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# DIPLOMARBEIT

## **O brother, where art thou going?**

*The construction of collective identities in contemporary  
South Africa*

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*To my family*

In loving memory of

**Markus**

(† 2001)

and

**Raphael Aleksander**

(† 2008)

*On a day of burial there is no perspective -  
for space itself is annihilated.  
Your dead friend is still a fragmentary being.*

*The day you bury him is a day of chores and crowds,  
of hands false or true to be shaken,  
of the immediate cares of mourning.*

*The dead friend will not really die until tomorrow,  
when silence is round you again.*

*Then he will show himself complete, as he was  
to tear himself away, as he was,  
from the substantial you.*

*Only then will you cry out  
because of him who is leaving  
and whom you cannot detain.*

(Antoine de Saint-Exupéry)

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## **Declaration of Authenticity**

I confirm to have conceived and written this paper in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references either in footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are truthfully acknowledged and identified in the footnotes.

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# 1 Introduction

For several decades, South African identity was constructed according to guidelines that were based on ethnic distinctions. South Africans were divided into categories of whites<sup>1</sup>, coloureds and blacks, based on appearance, social acceptance and descent. In other words, a black majority was governed by a white minority, depriving the black population of land and their rights in general. Therefore, identity had been characterized during the apartheid era by the dominant ethnic group through the exclusion of any other ethnicity. A white minority excluded the majority of other South Africans and this separation was only based on ethnicity. This had the effect of dividing identity into ethnic groups and separating “us” from “them”.

The political changes in the 1990s and the first free democratic elections in 1994 prompted the question: “who are we?” The transition from apartheid to democracy can be regarded as a time of birth for South Africa – the Rainbow Nation. An interesting question that will be dealt with in this respect: how does this Rainbow Nation define itself? Is identity (still) built by excluding “the other” rather than by including issues of its multicultural society? As the apartheid era came to an end, a new constitution was agreed upon, guaranteeing for the first time the rights of different cultural and ethnic groups and focusing on South Africa’s multiculturalism. In order to allow a sense of belonging to the new South African community, a new flag and a new national anthem were introduced.

As far as South African authors are concerned, many dealt with the apartheid regime by focusing on the struggle against apartheid as the central theme in their work. Novels that will be dealt with in this thesis are:

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<sup>1</sup> None of the terms ‘black’, ‘coloured’ or ‘white’ is used in a derogative way throughout the thesis. They refer to terms that were used during the apartheid era.



Niq Mhlongo's *Dog Eat Dog*, Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*, Mandla Langa's *The Memory of Stones*, Lisa Fugard's *Skinner's Drift* and Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life*. *Dog Eat Dog* focuses on the experiences of a young black student in Johannesburg who tries to find his place in a new South Africa. Although a black author himself, Mandla Langa concentrates on a completely different issue in his novel *The Memory of Stones*. He deals with the sensitive topic of black-on-black violence and its consequences during the apartheid regime. Writing about a similar topic from a different point of view is Zoë Wicomb. As the only coloured author included in this thesis, *David's Story* focuses on the experiences David had when he was fighting against apartheid with his comrades. The novel also mentions violence within a group, as it is not stated clearly who is accountable for the death of David's comrade Dulcie. Lisa Fugard's novel *Skinner's Drift* includes the construction of a South African identity in a farm novel. It incorporates political and social aspects as well as the importance of land re-distribution to identity construction. Nadine Gordimer finally offers a new approach to identity construction by including an ecological standpoint in this discussion. *Get a Life* mainly deals with the importance of the protection of South Africa's environment. This might serve as one unifying factor, crossing the colour boundary.

These 5 novels have been chosen to demonstrate the different means of South Africa's identity construction. All novels were published from 2000-2005 and therefore offer a recent commentary by South African authors on the construction of collective identities in South Africa.

## 2 Collective Identities

The question of South African collective identities is one of the most frequently discussed topics in recent studies concerning South Africa. Although it might sound contradictory, it should be noted that the term "identity" can refer to both individual as well as group identity. According to Levin (cf. Levin, pp.139 – 156), identity can refer to both – being unique and having counterparts at the same time. Both forms of identity are closely related to each other. Individual identity means that any individual person is a member of any kind of group such as family, friends or colleagues. These groups can in turn belong to larger groups such as social class, religion or national identity. Stuart Hall defines different forms of groups as integral to the construction of individual identity:

The condition of man requires that the individual, while he exists and as an autonomous being, does so only because he can first identify himself as something greater. (Hall, p.291)

Assmann argues that group identity allows for a process by which individuals identify with the concepts of a given group (cf. Assmann, 131). Therefore, individual identity is partly constructed by virtue of its belonging to specific groups, whereas a collective identity is partly achieved by its individual members. Thus collective identities as well as individual identity are closely related to each other. Petzold makes the point that one of the most important similarities between individual and collective identities is the fact that any form of identity always exists in its difference from something outside this identity (cf. Petzold, pp.13-16). Stuart Hall continues by stating that

[...] identities are constructed through, not outside, differences. This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the 'positive' meaning of any term – thus its 'identity' – can be constructed. (Hall, p.4)

But just as individual identity is marked by conflicting needs and desires, any form of collective identity is also marked by internal differences that separate the members of this collective. The process of constructing individual and collective identity tries to focus on internal homogeneity and external differences. The idea that identity is built by individuals implies that identity can never be fixed and is an ongoing process. This implies furthermore that identity has temporal implications, which signal that constructing identity involves an interplay between past, present and future. Throughout history, both forms of identity have undergone changes and the construction of identity accommodates to them. Common history plays an important role in constructing a collective identity. National identity illustrates this in one of the following subchapters.

Summing up, it can be said that the concept of collective identity refers to the component of one's identity held in common with a larger group. It manifests as a shared feeling of "we" or "groupness" and common goals of the collective derive in part from the group's shared sense of identity, strengthening the group's sense of solidarity and collective identity. The danger with this concept is that a feeling of invulnerability may create excessive optimism and encourage members of the collective to take risks. An unquestioned belief in the morality of the group may cause members to ignore the consequences of their actions and stereotyped views of leaders could be passed on within the group. During the South African Apartheid regime, collective identity was based solely on exclusion, where ethnicity served as the only factor of identity creation. It should be kept in mind that this regime caused members of certain collectivities to suffer from horrendous events which left their mark upon the group consciousness. The question as to whether this led to a change in the future identity-building of these collectivities will be addressed in the following chapters.

## 2.1 Identity

Bearing in mind that identity can, as we have seen, refer to both individual and collective identity, it seems logical to discuss the more general underlying term: "identity". The term identity often evokes associations with strict and perhaps even unchangeable attachments. Bausinger defines the identity card as the archetype for identity, giving testimony to the unambiguous identity of its bearer. Despite the fact that IDs normally refer to the nationality of the bearer, the question has to be asked as to whether identity is in fact a steady and therefore non-flexible construct.

Referring to identity, Prisching (cf. Bausinger, pp. 13-14) mentions the term "graded identity potential". His concept is to be seen as a strict contrast to concepts of the past, where identity was defined by concentric circles – family, neighbourhood, village, region and nation. A more modern view as described by Bausinger argues that it is necessary to include:

the complex constitution of an identity by combining concurrent partial identities respectively identity offers not only of certain places but also of groups, of class, age and gender – this means: identity is far more dynamic, flexible and subject to change.  
(Bausinger, pp.13)

This definition leads to the idea that identity underlies change. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the concept of identity is put into question by changing conditions. Bausinger states that identity is always there as part of the naturalness of life. However, identity has to be readjusted if new situations occur, creating new challenges. People have to accept different specialized systems in complex societies, and they have to decide towards different collectives and the identifications these collectives offer as well. Therefore, this process leads to a complex definition of identity where each person has to handle his/her identity.

## 2.2 Cultural identity

### *2.2.1 Culture*

Culture has become a frequently used term in modern societies as the media report on youth culture or the recent European Capital of Culture, to name just a couple. But what does culture refer to and how can it be defined?

Anthropologists define culture as "the way of life of a people" (Mathews, p.1), but this would assume that there is a South African culture that defines all South Africans in common as opposed to non-South Africans. In order to answer the question as to whether this viewpoint is acceptable it is necessary to look at the different definitions and ideas that the term "culture" has been related to.

Matthew Arnold defines culture as

a study of perfection [...] an inward condition of the mind and spirit [...] Culture indefatigably tries [...] to draw ever nearer to a sense of what is [...] beautiful, graceful, and becoming. (Baumer, p. 521-523)

This quote defines culture as the best that can be thought and said, an ideal that most people are not able to reach. Nevertheless, the idea that the term culture is deeply related to an ideal situation remains intact as even today a person is characterized as being "cultured". This characterization may refer to attitudes such as being able to refer to art in general or behave correctly at Queen Elizabeth's dinner table.

Anthropologists then reworked the above-mentioned concept of culture to apply to a majority of people, not only to those who are well educated. As far as anthropologists are concerned, culture refers to all human beings, as Clifford Geertz argues:

Culture [...] is not just an ornament of human existence but [...] an essential condition for it. [...] There is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture. (Geertz, pp.46-49)

The period during which the term culture was redefined was nevertheless not without its dubious definitions. Tylor and Morgan (cf. Matthews, p. 5-20) – both famous for founding the science of anthropology – stated that every human being had the potential to become cultured, which seemed to refer to the Europeans or Americans of their day. Franz Boas was the first anthropologist to speak of “cultures” rather than “culture”. He tried to show that there is not just one culture which all human beings have in common, but that each society has its own culture – unique and coherent. He also claimed that these cultures may not be compared with one another and his view of cultures prevailed for most of the past century (cf. Matthews, p.13-17). Throughout the history of anthropology and the debate on culture, there has been one basic underlying definition of this term: culture is the way of life of a people. The assumption that goes hand in hand with this definition is that there are patterns of cognition, values and behaviour that all members of a specific group share in common, in contrast to members of other groups.

Interestingly, modern tendencies in anthropology seem to abandon the above-mentioned concept of culture. As Robert Brightman stated:

While the adjective “cultural” continues as an acceptable predicate [...] such phrases as “culture” or “Kwakiutl culture” or “the culture of the Nuer” are of increasingly infrequent occurrence. [...] When the word “culture” does occur, it frequently bears [...] quotation marks [...] showing the writer’s ambivalence, self-consciousness or censure. (Brightman, p.510)

### *2.2.2 Cultural identity and Space*

We have already seen that culture in general and cultural identity specifically denote the shared learning of a given group. It has also been proven that it is not possible to speak of “the” identity of a person or a group, since an identity may change according to underlying circumstances. Chris van der Merwe regards culture as something which shows different layers combining symbols, rituals and values. Anderson’s

idea of an imagined community shows self-identification with a nation via national symbols such as flags or anthems.

Closely linked to this concept is the idea that people live in places and particular spaces to which they are emotionally attached. In South Africa people were forced to leave the places they were attached to, which led to the difficult situation whereby people were completely uprooted. Returning to such places of origin is always associated with returning to memory. But memory sometimes also allows space and places to appear as a nostalgic construct. A loss of land in South Africa not only means being uprooted but also means losing contact with forefathers. In South African religion, being linked to the land of ancestors is a key point - as will be discussed in the relevant chapters dealing with South African novels.

### 2.3 National Identity

The term "nation" is ambiguous. As John Joseph (cf. Joseph, p.92) argues, it might either be used in an etymological sense, referring to people linked by birth, as for example the Hebrew nation. In a more extended context "nation" refers to territory, its inhabitants and political powers that rule this territory from one centre, as for example the Austrian nation. Joseph argues in his work (cf. Joseph, pp.91-131) that whenever these two concepts of nation coalesce, the term "nation-state" is used. For him, Ireland serves as an example as it counts as nation and nation-state at the same time.

His two concepts of nation lead to the discussion as to whether one or both ideas can coalesce in reality. This "ideal" would then indicate that all inhabitants were born in the respective national territory and would still live there, but the question that has to be asked at this stage is whether this "ideal" of a nation-state should not be regarded as a dystopian ideal rather than a utopian ideal. Nevertheless, it has to be argued that the concept of nation-by-birth is still present in modern times and that it has

growing acceptance whenever there is a real or perceived threat from outsiders – either through immigration or colonialism. This phenomenon became evident during the 2005 French riots<sup>2</sup> as well as during the 2008 South African riots<sup>3</sup>. It is also interesting that nationality is often discussed in times of repeated reconfigurations of national boundaries, as happened after both world wars. These changes have all affected awareness that nationality is a rather fluent and arbitrary concept. Nevertheless, there is still strong belief in the fact that nationality is something that is associated with being born in a specific territory, although Joseph states that recent studies strive to “understand identity as something we construct and negotiate throughout our life” (Joseph, p.94). One of the main topics within the study of national identity has been the central importance of language in its formation. Joseph argues furthermore that

a number of prominent historians, sociologists and political scientists have argued that the existence of a national language is the primary foundation upon which nationalist ideology is constructed. Others, however, have paid more serious attention to the evidence compiled by linguistic historians showing that national languages are not actually a given, but are themselves constructed as part of the ideological work of nationalism building. (Joseph, p.94)

How important the function of language is to constructing identity in South Africa will be discussed in Chapter 2, Language and Identity.

The question as to how a nation can be defined is answered by Renan, who states that

[a] nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things that are actually one make up this soul, this spiritual principle. One is the past, the other the present. One is the common ownership of a rich legacy of memories; the other is the present-day agreement, the

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<sup>2</sup> From October to November 2005 a series of riots and violent clashes occurred in France. This led to the burning of public buildings and, as result of these riots, President Jacques Chirac declared a national state of emergency on November 8, 2005. The reasons behind these riots were high youth unemployment and lack of opportunities in France’s poorest communities where most people have an immigrant background.

<sup>3</sup> In May 2008 a series of attacks started in the township of Alexandra/Johannesburg, where locals attacked migrants from Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe. The violence spread to other townships across the Gauteng Province of South Africa.



desire to live together, the will to continue validating the heritage that has been inherited jointly. (Joseph, p. 112)

This definition claims that "nation" is a concept that exists in the minds, the memories and the will of those people who make it up. The collective will of a people would have the deepest impact on constructing a nation. A nation is characterized by the whole history of that nation, providing the basis for its language, culture and its way of thinking. For Gellner (cf. Joseph, p.114), on the other hand, a nation is not only based on shared memories as mentioned above but also on shared "forgetting"; the putting aside of differences among groups forms the nation, while also ceasing to remember that there was a time when they were not united. This idea of shared memories and also shared forgetting plays an important role in South African histories, where institutions such as the TRC<sup>4</sup> tried to work on past events throughout different races in order to allow a shared future for all South Africans.

Combining Gellner's and Renan's ideas leads to Benedict Anderson's definition of a nation as an "imagined political community":

It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in minds of each lives the image of their communion. Renan referred to this imagining in his suavely back-handed way when he wrote that 'Or l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses'. With a certain ferocity Gellner makes a comparable point when he rules that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist. (Anderson, p.6)

But in order to invent or imagine a nation it seems absolutely necessary to create a belief that the nation has not truly been invented. Not being able to forget the idea that a nation is imagined might lead to the fact that it is perceived as being artificial and therefore losing validity. According to Anderson's concept, the nation must be introduced as a natural entity allowing deep trust in its authenticity. If a nation does not

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<sup>4</sup> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was a committee set up by the Government of National Unity to help deal with atrocities that occurred under apartheid.

have a recorded history, Anderson (cf. Anderson, pp 6-37) argues, myths are invented that go back to prehistory in order to claim legitimacy.

He goes on by explaining:

[...] the nation [...] is imagined as community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings. (Anderson, p.7)

National identity is perhaps not the most important identity to people. Regional and local identities matter, as do social, racial and religious identities. Given the importance in defining who individuals believe they are it seems astonishing that these identities are often founded on symbolic grounds. This symbolism is shown by purposeful deployment of national symbols as well as daily habits of which people may not even be aware. This will again be discussed in the chapter on Identity and National symbols dealing with South Africa's anthem and flag and the important role it plays in promoting collective identities in South Africa.

### 3 Language and Identity

#### 3.1 South African languages

Given that South Africa has 11 official as well as 9 unofficial languages, it is important to take a closer look at them in the following chapter. The use of native language in novels is an important indicator, helping to answer the question of collective identity in South African novels. In South Africa language is still a common subject of debate and Webb states that

Many people have quite definite views on what the country needs, linguistically seen. Many of these views, however, are not sufficiently well-informed, and many are simply speculative and emotional. A specific example of such views is the generally negative attitude to the use of the Bantu languages as languages of learning and teaching. (Webb, p.1)

South Africa still faces national problems such as poverty, unemployment, violence and inadequate development of its human resources. Language plays a key role in most of South Africa's problems. One of these problems is the overestimation of English as the language of instruction in black communities which underestimate the role Bantu languages could play as languages of learning. Webb (cf. Webb, p.5-35) argues in his work that black parents in South Africa still prefer English as the language of learning and teaching for their children. English is still regarded as a language of success and it is the dominant language of public domains in South Africa. The question is whether this can only be achieved by preferring English as the language of instruction. Webb makes an important point:

[...] Parents then argue wrongly that the only way their children can acquire English effectively is if it is used as a language of learning. This is a typical case of putting the cart before the horse: the development of cognitive skills does not take place because the language of development is not known well enough, and English is not acquired effectively because learning skills have not been

developed adequately. If the other route is followed: using a Bantu language for cognitive, affective and social skill development, both sets of negative consequences may be reversed: general learning skills may be better developed and, as a consequence, English may be acquired more effectively. (Webb, p.10)

The negative side effect of this development is the fact that Bantu languages are highly underestimated. Speakers of Bantu languages argue that they are not able to join a formal education programme because they speak a Bantu language and these languages have only little economic value. These problems make it clear that language plays a key role in South Africa. It might serve as barrier between the South African people and economic prosperity and education. The dominance of English in the formal economy and the non-use of Bantu languages make this situation even more complicated. South Africa's past provides many examples which show how language has been used to manipulate and discriminate. Since apartheid was based on dividing people into classes in order to gain control over them, the use of language as a means of discrimination should not be underestimated. Afrikaans and English were extremely dominant in South Africa before 1994, when both languages were used to apply linguistic restrictions, for example people were appointed according to their proficiency of Afrikaans and English (cf. Webb, pp.6-20). On the other hand, language also played an important role with regard to collective identity and it offered conflict potential. South Africa is still regarded as a complexly divided society and tensions between different ethnic groups are still present. Afrikaans, for example, is regarded by members of Afrikaans-speaking communities as part of their collective identity, whereas members of black communities regard Afrikaans as a symbol of oppression. English, on the other hand, is seen as a symbol of liberation and economic wealth. So, generally speaking, it can be argued that language plays an important symbolic role in South Africa's process of finding a collective identity. Webb (cf. Webb, pp. 5-25) defines the following difficulties in solving language-related problems in South Africa:

- The dominance of English: English is regarded as the lingua franca worldwide, especially regarding economic issues. There is a need for South Africans to acquire knowledge of English in order to prevent manipulation, discrimination and to guarantee strong economic as well as political forces. Nevertheless, it is necessary to find a balance between English as a powerful language tool and other South African languages. Multilingualism, which should be supported by multilingual education, provides an interesting tool in including all South African languages.
- Low proficiency in English: Webb mentions that the level of proficiency of English in South Africa is inadequate considering the important role it has in public life. Though South Africans do have basic communicative abilities in English, the level of proficiency is a problem that has to be addressed.
- Adoption of Bantu languages: According to Webb (cf. Webb, pp.25-32), Bantu languages have a low status, with nearly no economic value and its speakers not believing in their languages as an appropriate linguistic tool. They argue that Bantu languages have no use in certain domains of their life and that it therefore makes no sense to study these languages.
- Multilingualism: Although the new constitution of South Africa supports the idea of multilingualism, the concept has not yet gained acceptance in South Africa. Due to the dominant use of English as the language of politics and the economy, it is difficult to create awareness for the other South African languages as well. This increasing awareness should include an acceptance of language as playing a fundamental role in public life and of language allowing access to education, basic rights as well as privileges. One of the main problems closely linked to promoting multilingualism is the question of the costs involved. It seems impossible from an economic point of view to create a policy of equality for all South African languages.

- Negative attitude towards different South African languages: Webb states that there is still a strong negative intolerance stigmatizing members of different language groups. This division is mainly made alongside old racial concepts but can surprisingly also be found within language communities. English-speaking South Africans can show a strong negative attitude towards Afrikaans-speaking South Africans and vice versa (cf. Webb, pp.25-32). Ethnic intolerance is also mirrored in race-related terms referring to South Africa's history of Apartheid. Afrikaans-speaking whites are therefore referred to as "Boers" or "rock-spiders", whereas English-speaking South Africans are negatively referred to as "Souties" or "the English". These terms exist for different ethnic groups in South Africa.

The following subchapters provide further information on some of those official languages of South Africa, which are mainly of interest according to the research question of this thesis.

### 3.2 Indo-European languages in South Africa

The Indo-European languages in South Africa include languages deriving from the Germanic branch (English, Afrikaans and German), the Indic branch (Hindi, Urdu, and others) and the Romance branch (Portuguese). According to Mesthrie (cf. Mesthrie, pp.11-26), small numbers of speakers of the following languages could be found in South Africa as well: Polish, Dutch, Italian and French. Although French seemed to play an important role in former times when the Huguenots lived in the Cape area, French was soon assimilated to Afrikaans. The recent growth of French speakers in South Africa can be explained by the fact that it is now possible for Africans to obtain work permits as well as citizenship rights in South Africa. Also a great number of refugees from central and southern Africa have brought new African languages as well as French

and Portuguese to South Africa. The main Indo-European languages in South Africa include Afrikaans and South African English.

### 3.2.1 Afrikaans

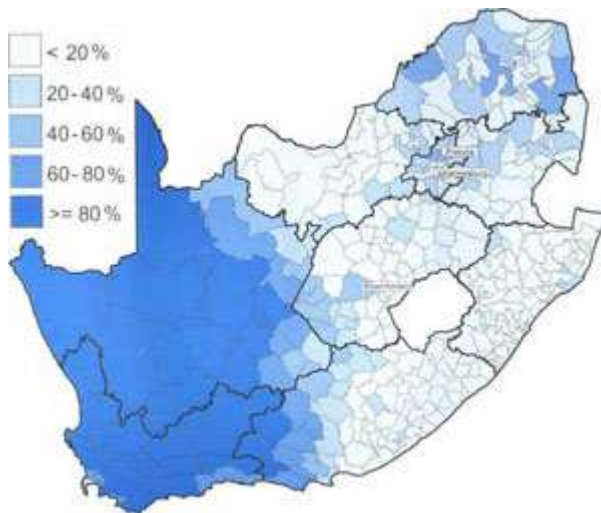


Fig.1 Speakers of Afrikaans in South Africa<sup>5</sup>

Afrikaans<sup>6</sup> is a language that is based on 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch but is also influenced by other languages as well. It is classified as an Indo-European language that belongs to Germanic languages. Afrikaans was first referred to as "Cape Dutch", indicating that Afrikaans was considered a Dutch dialect until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. But there is evidence that only a few strongly defined dialects are also to be found in the Dutch language area. Early studies of Afrikaans suggest that three main historical dialects probably existed before the Great Trek in the 1830s. These dialects are defined as the Northern Cape, Western Cape and Eastern Cape dialects. Remains of these dialects can still be found in present-day Afrikaans, although Standard Afrikaans has contributed to a great levelling of differences in modern times. The first Afrikaans grammars and

<sup>5</sup> Source: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.salanguages.com/afrikaans/index.htm>

dictionaries published in 1875 in Cape Town supported a further standardization of Afrikaans. Modern-day Standard Afrikaans itself is said to have developed from the Eastern Cape dialect, as this is where the Great Trek started. The two Boer Wars strengthened the position of Afrikaans in South Africa furthermore and the official languages of the Union of South Africa changed from English and Dutch to English and Afrikaans in 1925. The first full translation of the Bible from Dutch into Afrikaans in 1933 can be seen as another major step in strengthening the importance of Afrikaans in South Africa.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, it is important to understand the significance of the language for South Africans. Afrikaans is the first language of nearly 60% of South Africa's white population as well as over 80% of the coloured population. Large numbers of Bantu-speaking and English-speaking South Africans speak it as their second language. Some believe that the term "Afrikaanses" should be used as a term for all people who speak Afrikaans, irrespective of ethnic origin, instead of "Afrikaners", which refers to an ethnic group. But linguistic identity has not yet established that one term be favoured above another and all three are used.

Afrikaans has been influential in the development of South African English. Many Afrikaans loanwords have found their way into South African English, such as *bakkie* (pickup truck) or *braai* (barbecue). A few words in standard English are derived from Afrikaans, such *trek* (pioneering journey).

Historically important is the fact that in 1976 high school students in Soweto began a rebellion in response to the government's decision that Afrikaans be used as the language of instruction for half the subjects taught in non-white schools, with English continuing to be used for the other half. Although English is the mother tongue of about 8% of the population, it is the language most widely understood, and the second language of the majority of South Africans. Afrikaans is more widely spoken than English in the Northern and Western Cape provinces, several hundred kilometres from Soweto. The black community's opposition to



Afrikaans and preference for continuing English instruction was underscored when the government rescinded the policy one month after the uprising: the majority of black schools chose English over Afrikaans or native languages as the language of instruction. It has been argued, though, that the language issue was a catalyst for the uprising rather than a major underlying cause, which was racial oppression. But it must also be kept in mind that this decision led to the fact that non-white South African children would be denied instruction in all but the most basic topics of mathematics, sciences etc. The government justified this policy by claiming that non-white South Africans would never have an occasion to use such knowledge.

Under South Africa's democratic constitution of 1996, Afrikaans remains an official language and has equal status to English and nine other languages. Interestingly, South Africa's diplomatic missions only display the name of the country in English and their host country's language, but not in Afrikaans. In spite of these moves, which have upset many Afrikaans speakers, the language has remained strong, with the publication of Afrikaans newspapers and magazines. In addition, a pay-TV channel in Afrikaans was launched in 1999, and an Afrikaans music channel in 2005. A large number of Afrikaans books are still published every year.

But post-apartheid South Africa has seen a loss of government support for Afrikaans, in terms of education, social events, media and general status throughout the country, especially considering how it now shares its place as the official language alongside ten other languages. Still, Afrikaans remains more prevalent in the media - radio, newspapers and television - than all the other official languages, except for English. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that Afrikaans is still viewed negatively by some.

From a geographical point of view, Afrikaans is still the language which is mostly spoken in the western part of South Africa and the southern part of Namibia. Important dialects include Cape Afrikaans, Orange River

Afrikaans and East Cape Afrikaans. It is spoken outside of South Africa in the following countries: Botswana, Malawi, Namibia and Zambia.

### 3.2.2 South African English

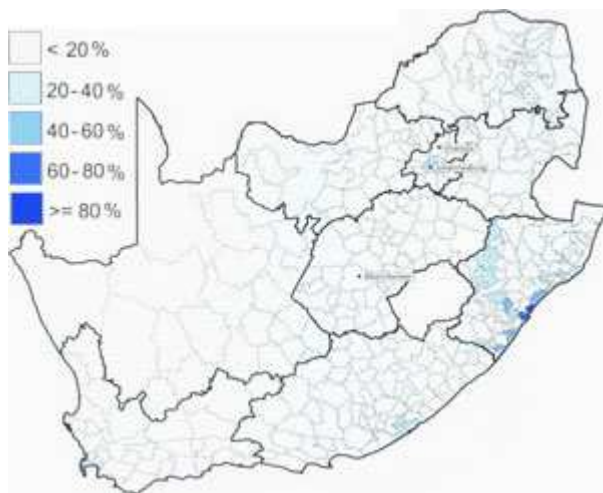


Fig.2 Speakers of English in South Africa<sup>7</sup>

English is classified as an Indo-European language that belongs to the Germanic languages.

The history of the English language in South Africa can be traced back to the beginning of the British occupation in 1795<sup>8</sup>. English was considered the most civilized language and was therefore used in the upper class societies of South Africa. English was declared the sole official language of the Cape Colony in 1822 (replacing Dutch). On the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, which united the former Boer republics of the Transvaal and Orange Free State with the Cape and Natal colonies, English was made the official language together with Dutch (which was replaced by Afrikaans in 1925). At the height of the era of Afrikaner nationalism and apartheid, as well as after the establishment of the Republic of South Africa in 1961, this policy continued, the African languages being accorded no official status. However, in the independent

<sup>7</sup> Source: <http://www.hsra.ac.za>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.salanguages.com/english/esa.htm>,

homelands that were established as part of the apartheid policy of separate development, English rather than Afrikaans was typically utilized by homeland authorities as an official language, together with one or more African languages of the region. Since the first democratic elections in 1994, in terms of the new interim constitution, English is now one of eleven official languages in South Africa.

Presently, English is established throughout South African society, amongst individuals from a variety of linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. Especially amongst the educated, English functions as a lingua franca, and is a primary language of government, business, and commerce. Educationally, it is a compulsory subject in all schools, and is the preferred medium of instruction in most schools and tertiary institutions. The only other medium of instruction at advanced levels at present is Afrikaans.

Amongst the African majority, English has been seen as the language of liberation and black unity as opposed to Afrikaans, which has been perceived as the language of the oppressor. Very few Africans, however, presently reveal a complete language shift towards English and away from African languages. While English functions as the language of prestige and power, an African language is typically maintained as a solidarity code. According to the latest census figures<sup>9</sup>, while 33% of Africans have some knowledge of English, only about 1% cites English as a home language.

The initial spread of English amongst Africans took place during the colonial era, through mission education which enabled a high standard of English amongst a privileged minority. The apartheid policy in general, and the discriminatory Bantu education policy in particular, resulted in restricted access to English and therefore little opportunity to develop appropriate abilities in the language. Amongst whites in general, 89% appear to be able to speak English. Amongst white Afrikaners, the ability to speak English has become essential, given its general societal status

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<sup>9</sup> Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles. Oxford University Press, 1996.

and the lack of popular support for Afrikaans. For coloureds whose traditional language was Afrikaans, English has become increasingly influential. While a complete language shift to English has occurred among this group, this appears to be a trend only amongst more educated individuals. In total, 51%<sup>10</sup> of coloureds were shown in the 1991 census to be able to speak English

English has also had a strong influence on the languages of South Africa, and an enormous stock of English words has been adopted into Afrikaans and the African languages. The mixing of English and another indigenous language is perhaps the strongest indication of the impact of English. Such mixing has for many speakers become the norm, indicating a double identity - belonging to both the elite and the specifically African groups.

### 3.3 Bantu<sup>11</sup> languages

The Bantu languages are the predominant languages in South Africa in terms of sheer numbers. It comprises the following languages:

- Nguni branch (isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, IsiNdebele)
- Sotho branch (SeSotho, SePedi, SeTswana)
- XiTsonga
- TshiVenda

In addition to these official languages a number of other Bantu languages are spoken by a minority in South Africa. The present domain of the Bantu languages extends progressively eastwards from the Cameroon-Nigerian border through the equatorial zone to the Kenyan coast and southwards to the Cape. According to Herbert and Bailey (Cf. Herbert and Bailey, pp.50-78), it is not possible to date the arrival of the first Bantu-speaking Africans in the region of South Africa. All 9 Bantu languages

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<sup>10</sup> Dictionary of South African English on Historical Principles. OUP, 1996.

<sup>11</sup> The term "Bantu" is not used in a derogative way throughout the thesis.

that are spoken in South Africa are regarded as co-official and co-equal under the South African constitution. This paper will focus on isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and Sotho.

### 3.3.1 isiZulu<sup>12</sup>

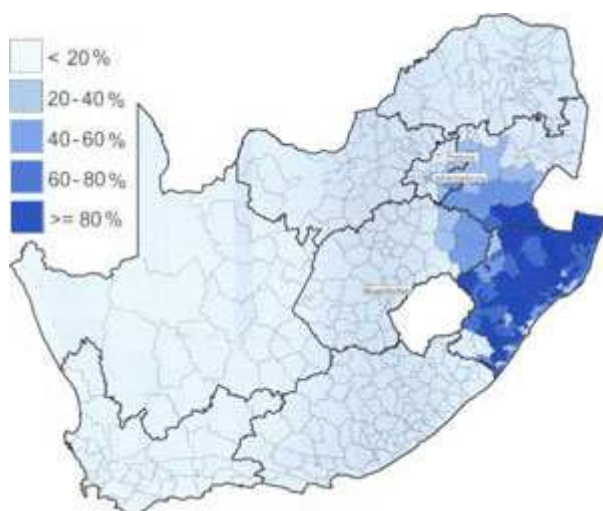


Fig.3 Speakers of isiZulu in South Africa<sup>13</sup>

Zulu is the most frequently spoken Bantu language in South Africa with approximately 9,200,000 (Mesthrie, p.13) speakers which adds up to nearly 23% of the South African population. There are an additional 37,500 in Malawi; 15,000 in southern Swaziland; and 228,000 in Lesotho. The main concentrations of Zulu-speaking South Africans are in Natal Province and within Natal in Kwazulu, in south-eastern Transvaal and north-eastern Orange Free State. It is an important language (Herbert and Bailey pp.35-50) in at least a dozen districts in Transvaal, and one large district in the Orange Free State. Of all the languages spoken in Southern Africa, including English and Afrikaans it has the largest number of speakers.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. <http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/Profile.aspx?menu=004&LangID=23>

<sup>13</sup> Source: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za>

Characteristics:

Zulu uses prefixes and suffixes which are attached to roots and stems to provide grammatical information. Nouns are divided into classes as in other Bantu languages as well. Each gender has two distinct prefixes, one marking singular nouns, the other plural nouns. It is much more difficult to understand the different classes of gender classification as there are several classes exceeding the European masculine, feminine and neuter classification. Zulu has borrowed words from Khoisan as well as in recent times from English and Afrikaans.

Zulu has a number of dialects<sup>14</sup>, but four of them are generally recognized as the major ones. There is also a Zulu-based pidgin, known as Fanagalo, which is a mixture of English, Afrikaans, Zulu and other African language vocabulary. Zulu has a Roman-based orthography in which the click sounds are written using various combinations of graphemes. Zulu's orthography is governed by the Zulu Language Board of KwaZulu. The role of African languages in South Africa has already been mentioned in the previous chapter and, summing up, it can be described as complex and ambiguous. Using Bantu languages in education was strictly regulated by the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Recently, Zulu has been used a language of instruction in primary schools, but is being replaced by English as the language of instruction from Standard 2 onwards. Any further education is taught in English or Afrikaans, although Zulu is taught as a subject by several educational institutions. Zulu is used by several authors to publish prose as well as poetry. Several newspapers and monthlies are published in Zulu or bilingually (Zulu and English/Afrikaans).

The geographical centre of Zulu is in eastern South Africa, but Zulu is spoken beyond its home areas and is understood by all speakers of Nguni languages.

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. <http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/Profile.aspx?menu=004&LangID=23>

### 3.3.2 isiXhosa<sup>15</sup>

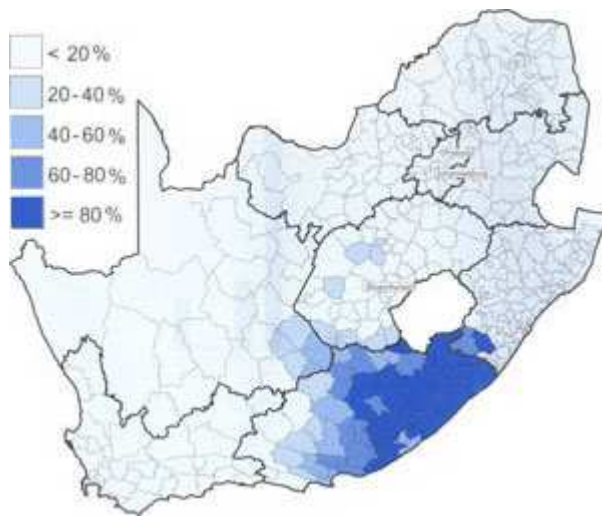


Fig. 4 Speakers of isiXhosa in South Africa<sup>16</sup>

Xhosa is spoken by approximately 7,200,000 South Africans, which means that nearly 18% of South Africans are Xhosa-speaking. Its main geographical centre lies in south-eastern South Africa, having an important influence in Eastern Cape Province and Orange Free State. It is also spoken as a dominant language in several districts away from the main Xhosa region: near Bloemfontein, and in the mining districts of southwest of Johannesburg<sup>17</sup>. Xhosa is the most widely distributed language in South Africa, although not the most spoken. Xhosa is regarded as a Nguni language alongside Zulu, Swati and Ndebele. All four languages are closely related and mutually intelligible. However, they are generally not considered as dialects of the same language for cultural, historical, and political reasons. For instance, Zulu and Xhosa have their own identities in the view of individual speakers of the respective languages. As a Bantu language, Xhosa is related to a large number of languages spoken throughout much of Eastern, Southern and Central Africa.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. <http://www.lmp.ucla.edu/Profile.aspx?menu=004&LangID=23>

<sup>16</sup> Source: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za>

### 3.3.3 IsiNdebele<sup>18</sup>

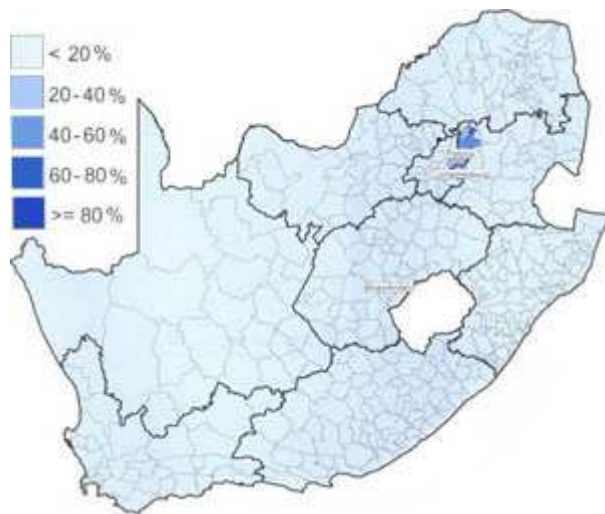


Fig. 6 Speaker of IsiNdebele in South Africa<sup>19</sup>

IsiNdebele is also known as Ndebele, South Ndebele or Isikhethu.

isiNdebele is a member of the "Nguni" language group, which belongs to the Bantu languages. It is most closely related to isiZulu, isiXhosa and SiSwati.

The Ndebele people were originally an offshoot of the Nguni people of KwaZulu-Natal. The language amaNala and amaNzunza are related to that of the amaNdebele people of Zimbabwe. The Ndebele people are well known for their artistic talent - especially with regard to their painted houses and colourful beadwork.

P.C. Taljaard mentions in his article:

In the early stages of the history of the Ndebele people had to go through difficult stages. After having settled in the Pretoria area in the 1600s, they grew in numbers. Their king Musi died and a feud broke out between his two sons Manala and Ndzundza. This led to bloodshed and the killing of many. Finally they decided to live apart, the Manala in the Pretoria area and the Ndzundza further east. In the 1820s Mzilikazi, a Zulu general, fled from Shaka with

<sup>18</sup> Cf. <http://www.salanguages.com>

<sup>19</sup> Source: <http://www.hsra.ac.za>



his army. They overpowered the Manala and decided to settle down with them. After some time, Mzilikazi became afraid that Shaka would send an army after him. With a clever plan he lured the Ndebele men away, got the others together and killed them. He then took the women and livestock and moved northwards until he finally settled in Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. That is the origin of the Ndebele of Zimbabwe. This caused a huge decrease in the number of Ndebele speakers. From 1880 to 1890 there were several battles with the white rulers of the then Transvaal Republic which culminated in what can be called a diaspora. After they were defeated, the Ndebeles were forced to work and live on farms over a large area, which destroyed their pride as a nation. It was only in 1984 when the KwaNdebele Homeland was established that this pride was restored and the people moved back there. (<http://www.salanguages.com/unesco/isindebele.htm>).

There are 711,821 (1.59%) first language speakers in South Africa. isiNdebele is also a major language in Zimbabwe with an estimated 1,500,000 speakers, and there is also a small population of speakers in Botswana. There are linguistic differences between the isiNdebele varieties spoken in Zimbabwe and South Africa.

### *3.3.4 Sotho*

The second largest present-day Bantu language group is the Sotho group, which includes 3 major standard languages known as:

- Sesotho
- SePedi
- SeTswana

Sesetho is spoken by approximately 8% of all South Africans and another 1,500,000 people in Lesotho (cf. Herbert and Bailey, p.68). It was the first of the three languages to be codified, being the most homogeneous language of this group. Several existing Sotho dialects are extinct but this led to a spread of standardized Sesotho. The practice of standardization in this case led to a reduction of variation and diversity. Sesotho interestingly shows the greatest cultural influence from Nguni, including the adoption of several words.

SePedi is spoken by approximately 9% of all South Africans and another 11,000 people in Botswana (Herbert and Bailey, p.68). According to Herbert and Bailey, SePedi was originally invented by the Nationalist government to "unify a diverse set of people, who formerly were called the Tansvaal Sotho" (Herbert and Bailey, p.70). SePedi, the language of one of these groups, was selected as the standardized language, so it is obvious that the linguistic as well as cultural diversity within SePedi is very wide.

SeTswana as the last of these 3 languages is spoken by approximately 8% of all South Africans, 1,100,000 people in Botswana, 11,000 people in Namibia and another 30,000 people in Zimbabwe. SeTswana was originally known as Western Sotho and it is said that the Kgatla dialect was used as a basis for standard SeTswana.

## 4 South African music<sup>20</sup>

The curious beauty of African music is that it uplifts even as it tells a sad tale. You may be poor, you may have only a ramshackle house, you may have lost your job, but that music gives you hope. (Nelson Mandela)

South African music has from the earliest beginnings to the present day been created by intermingling local style and forms imported from foreign countries. This chapter is intended to highlight the development of South African music, focusing on the development of Kwaito. It is therefore necessary to take a closer look at music development in South Africa from a very specific point of view, and it has to be stated clearly that this chapter cannot provide an exhaustive overview of all the different music styles in South Africa. It does not, therefore, include the development of pop, rock or reggae in South Africa, which is not to be understood as the judging of different styles, but this choice had to be made due to the limited extent of this thesis.

It is rather difficult to define an exact beginning of South African music, but one idea is that South African music started when indigenous people and slaves imported music ideas from western colonies during the Dutch colonial era from the 17<sup>th</sup> century onwards<sup>21</sup>. The Khoi used special instruments, for example the mamokhorong, to provide music for their dances in Cape Town, which became a melting pot of cultural influences from all over the world. Slave orchestras, on the other hand, played western music during the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Cape Town. The governor of the Cape, for instance, had his own slave orchestra. Coloured bands of musicians began to parade in Cape Town during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, similar to the parades of British military marching bands. And travelling minstrel shows which originated in the 1880s can still be seen during the great carnival in Cape Town each New Year.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. <http://www.southafrica.info>, <http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com>, <http://www.time.com/time/europe/html/040419/kwaito.html>

<sup>21</sup> For further information see: <http://www.southafrica.info/about/arts/music.htm>

## 4.1 Missionaries and choirs

The existence of missions had a profound influence on South African music. During the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, composers such as John Knox Bokwe began composing hymns that included traditional music patterns. In 1897<sup>22</sup>, Enoch Sontonga composed a hymn entitled "Nkosi Sikelel'iAfrika", which was adopted by the liberation movement and finally became the national anthem of South Africa in 1994. The missionary influence as well as the influence of American gospels led to a still very vivid South African gospel scene. Gospel is still one of the best-selling genres in South African music today, with artists achieving gold or platinum sales on a regular basis. One of the most successful South African gospel artists is Rebecca Malope<sup>23</sup>. When she started she had problems finding a record company willing to produce her first album. She finally enlisted the help of Sizwe Zako and together with Peter Tladi they were able to raise enough money to record Malope's first album. Their struggle was rewarded when the album reached gold status within a matter of weeks.

Vocal music as such is the oldest traditional music form known in South Africa. It was used to accompany dances or social gatherings and involved so called call-response patterns.

## 4.2 Marabi

During the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century mining processes prompted increasing urbanization in South Africa. This led to the development of slums and ghettos where new forms of music developed. The term "Marabi" derives from a South African organ style, the purpose of which was to draw people into the shebeens and get them dancing. Only a few

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.southafrica.info/about/arts/music.htm>

<sup>23</sup> For further information on Rebecca Malope see:  
<http://www.music.org.za/Artist.asp?ID=107>

relatively simple chords that were repeated characterized the style. South African musician Abdullah Ibrahim still uses parts of this style in his music. Due to illegal business that was related to the shebeens, South Africa's Marabi culture remained an underground culture. The official attitude from both sides' white authorities as well as more sophisticated black listeners mirrored the attitude towards early jazz music in the United States. But the catchy tunes and the rhythm of Marabi were soon picked up by dance bands which were based on American swing bands of the 1920s. Such bands, which allowed the first professional black musicians, became popular in the 1930s and 1940s. Bands such as The Merry Blackbirds fascinated both black and white South Africans. The upcoming racial restrictions and regulations put an end to such progress, but the Marabi style developed into the earliest form of South African jazz music – Mbaqanga.

### 4.3 Kwela

Kwela developed in South Africa in the 1950s and became known for the sound of the pennywhistle typically used in Kwela. The idea of using a pennywhistle allowed street performers from every corner of South Africa to perform, as it is a rather cheap instrument and above all portable. Generally speaking, flutes have always played an important role in traditional South African music. The pennywhistle enabled an adaptation of folk tunes to the new Marabi music style which then led to the creation of Kwela. The term "Kwela" is derived from Zulu meaning "to get up". Some of the most famous Kwela stars in South Africa were Lemmy Mabaso and Spokes Mashiyane.

### 4.4 Jazz in South Africa

South African jazz music developed as a combination of all other music ideas and forms during the 1950s. A key area for the development of jazz

music was Sophiatown, a township in Johannesburg. Partly due to its legal status as a freehold area and its proximity to Johannesburg, Sophiatown attracted many musicians and it became a hotspot during the rapid growth of black music culture. Marabi and Kwela began to merge into Mbaqanga, which is recognized as the first African jazz style. Miriam Makeba is perhaps the best known artist of this music style, having also attained international success. This new black music culture also influenced a renaissance of other arts such as writing. Thanks to Sophiatown's special legal status, the city became the first place of cultural and social interchange between different races in South Africa. In 1960 this was radically brought to an end when the Nationalist government forced the inhabitants to relocate from Sophiatown to townships outside of Johannesburg such as Soweto. Sophiatown itself was destroyed and Triomf was built in its place.

Nevertheless, the cross-cultural exchange that took place in Sophiatown continued to be an inspiration to South African musicians of all different races. In 1955 the famous Sophiatown Modern Jazz Club was founded, supporting the ideas of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie. One of South Africa's most famous jazz bands, the "Jazz Epistles", grew during this period and started to shape South African jazz music in unprecedented ways. Due to the increasing power of the Apartheid regime, South African resistance movements began to grow, also influencing the music style in South Africa. In the wake of the Sharpeville Massacre and the subsequent legal difficulties, many musicians found it necessary to leave South Africa.

One of the key figures of South African music is Abdullah Ibrahim. He combined traditional music with a deep knowledge of American jazz. Ibrahim understood that the idea of American jazz music was similar to the idea of South African jazz. When he first went to Switzerland in 1962 he met Duke Ellington, who was so impressed that he sponsored Ibrahim's first recordings. Ibrahim returned to South Africa in the 1970s, working with some of the best jazz musicians in South Africa, such as Basil Coetzee - with whom he recorded one of his masterpieces, "Manenberg". This composition, which is internationally regarded as one

of the best South African compositions ever, was adopted by the South African resistance movement. Ibrahim has worked as a solo performer, with trios, quartets as well as with symphony orchestras, especially during the 1990s when he decided to finally return to South Africa. Ibrahim has also founded a school for South African musicians in Cape Town.

South African jazz music continued to be performed during the years of severe oppression under the Apartheid regime. In more recent years new jazz musicians such as Moses Molelekwa have included new elements to steer South African jazz music in another new direction, and this is only one indicator that South African jazz music will remain a living and growing tradition.

#### 4.5 Kwaito

In 1990 a new style of music captured the attention of young black South Africans: Kwaito. Kwaito recently became one of the biggest forces on the South African music scene, characterized by a mix of chanted lyrics, slowed-down house beats and bass-heavy African percussion. But Kwaito is not only limited to music: like hip hop in the United States, Kwaito is an expression of a specific way of life, it includes the way people dress, talk and dance. It is a street style in which music is used to reflect life in townships, again a similar idea to hip hop reflecting life in American ghettos. Just as hip hop is influenced by street music from New York, Kwaito is regarded as a voice for young, black, urban South Africans. Time magazine<sup>24</sup> describes Kwaito as a mixture of all that 1990s South African youth grew up on: South African disco music, hip hop, R&B, Ragga, and a heavy, heavy dose of American and British house music. Like many styles of rave and house music, this sort of music is not intended to be performed live. Some of the most successful Kwaito artists include Arthur Mafokate and Zola. Mafokate is not only a successful artist

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<sup>24</sup> <http://www.time.com/time/europe/html/040419/kwaito.html>

himself but is also regarded as one of the most important persons in the Kwaito music industry.

The history of Kwaito music is closely linked to the political history of South Africa. The rise of Kwaito music can be linked to the election of Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected president of South Africa. Prior to that period, there was only limited scope for black artists in the South African music business, as shown in the previous subchapters. Kwaito artists, like many other black artists, had great difficulty getting signed by record companies. This prompted Kwaito artists to form their own record companies such as Triple 9 Records. From the very beginning, Kwaito was characterized by pulsating music accompanied by political lyrics. One of the earliest Kwaito songs, "Kaffir", is one example, mocking white South Africans and using the derogatory term for blacks. Whether Kwaito is a force for social and cultural unity is a question that still remains unsolved. In a country where nearly half of the population is under 21, it is evident that youth culture plays a significant role in this respect. Nevertheless, the enormous success of Kwaito music has also led to controversy affecting recent Kwaito developments. Purists of Kwaito music claim that artists are beginning to exploit the idea inherent to Kwaito. They argue that the main interest of Kwaito artists is a house blend of Kwaito and neglects the political energy that was so important to the genre in its beginnings. Some artists focus on producing mainstream Kwaito in order to be broadcast regularly, which has led to fears that the uniqueness of Kwaito will be lost if this trend continues. On the other hand, critics argue that in recent songs Kwaito is related to sexual clichés. Another danger lies in Kwaito music that is used to paint a false picture of South Africa, as Kwaito did originally not intend to show a happy South African urbanity. So it is interesting to watch the influence of Kwaito on South African identity grow. Nevertheless, Kwaito continues a South African music tradition that is globally successful while remaining typically South African.



## 5 Niq Mhlongo's *Dog Eat Dog*

### 5.1 Language

The importance of language as an indicator of identity construction in South Africa is evident in *Dog Eat Dog*. Mhlongo uses native language in different situations. One reason for using native languages in the novel is to give local colour to the novel.

'Manj' ung' thukelani, pho? But why insult me like that?' asked the shocked commuter. While pointing at his right ear, the taxi queue marshal answered. 'Angith' awuzwa la emadhleben' wakho. Because you are deaf'. (DED, p. 72)

English in this case serves as a language for translation. The dialog itself is in Sesotho but because only some of the readers of this novel are able to understand Sesotho it is necessary to provide a translation.

Throughout the novel passages that are mainly in Sesotho occur several times (for example p. 89-92). Most of these passages reflect dialogues with taxi drivers or people directly involved with the transportation system. An interesting question that could not be answered during the research for this paper deals with the fact that this might be a hint towards the belief of many Bantu speakers that their native languages have a low status and are therefore not worth studying.

The different South African languages are also used to critically discuss the importance of these languages for South Africans.

Towards the end of the novel, Dingz says:

How does Zulu sound to God? I asked myself. Is it aggressive or romantic? I can hear every preacher saying that there is only one God we must direct our prayers to. But does he have good interpreters like the woman in the train interpreted the preacher's Sesotho? Does The Man understand tsotsitaal, or are we just wasting our time praying to Him in that language. I was convinced that God was white, and either English or Afrikaans, simply because it had taken Him so many years to get an interpreter to

translate exactly what the blacks and the poor wanted in their endless prayers. It took God almost a century to bring about the end of apartheid and its package of injustice and to usher in the long-awaited freedom. It also seemed to me that English and Afrikaans are God's languages. Mastering those two languages in our country had since become the only way to avoid the poverty of twilight zones like Soweto. (DED, p.182)

This passage shows clearly that certain South African languages – mainly Afrikaans and English - still have a negative connotation in present day South Africa. By arguing that it took God almost a century to end apartheid, it is also made clear that Afrikaans and English are the two languages that are predominantly linked to the apartheid regime, as both languages served as instruments for the government prior to 1994. Another point mentioned in this quote deals with language planning, when Dingz mentions that "Mastering those two languages in our country had become the only way to avoid poverty [...]" (DED, p.182). As already discussed in the chapter on South African languages, South Africa still faces problems such as poverty and unemployment and it is evident that language in general plays a key role in most of these problems. There is a majority amongst South Africans who believe that mastering English is one way to avoid poverty. English is associated with economic power, and historically with liberation, as opposed to Afrikaans which is still related to oppression. The question is whether these problems can be solved solely by mastering English or Afrikaans and underestimating the influence of Bantu languages. Arguing that Bantu languages have no economic value clearly demonstrates a division between English/Afrikaans on the one hand and Bantu languages on the other. Although English is the lingua franca worldwide, especially in terms of economic issues, multilingualism should be supported in South Africa and include all South African languages.

Niq Mhlongo describes this situation when Dingz is informed that he was not granted a bursary.

I thought I had supplied everything that the Bursary Committee needed: copies of my father's death certificate and my mother's pension slip, an affidavit sworn at our local police station giving the

names and ages of the nine other family members who depended on my mother's pension, as well as three other affidavits confirming all movable and immovable property that we owned. Although, unfortunately, my family did not own any immovable property as the house in Soweto that we had been living in since 1963 was leased to us by the apartheid government for a period of 99 years. [...] They should have told me plainly. 'We regret to inform you that you are black, stupid and poor; therefore we cannot waste our money on your thick Bantu skull'. (DED, p.8)

Dingz desperately wants to escape poverty and he is aware of the fact that only employment will provide the necessary basis for this. Towards the beginning of the novel he says: "There was nothing exciting for me about living the life of the unemployed and unemployable, whose days in the township fold without hope" (DED, p.9).

## 5.2 We and the other

*Dog Eat Dog* is a novel showing that ethnicity is still a decisive factor in South African identity construction. Collective identity in the novel is mainly built by exclusion rather than inclusion, based upon a shared feeling of a specific group - the "we" as opposed to "the others". But who belongs to which group?

Dingz Njomane lives in a black society and, from his point of view, he is part of the majority. Based on this standpoint, white people are regarded as not belonging to the same group and therefore as outsiders. The novel is generally written from the perspective of a member of black society and any problems that occur are described from within this group's shared sense of togetherness. That the group as such is not homogenous will be discussed later on.

In this context it is also interesting to take a closer look at Dingamanzi's view of racism. Throughout the novel Dingz constantly tries to play the race card. When a white woman tells him to help a black woman with the ATM, Dingz accuses her of being a racist.

'Oh boy! What is she still doing there?' said the blonde behind me to herself. [...] At long last the cursing blonde exploded. 'Excuse me. Do you mind helping her? She seems to be struggling,' she pleaded, pointing at the lady at the ATM. [...] With a sudden flash I turned and looked at the blonde. Anger was building up inside me. Why pick me when there are three people in front of me? I asked myself angrily. She could have even offered to help the lady herself if she was really serious about it. Why me? Is it because she is used to blacks running her errands every day? 'Is it because I'm black?' I asked. (DED, pp.34-35)

He argues why playing the race card is an option for him when he says

I could tell my words had had a strong impact. Yes, it is true that I was implying that she was a racist. It was the season of change when everyone was trying hard to disown apartheid, but to me the colour white was synonymous with the word and I didn't regret what I had said to the blonde. Anyway, I had been told that playing the race card is a good strategy for silencing those whites who still think they are more intelligent than black people. Even in parliament it was often used. When the white political parties questioned the black parties they would be reminded of their past atrocities even if their questions were legitimate. Then the white political parties would have to divert from their original questions and apologize for their past deeds. (DED, p.35)

In a way Dingz uses the exclusion of one part of the South African population to construct his identity as a black South African. Celebrating the first black democratic government after the end of apartheid is also an important issue that is covered in the novel, showing how Dingz feels as a black South African. Niq Mhlongo uses this event to show the cultural diversity of South Africa by using native South African languages, different cultural rites and songs.

A song in Sesotho exploded and ripped through the hot morning air as a crowd danced and sang their way along Rissik Street towards the Civic Centre.

Nelson Mandela!

Nelson Mandela!

Ahona otshwanang lesena (There is nobody like him)

[...]

It was a crowd of men, women and children carrying different banners and flags praising the Big Brothers. There were ANC, SACP and PAC flags. [...] From the West Side of Braamfontein came a group of Inkatha Freedom Party supporters. They were chanting political slogans demanding self-rule for Zululand. (DED, p.63)

There is a clear reference to the fact that *Dog Eat Dog* is written from a black perspective in chapter 27, when Dingz and his friends discuss the differences between black and white students at university.

'I think you're forgetting one thing, comrade,' I said, as I started pouring Redds cider into Nkanyi's glass, 'and that's the fact that an institution like this one is run like a corporation, where vice-chancellors are like CEOs, academics are like managers and students like me and you are the customers.' Themba handed me a beer and I poured it into my glass. 'Students from a foreign soil are seen as reliable customers because they pay hard cash towards their academic fees.' I took a sip of my beer. 'But we are bad news for the varsity because we end up owing money to it at the end of each academic year, and may even get financially excluded like Stomachache. That is why institutions like this one remain ivory towers to black South Africans. Babes nodded her approval. 'Absolutely. You're right. These guys from outside South Africa are sponsored by their governments while studying here. [...] 'Look at the so-called traditional black campuses.' [...] 'The reason they are threatening to close down is that they cater for the impoverished black masses; they cannot maintain themselves without financial help from the government'. (DED, p.220)

Niq Mhlongo refers to problems of (poor) South African students as opposed to students from abroad. South African students need financial aid from the government to be able to study. This implies costs and financial problems for the government. Students from abroad are sponsored by their own government and bring money to South Africa. This leads to a class society within the university system and ultimately leads to the "black campuses" Niq Mhlongo refers to in this passage. In this novel, a concept of collective identity is mainly built upon race. It manifests as a shared feeling among Dingz's group - the black "we" as opposed to the group of "the other" to which other ethnicities such as white South Africans belong. During South African apartheid, collective identity was solely based upon exclusion, where ethnicity served as the

only factor of identity creation, and Niq Mhlongo uses the same method to construct collective identity in his novel.

Dingz states that he has the same goals as other members of his group; he feels he belongs to this group, sharing the same troubles in the past and therefore sharing a similar sense of identity. He definitely shows signs of those dangers that lie within the concept of collective identity, namely an increasing feeling of invulnerability. His unquestioned belief in the fact that playing the race card will solve any upcoming problems enables him to ignore the consequences of his actions.

Nevertheless, it should be remembered that as a result of the apartheid regime, members of certain collectivities – in this case mostly those of the black collectivity – suffered from horrendous events which left their scars upon the group consciousness. Using race as a decisive force in this novel to construct collective identity might be regarded as an inverted form of racism but it always has to be considered as racism that developed from historical events throughout the last centuries. As Niq Mhlongo put it

I will be romanticizing our 12 years of democracy if I say that the end of apartheid in South Africa brought about the end of racism. We as South African people - blacks, whites, Indians and coloreds - have internalized it over the years. Racism therefore is not something that can be expected to change overnight in South Africa, although my generation is trying hard to forge a new identity.' (Mhlongo, Interview)

### 5.3 Music

Niq Mhlongo uses music in his novel in different situations. Towards the beginning of the novel, when Dingz receives the news that he will not be receiving a bursary, he listens to Peter Gabriel's *Don't Give Up*.

To suspend the pain and frustration that was sharpening inside me I inserted a Peter Gabriel cassette into my tape recorder, and the song *Don't Give Up* started bellowing from the speakers.

Don't give up

`Cos you have friends

Don't give up

You're not beaten yet

The lyrics reminded me of how my father used to encourage me when I ran out of faith. My old man would tell me that to keep trying would never kill a man. (DED, p.10)

This song was originally recorded as a duet by Peter Gabriel and Kate Bush for Gabriel's album *So* in 1986. Peter Gabriel performed it during the Nelson Mandela 70th Birthday Tribute Concert, held on June 11<sup>th</sup>, 1988 at Wembley Stadium in London, as well as during the broadcast event Nelson Mandela: An International Tribute for a Free South Africa, when Gabriel performed the song together with Tracy Chapman on April 16<sup>th</sup>, 1990. The Birthday Tribute Concert had the slogan "Freedom with 70" and during the Tribute for a Free South Africa, Mandela appeared live on stage in Wembley. Both concerts are closely related to Mandela and the end of apartheid in South Africa. Even if Mhlongo justifies the choice of this song by saying that it reminded him of the advice his father gave him, it must also be mentioned that *Don't Give Up* was regarded as a supporting title for the Resistance Movement in South Africa.

Music generally seems to play an important role for the main character Dingz, as music appears frequently throughout the novel in different situations. It offers a way to identify with a specific group and Niq Mhlongo uses his deep knowledge of music to provide a certain background for his character. Mhlongo is regarded as an important member of the Kwaito generation and he once said in an interview: "I got this name tag of being the 'voice of the kwaito generation' in writing. 'This sometimes is a bit harmful to my performance, because I always have to behave in a certain way, or write in a certain way that is associated with this generation. Namely, to keep up with the mores, music and slang from the township "(Mhlongo, Interview). Mhlongo indeed refers to Kwaito in the novel several times. First when Dingz and Theks are travelling by minibus.

Ear-splitting music was blasting from a pair of speakers right behind us. The bass was pounding my eardrums, but the driver and the two teenagers in front of us were nodding along to Joe Nina

Maria Podesta maan. Ding-Dong.

Yeah, yeah, yeah baby.

Ungishaya ding, ding ding ding-dong. (DED, p.77)

Joe Nina's recent music career is more linked to Mbaqanga than to Kwaito but it is interesting that Mhlongo mentions Nina in this place. Joe Nina is in fact closely related to Kwaito as he and Arthur Mafokate teamed up for a competition in 1991 where their track won first prize. Arthur Mafokate is regarded as one of the first Kwaito artists in South Africa and he has remained one of the most influential Kwaito musicians to date.

The next passage using Kwaito music can be found towards the middle of the novel, when Dingz and his friends sit outside his home:

My brother's hi-fi speakers were pumping out some fat kwaito beats outside on the lawn.

Hini lethi ncancanca lomshini wuyakhuluma. (What is saying ncancanca? This machine is talking.) [...] Themba sang along with Woza Africa's *iStokvel*. (DED, p.83)

These passages together with those mentioning Boom Shaka (p.100, p.198) give local colour to the novel. But even more important is the fact that Niq Mhlongo sees music as one possibility to construct a new identity in South Africa. He says

[t]he end of apartheid gave rise to this new, youthful and energetic generation that expresses itself through kwaito, Afro-pop and rap music as well as through poetry - hence I refer to it as the kwaito generation. This is the new national, hybrid generation that is united in a new kind of struggle: against Aids, poverty, xenophobia, unemployment, crime, etc. (Mhlongo, Interview)



## 6 Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*

*David's Story* deals with problems of memory, truth, betrayal and social issues that the New South Africa had to face in 1991. The title refers to David Dirkse, a coloured fighter of the Mhkonto we Sizwe – the military wing of the ANC. David tries to tell his story to a female narrator but he quickly realises that he in fact is incapable of doing so. The narrator tells David:

My task is to invent a structure... so that we don't lose you altogether. It is impossible, this writing of a story through someone else. (DS, p.199)

David seems to be unable to speak about the key point of this story – Dulcie, another figure of the MK with whom David has a long-term relationship. The narrator finds out that David is unwilling to include Dulcie in his story and she therefore argues

[...] Dulcie is surrounded by a mystique that I am determined to crush with facts: age, occupation, marital status... necessary details from which to patch together a character who can be inserted at suitable points into the story. (DS, p.78)

David, however, has great difficulty throughout the novel recounting the story of Dulcie and he ultimately fails to recount Dulcie's role in his story. Nevertheless, he describes Dulcie:

[...] I suppose, David confesses, that I don't see the need to flesh her out with detail, especially the kind invented by you. You see, she's not like anyone else; one could never, for instance, say that she's young or middle-aged. I think of her more as a kind of – and he has the decency to hesitate before such a preposterous idea- a kind of a scream somehow echoing through my story. (DS, p.134)

The narrator notes that "Dulcie has, after all, always hovered somewhere between fact and fiction" (DS, p.198). David's inability to tell the story of

Dulcie is closely linked with an inability to recount South Africa's bloody past during the apartheid era.

Wicomb uses trauma and the effects of trauma to paint a vivid picture of how collective trauma influences identity construction in South Africa. She links physical objects such as bodies or places with memories of the past. The importance of places and landscapes in *David's Story* is partly derived from the fact that these landscapes are linked to traumatic episodes and histories to which they have borne witness. Having stable connections to the region of one's origin is also important in the context of another concept, namely the concept of nationality. Nationalism is based on the idea of either belonging to a specific nation or being excluded from that citizenship. For Wicomb it is obvious that in a country like South Africa, where national or tribal identities have long been conceived in relation to landscape, displaced symptoms of trauma shift from violated bodies to damaged landscape in a movement that binds the body to the land. She argues that places and landscapes have always been a political issue in South Africa.

Yes, identity is not only about contemplation of being; it is bound up with the body and the ways in which we experience the ground beneath our feet, and rest our eyes on a familiar landscape. But then different groups in South Africa experience these differently... No doubt the new redistribution of land will also produce a new take on the topic. (Meyer, p.189-90)

Here Wicomb clearly tries to highlight the fact that different groups in South Africa have had different experiences of post-apartheid modernity. Sally's grandmother, Sarie Meintjies, on the renovation of Logan hotel:

[...] she cast an appreciative eye over her own modernization, the glazed windows and the lovely patterned lino that looks just like a photo of the Logan foyer. No, she smiles, the bad old days of dung floors are over. (DS, p.8)

Where a white South African might feel sorry for the loss of the hotel's interior due to its modernization, Sarie, who worked as a cleaner in this hotel until her retirement, compares it to her own newly renovated home.

Members of two different groups feel completely different about the same event.

## 6.1 Being a Griqua

*David's Story* also takes a closer look at the resistance movement itself, which becomes obvious when David goes to the Eastern Cape to find out about his coloured roots, and his trip arouses the suspicion of his comrades. It suggests the important role of the resistance struggle in identity formation, but at the same time identity formation is complicated by race. The main characters in the novel are coloured, a term deriving from the apartheid era, indicating a condition of being not black and not white. Being registered as "coloured" meant belonging to a group that was privileged above black South Africans but subordinate to the group members of the whites.

As already mentioned in the chapter on national identity, South Africa has been engaged in a debate about the meaning of a nation and nationality in general. One important subject dealt with in *David's Story* is the status of the Khoisan people and therefore also the status of the Griqua. The main plot of the novel focuses on specific Griqua issues such as the question of ethnic identity. David feels an urgent need to document his origin, having a sense of being rooted somewhere in the past in this "time of all-change" (DS, p.169). The narrator points this out in the beginning of the novel

David's story started at the Cape with Eva/Krotoa, the first Khoi woman in the Dutch castle, the only section I have left out. He eventually agreed to that but was adamant about including a piece on Saartje Baartman, the Hottentot Venus placed on display in Europe. One cannot write nowadays, he said, without a little monograph on Baartman; it would be like excluding history itself. (DS, p.1)

David does not want to feel uprooted and he tries to find traces of his origin:

Of the Old Ones, the Griqua ancestors who once roamed these plains and whose spirit the Chief said they would capture here as a new nation. The Old Ones had left the world as they had found it, their waste drawn back into the earth, their footprints buried. (DS, p.97)

By linking the past with the present, David tries to secure a future for his existence as a coloured South African. His interest in his roots and his ancestors arouses suspicion among his comrades and even David himself goes through conflicts concerning a reconstruction of his past.

The collective trauma of the Khoi and San people intertwines with David's story. Just as David is looking for information about his roots, Le Fleur himself also began to look for his ancestors. In one of these passages, the importance of land to the construction of collective identity is highly interesting. In Kokstad, Le Fleur is visited by a burning bush telling him:

These are your people who have lost their land, who have become tenants on their own Griqua farms. It is you who must restore to them their dignity. (DS, p. 41)

Le Fleur then proclaims his resolution:

Griqualand for the Griquas and the Natives. This is our land. We will wipe out the stain of colouredness and gather together under the Griqua flag those who have been given a dishonourable name (DS, p.42).

In the afterword, Driver mentions that David needs a recuperated rather than an ethnic Le Fleur, "uncorrupted by racism...as a model to live by, and as a model for present-day Griqua and other" (DS, p.225). David hopes to restore a more open way of thinking about identity, land and nation.

## 6.2 Collective trauma

Given that *David's Story* deals with the influence of trauma on collective identities, it is important to take a closer look at the trauma of a collective as well as cultural trauma.

Collective trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memory forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

Through symbols of trauma, Wicomb combines David, Dulcie and Sally in the present to Andrew and Rachel Le Fleur and Sara Baartman in the past. In so doing, Wicomb points out that the historical trauma from the past influences the lives of those in the present. Nevertheless, it is interesting to include Wicomb's standpoint in this discussion. She mentions that *David's Story* is "as much concerned with the ways in which coloureds or Griquas have been represented as it is with self-representation, with absurd self-definition as witnessed, for instance, in the epithet of 'pure Griqua'. Perhaps the novel also explains reasons for the retreat into colouredness" (Wicomb, Interview).

Wicomb argues furthermore that the novel is not dealing mainly with collective trauma such as miscegenation but with betrayal and a Resistance Movement no longer requiring coloured women (cf. Wicomb, Interview).

Nevertheless it has to be mentioned that *David's Story* points out the importance of collective trauma on memory. The novel therefore also focuses on memory and national identity as both are closely linked. Wicomb mentions that South African identity is built by icons, by culture and tradition, but South African identity is no longer solely characterized by racial identity. She emphasizes the important role of a search for one's ancestors in order to define one's identity.

Driver finally points out in the afterword that the novel's interest in Griqua history makes it rather unusual in South African literature. The language of the Griqua people is not part of the Bantu language group and members of the Griquas generally do not identify with the far more numerous Bantu-speaking indigenous peoples of South Africa. Any discussion about Griqua identity is still politically charged in South Africa as it involves competing definitions of Griqua identity and different Griqua political parties.

Generally speaking, it has to be said that Wicomb sees the only way to a shared collective identity through digging up past events and reconstructing even the most painful events in the past. Digging up the past allows to heal collective traumas that were experienced by members of different groups.

## **7 Mandla Langa's *The Memory of Stones***

Mandla Langa's novel *The Memory of Stones* provides a huge cast of characters spanning nearly two decades. The central story takes place in Ngoza in 1996. Ngoza is a region in KwaZulu-Natal whose inhabitants were removed decades ago by the apartheid regime. Natal became notorious between 1990 and 1994, when massacres were committed by Zulus against Zulus, which is discussed in the novel itself. When the homeland of KwaZulu was re-incorporated into the Natal province after the end of apartheid in 1994, the province of Natal which had existed between 1910 and 1994 was renamed KwaZulu-Natal. The province is home to the Zulu monarchy, and the majority population and language of the province is Zulu. It is also the only province in South Africa which includes the name of its dominant ethnic group in its name.

## 7.1 Importance of land as a means of identity construction

*The Memory of Stones* is a text that has to be regarded as a regional text because it is set in Mandla Langa's region of origin. Filled with detailed descriptions of different places, it is a text showing the importance of land as a means of identity construction in South Africa. Being forced to leave the ancestral grounds is a topic as important as the recovery of ancestral land – it serves as the theme and as the subject matter of the novel. Right at the beginning of the novel, the people of Ngoza are forced to leave their ancestral land. This dispossession took place in 1975, when the apartheid regime decided to build a military base in KwaZulu-Natal and ejected the people from their homes. Baba Joshua, the leader of the Ngoza people, gathers them in a cave and speaks the following words:

'It hurts me to my heart to see you like this,' he begins, 'underground, like rats, homeless. The whole thing, though, is no longer in our hands, and we can lose a lot of time wallowing in self-pity.' He stops and gazes at the farther recesses of the cave, as if searching for a source of strength in the shadows. 'The most important thing, however, is how we shape our future. How we make it liveable for our children, our children's children and ourselves. Because the white man has come and touched all the things we hold sacred and dear and has taken away our dream. In doing so, he is building a future for himself and his children and – he hopes – for his children's children. But the future cannot be built on lies. A bird that builds on the nest of others must be endlessly ready to defend itself. This is the fate that the white man has called upon himself and his children's children. Whether or not he has come to terms with reaping this whirlwind is not our concern. Our concern is the future, which is buried in the ruins of our past, in the dwellings razed to the ground and in how faithfully we preserved the memory of the time when we were human beings. We shall move and seek work and carry out orders on the terms set by those in power. We shall be cold and hungry and bereft of all the support which has nurtured us through ages. But we shall return to this land which was given to us by our forebears. What matters, then, is how we conserve our energy to ensure that we do return'. (MoS, p.13)

This quote is one of the most important quotes in the novel and one which shows how closely land occupation is linked to a sense of identity, even human worth, in a community. Closely linked to this is the idea that

people live in places and particular spaces they are emotionally attached to. In KwaZulu-Natal people were forced to leave the places they were attached to, which led to the difficult situation whereby people were completely uprooted. Returning to such places of origin is always associated with returning to memory. But memory sometimes also allows space and places to appear as a nostalgic construct. A loss of land in South Africa not only means being uprooted but also means losing contact with one's forefathers, which brings great difficulties as it is important to be bound to the land of ancestors in all South African religions.

## 7.2 Black-on-black violence/dirtying the nest

Mandla Langa deals in his novel with the difficult issue of black-on-black violence, betrayal within this group as well as predatory behaviour. Although hardly ever mentioned in any post-Apartheid novel, this issue complicates the situation for blacks in South Africa as they have to deal not only with racism towards blacks and whites but also with problems within their ethnic group. Nevertheless, Mandla Langa's attempt at making these problems central in his novel is a rather sensitive issue. He makes no attempt to romanticize the important work of the ANC, nor does he herald members of the ANC as heroes. For Mandla Langa, it is obvious that the former enemies are gone and it is therefore important to build a new identity by creating a new history through coming to terms with the past, even if this coming to terms has to be done by dirtying one's nest.

Mandla Langa states in the acknowledgements why it was so important for him to write this novel: "He [Langa's brother] was shot dead in May 1984. [...] Those who had labelled him an enemy agent were themselves [...] handmaidens of the Apartheid State" (MoS, V).

The novel centres on the most important passage, where Mpanza confesses to Jonah's sister Zodwa that he was the assassin of Jonah.



We left our homes and went into these kingdoms where we tasted what it meant to be despised. Coming out of a country where to look like us was akin to being cursed, we found a home in the political struggle, where we were made aware of our humanity. We then learnt how to confront all those who had denied us this quality and in looking at the enemy, we were sometimes shocked to see how much he looked like us. Because, if you study the configurations of this country, and its process towards self discovery, you'll realize that, without the enemy within, the enemy outside would never have managed to penetrate our armour. Political theory taught us what was paraphrased by James Baldwin, that the mistake we make is thinking that, since all our brothers are black, then all blacks are our brothers. If you look at the number of casualties of the struggle, through the ages, an alarming percentage is black. White people who died in the struggle are almost negligible compared to the nightly vigils and burials and wailing attending the lives of black folks. Why? Because, however elegantly we put this obscuring political language, to be black and to betray was the greatest, most unforgivable sin in our eyes. It was in this spirit that we justified within ourselves why Jonah had to die. With him, so we thought, it was even more unacceptable that he had been a stalwart of our movement, a cadre of impeccable credentials. We accepted the order from Rosie, a supreme irony, since Rosie took his orders from past-masters of intrigue in Pretoria. Once the order had been given we, the soldiers, had to execute it. [...] All of us, then, were marked for death. I wanted to die when the truth finally came out. Through all these years of wandering, of pretending to live, I have been trying to atone for Jonah's death [...]. (MoS, p.359-360)

This passage is again a very important passage in the novel, showing the loneliness and sadness of Mpanza, who committed the ordered assassination of Jonah, which shows parallels with the assassination of Langa's brother Ben. Mpanza says that "the mistake we make is thinking that, since all our brothers are black, then all blacks are our brothers" (MoS, p.359) and indicates one of the greatest problems of identity construction in post-apartheid South Africa. Identity was constructed according to strict ethnic guidelines during apartheid, but the identity of an ethnic group itself is highly inhomogeneous. Mpanza can be regarded as a symbol for the danger of group thinking and collective identity construction. His unquestioned belief in the morality of the group led him to assassinate his comrade and friend. He was aware of the consequences of his actions, but the fact that the group he belonged to

was using him did not occur to him and was simply unthinkable. His identity is shattered by the fact that he was betrayed and used by one of his own group, those persons whom he felt close to. He is insecure as he no longer knows to which collectivity he belongs.

Mandla Langa's novel also paints a vivid picture of the situation in KwaZulu-Natal in the years immediately before and after Mandela's release. It indicates that blacks who were ordered by the white secret police to commit these crimes were responsible for some of these massacres. During this time, the underground fights were still going on and the secret police was doing its best to prove that blacks were incapable of governing themselves. During the time of transition, a great number of massacres took place, including those ordered by warlords who tried to destabilize the country in cooperation with the white police. South Africa was in danger of heading the same way as Zimbabwe.

The novel mentions these events:

When the Seven Day War between the comrades of the United Democratic Front and the warriors – *amabutho* – of Inkatha. Although there was evidence of burning, which was supported by graphic letters and images on the walls, which denounced leaders and elevated tyrants, KwaMagwaza seemed intact, mainly because it had already been so looted from within that any violence against it could be seen as a gratuitous act of malice. [...] The killing of the United Democratic Front's young leader halts the peace process dead in its tracks. (MoS, p.210-211)

The situation becomes even worse when MaNdlela recognizes that this kind of community devastation was the reason why she fled. She describes the situation:

There was a hush as the women walked on [...] The smell of dead and dying grassland and sterile maize fields was taken over by a strong, heady sickly-sweet odour of blood. While the women gagged, perhaps imagining that they were being assailed by a strange case of collective nosebleed, their eyes rested on the tangled mass of ruined flesh. [...] The women's goats hacked with edge instruments fashioned for bringing about sudden death, lay in destroyed heaps on the ground on which their blood had flowed [...] MaNdlela was aware of a whistling in her head, a circumstance that told her in eloquent and unmistakable terms that horror was

upon her. In the lands of the warlords in the Natal Midlands, where slaying had become so commonplace that in the mortuary the drunk police had the gall to refer to dead women as cows, she had dedicated her life to saving the lives of children. [...] In that township named KwaMagwaza – a place of stabbing – where men violated women and forced the bruised eyes of husbands and children to watch, violence took the form of more dead bodies lying in glades, mutilated in the pursuit of vital organs, ingredients that guaranteed the potency of *muthi* from the Natal Midlands. (MoS, p.206-208)

Terrorists threaten the inhabitants of this area and those living there are aware of this constant threat: "It begins like that, with livestock. The next step, it will be us" (MoS, p.213).

Mandla Langa states clearly that black-on-black violence is one of the issues that must be dealt with in order to be able to construct a new form of collective identity.

### 7.3 Exile/collaborators

Mandla Langa also focuses in his novel on apartheid humiliation, oppression, exile and anti-apartheid work in Europe. He deals with the situation of blacks in recent South Africa, with failed marriages and also with the corruption of the liberation ideal and crime syndicates. His way of describing how violence destroys communities is brutal but realistic.

Those who had lived high on the hog during apartheid years now lorded it over those who had endangered their own lives and careers. The latter had hoped that the new dream would accommodate all the people, all the faces [...] and their countless generations. (MoS, p.182)

Mpanza describes his difficulties returning to a normal life. After threatening a shebeen proprietor because Mpanza recognizes in him a known collaborator who now supports the government, Mpanza is told to leave Johannesburg and move to KwaZulu-Natal.

Comrades he had known had become career politicians; they had their eye on the elections. Where idealism had once shone in their eyes now gleamed a single-minded resolve to survive on terms which had nothing to do with the revolution. [...] the problems of homelessness and unemployment, the poverty and its concomitant of violence were codified in the secret language of statistics. [...] Mpanza had the feeling that the memory of the bush was beginning to become a source of national embarrassment. Former enemies were being courted left, right and centre and there was a collective impulse to refrain from rocking the boat. (MoS, p.48)

When Mpanza talks to Reuben, Reuben says:

'*Mshana*,' he went on, 'this is the new South Africa, all right, For many people, it's also new money. The struggle is over, no-one's going to give you a ticky *bhansela*, true's the living God'. (MoS, p.179)

It was clear for Mpanza in former times that he was united with his comrades in a fight against oppression and Apartheid. But he discovers that after the end of Apartheid little has changed, except that his former comrades are trying to cut pieces from the juicier parts of the national cake.

#### 7.4 Myth and identity construction

Myths are used in *Memory of Stones* to show the importance of religion to the people of Ngoza. The Ngoza express their sense of identity and their reason for being through these stories. Baba Joshua remembers when they were first removed:

The trucks. The police prodding people with *donkiepiele*, the billy clubs. The women weeping silently and the children wailing. The livestock carted off to white farms, the anger and the impotence. The long years of exile where people waited to tend to ancestral graves. (MoS, p.31-32)

But myths are also used to provide security in difficult times, in times of struggle, by recounting old rites and rituals:

Many of the people who had returned to Ngoza had lost a family member, during the years of wandering among strangers. People realized, with a sense of alarm, that Joshua's death was the first since their return, and would offer them a possibility of conducting a series of traditional rites that would ensure a safe passage of his spirit. They had been forced to bury their dead in alien lands, where the rituals of transcendence had been different. In the cemeteries of the township, where every weekend was a time to bury the dead, funerals took place like a conveyor belt in a rubber factory. Those wishing to pay their respects and commune with the souls of the departed could only do so on week-days after work. That was also dangerous, since cemeteries were haunts of bandits and body snatchers that crafted *muthi* out of parts of the cadaver. It was too high a price to pay for a simple sacramental act. (MoS, p.218)

The final test for Zodwa as new leader of her father's people is another overlap of myth and reality. When she talks to Dingane, the dead Zulu king explains to her:

'Shaka', Dingane said, 'did a lot of good, not so much for the Zulu kingdom as for introducing a new way of fighting, which earned us our self-respect [...] But it all served to shape an African identity.' 'But', she asked, thinking about Johnny M, 'should the shaping of the African identity be achieved at such a cost?' 'All change is usually preceded', Dingane said, 'by a cataclysm. Simply put, that means bloodshed'. (MoS, p.349)

This passage shows clearly that Zodwa knows she must help her father's people to find a new identity. The question as to whether this has to be achieved at such cost is one that seems important to identity construction. It is a process that will take time in South Africa, as the effects of the apartheid era are still omnipresent, but it is an ongoing process. The cost of these new identities is high in each respect, ranging from violence, poverty to HIV/AIDS.

When Zodwa finally accepts her role as new leader of her father's people, she recounts the experiences, "feeling the presence of more reassuring ghosts behind her. Her father and Horwitz" (MoS, p.354). In her final speech, Zodwa reveals her idea of a collective identity for her people:

She swallowed something which must have tasted of bile. 'There is nothing here, people are poor,' she went on, 'but in this poverty I have come across demonstrations of great generosity. As Africans, especially now that we have our own government, we have to be generous without being foolish. We have to strive for peace and democracy'. (MoS, p.354)

Mandla Langa's novel shows how important it is to accept myths and rites to create a collective identity, but at the same time accept that it is not possible to build a collective identity without coming to terms with one's past. Not only do individuals have to face these events, but collectivities also have to work on their past and build a new identity for their members by accepting what happened. This as well as myths both help in building a collective memory and therefore help to construct collective identities through shared memories. Collective memories as well as ancient myths, rites and traditions play an enormous role in creating collective identities, as Baba Joshua puts it: "the most important thing, however, is how we shape our future [...] which is buried in the ruins of our past [...] and in how faithfully we preserve memory [...]" (MoS, p.13).

## **8 Lisa Fugard's *Skinner's Drift***

*Skinner's Drift* is a novel that tells the story of Eva van Rensburg, who returns home to visit her father Martin van Rensburg in South Africa.

With the end of apartheid, Jan Smuts International airport had become Johannesburg airport. The Witwatersrand, the area encompassing Johannesburg, Randfontein and a few other towns, and which was named after a cascade of white water that the early settlers had seen, was now part of Gauteng – Eva had no idea what Gauteng meant. The conservative Transvaal, province of stoic farmers, sofa-sized rugby players and insatiable hunters, had been divided into the Northern Province and Mpumalanga. A new country, and she sensed it the minute she passed through customs. (SD, p.5)

Eva feels insecure, "uncertain of herself" (SD, p.5) in this new country, although she tried to hide that she was South African when she left in 1987. Several changes took place during her absence, including the new version of the South African anthem:

The wheels thudded on to the runway and the girls launched into 'Nkosi Sikelel'i Afrika'. Other passengers seated in her section joined in, the white South Africans humming because the Xhosa words of their new anthem still eluded them, the blacks giving full voice. A smiling American family seated in the bulkhead stood up to watch, the father filming it all with video camera [...] What did they think? That this was an African custom to launch into song whenever a plane touched down, a way of thanking the great spirits in the sky for bringing them safely back to earth? (SD, p3.)

The new anthem symbolises South Africa's attempt to include all different identities within one shared and collective South African identity.

Nevertheless, this country that desperately wants to be seen as united has many problems such as poverty, violence, unemployment and ethnic difficulties that complicate its unity. As Desmond Tutu put it:

The fact of the matter is we still depressingly do not respect one another. I have often said black consciousness did not finish the work it set out to do. [...] What has happened to us? It seems as if we have perverted our freedom, our rights into licence, into being irresponsible. Rights go hand in hand with responsibility, with dignity, with respect for oneself and for the other. Hey, we have a wonderful country. We have produced outstanding people. The best memorial [...] would be a South Africa where everyone respects themselves, has a positive self image filled with proper self-esteem and holds others in high regard. (Tutu, p.2-4)

This speech held during a Steve Biko Memorial Lecture clearly shows that identity construction in South Africa is still ongoing.

## 8.1 Importance of land/soil

One of the main themes in *Skinner's Drift* deals with the importance of land for the construction of identity. With the Group Areas Act of 1950, the apartheid regime had the power to forcibly remove people from areas not designated for them. During the apartheid era white farmers could count on receiving privileges even in difficult times such as droughts. White farmers were granted loans from the government as well as crop subsidies, whereas black farmers were denied government help.

There had been problems with the farm during the drought, bore holes running low, the loss of the tomato crop, the frost in the winter. They were sinking deeper and deeper into debt. And, yes, there was a point when he thought they might have to leave, but then he learned that the SADF would give him a loan, a big loan if they stayed on, if they managed the farm according to Defence Department guidelines. He'd applied for the loan and it had come through the previous month, just in time for them to fence the house. As he paced the lounge and travelled deep into his story, Martin appeared transformed, taller, his face fashioned out of burnished wood, his eyes bright as stars. I love this country, he stammered, and now they want me, they want us, we are their first line of defence. (SD, p.127-128)

Defending the borders for the government seems to be a justification for not leaving the farm, although Lorraine asks Martin to leave:

'I want to leave.' He stood up as if he hadn't heard her, and walked to the liquor cabinet. 'I want to leave Skinner's Drift. This part of the world doesn't want us any more. Drought and now this danger –' 'We c-can't.' Which she'd expected. A fight, an argument. 'Martin. There's life beyond this farm in the Eastern Cape. We'll sell Skinner's Drift, get what we can for it –' 'We c-c-can't,' he repeated, and he opened a new bottle of Fish Eagle. (SD, p.127)

This passage is important as it refers to the role Skinner's Drift plays according to the land reform. The idea of the land reform is based on 3 main components: restitution for those who had lost land rights as a result of the racially discriminatory policies in the past, redistribution of land to the poor and landless or land hungry black people and tenure



security for black people living on commercial farms. The fact that not much effort was put into land reform resulted in the fact that farm labour remained highly flexible and insecure, land was still owned by whites, farm murders continued and farmers as well as workers fled to the cities.

These fears are encountered at Skinner's Drift when Eva says:

Then her heart was once again straining and knocking at her ribcage. It could happen. Farmers were still being killed by disgruntled workers high on liquor and dagga, by those who believed that the land belonged to them. Why not a soldier seeking revenge for a dead child? Mpho was outraged. (SD, p.285)

The bond with soil and nature becomes evident in several passages in the novel, such as on page 37:

Martin had slept three hours later than usual. Still, he dressed slowly, staring out of the bedroom window which offered the best view of his land. The double-storey house, unusual for the Limpopo valley with its squat hunkered down farmhouses, sat on the edge of a gentle rise. Beyond the garden of roses and fruit trees and fragrant vines, all kept well watered despite the drought, the land dipped until it reached the border fence. (SD, p.37)

How important Skinner's Drift is for Martin becomes obvious when Lorraine writes her first entry in the diary:

We have a home! Not a farm that we are managing but our very own. Skinner's Drift! It is roughly three thousand hectares with the most extraordinary red sandstone rock formations marking the eastern border. [...] Martin carried Eva on his shoulders and I've never seen him so happy. (SD, p.20)

Martin feels linked to the land and is in absolute despair as drought destroys his farm, as Johanna describes the situation:

Johanna's lips quivered as she removed the hanky that she kept tucked between her breasts and dabbed her eyes and thanked God that her niece was home. She prayed for Martin's recovery and stared at the ceiling as if to check that her words had taken flight. Eva promptly drained her sherry glass. Johanna did the same, eyes

flitting to the ceiling once more as she cried, 'And please forgive me for not making him leave the farm!' 'I'm sure you did everything you could,' Eva soothed. 'No, I went to the farm a few weeks ago. I hadn't seen him in months [...] It was terrible! I got there in the middle of the day and found him sleeping on the sofa with all curtains closed. I made us some tea and when he stepped outside I saw that he hadn't shaved in days and – forgive me for saying this [...] he smelled bad, like he wasn't washing himself. I wanted to cry when I looked at his feet, all swollen and red'. (SD, p.17)

Lorraine, on the other hand, doesn't feel such tight bonds with the land. She is the one who thinks about giving up Skinner's Drift and starting a new life somewhere in the city. Towards the beginning of the novel it is mentioned that Lorraine was not buried, resting in the earth as would have been usual. She insisted on being cremated, which could be regarded as an act of rebellion against Martin's close relation to the soil. For Martin, giving up Skinner's Drift would have meant giving up parts of his identity and that was not an option for him at any stage.

## 8.2 Racism as a means of identity construction

Throughout the novel, racism serves as means of identity construction. It shows clearly that during the apartheid era, identity was mainly constructed through exclusion and according to ethnical issues. Martin does not trust the workers at Skinner's Drift:

The rains of 1981 and 1982 had been scant, last year's even more pitiful, and since then Martin had not trusted his water in the hands of Ezekiel and Wellington. He did it all himself, flicking the switches at the pump house, adjusting the movement of the centre pivot irrigator system [...] After several stammered lectures about how precious the water was and the hell they would have to pay if they wasted a drop – *make sure I never find a leak, anywhere!* – an uneasy ritual had developed amongst the three men. (SD, p.40)

He does not allow any of his men to ride his horse and shows a lack of respect towards black people all the time. Identities are constructed first and foremost based on race issues. When Lefu recounts the story of finding a grave he says:

But then the rain came, a grave was washed away, a grave that I had not dug. I found a body and I knew it was one of our people. [...] White people are not thrown away like that. A white child goes missing and everyone is searching. (SD, p.266)

When Lorraine dies and Jannie comes to the stable to inform the workers that Martin will not be at the farm that day, the workers ask if they are allowed to join the funeral. Jannie answers:

'Don't worry, [...] I'll ask someone to give you a lift.' [...] Nkele washed the white shirt that Mpho had worn to church on Sunday. She ironed Lefu's suit and the one black dress that she owned, and early on Tuesday morning the family dressed for Lorraine's funeral. Lefu polished his star of Zion and pinned it to his chest, as did Nkele. Then they both took them off. They weren't going to their church, they were going to the white man's church. Maybe they wouldn't even be allowed in, maybe they would wait on the grass outside. It didn't matter, just as long as they were there. [...] Nkele spoke bitterly. 'Mpho, this is the day when I hate them especially. Yes, I wanted to go to Mrs van Rensburg's funeral. But there are other ways of paying respect. For your grandfather though, it is different. He is a man on this farm. [...] Get out of those clothes. They aren't coming'. (SD, 256-258)

Although things had changed after the end of apartheid, Eva has a strong feeling of not belonging to this place any longer. Even her aunt Johanna "with her complaints and racial blunders had entered this new South Africa, she could talk about Mandela and Mbeki". (SD, p.271) For Eva, South Africa only offers a past she is not willing to include in her present state of being, which might be regarded as one reason why she no longer feels she belongs to this place. She has been disconnected from her land and therefore had to construct her own identity, which is different from those identities of other South Africans.

## 9 Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life*

Nadine Gordimer's novel is a work that focuses on the future of South Africa as a nation for all South Africans regardless of race, gender, or other decisive issues. It shows a completely different picture of the behaviour of people belonging to different ethnicities.

### 9.1 Race

Towards the beginning of the novel, Adrian and Lyndsay decide that they have to talk to their housekeeper Primrose, as they do not know for sure how dangerous it might be for her to stay in the same house as their son, who has just received cancer therapy.

They must speak to Primrose: the decision to send her away must not be seen as a banishment from her place in their lives but come about with her full understanding and acceptance as their duty to her safety. [...] The tall heavy woman [...], who had never before been called into the living room to sit down and talk with her employers, nevertheless gave them the uninhibited attention their good relations, her considerate working conditions and excellent pay she found naturally called for. There was the proposal, she would go to her home in the new government housing scheme [...] Adrian reassured her; she would have her full wages [...] –How can you manage? - How can you manage meant: I don't go [...] Perhaps the woman had survived so much in her life that she couldn't really believe in the danger [...]. (GaL, pp. 19-20)

This dialogue shows a different form of relationship than any other novel so far. Primrose is a black housekeeper working for Adrian and Lyndsay Bannerman, but their relationship seems to be a rather friendly one, irrespective of skin colour. Primrose stays deliberately, although she would be paid full wages without working, but her absolute loyalty means

she is willing to take the risk of possible physical damage. The Bannermans, on the other hand, treat Primrose with much care and love, feeling responsible for her, knowing that she has been through difficult times. Primrose is fully involved in the family structure, which is evident when she speaks with Paul about his relationship with his son Nickie. Although it is a professional relationship Primrose is engaged in, this relationship is characterised by respect and friendship.

Another relationship which traverses the colour barrier is Paul's friendship with Thapelo. Both are working together and Thapelo does not hesitate to visit Paul during his illness:

"So when can I come to your place." [...] "Why should you risk anything at all, I'm my own experimental pebble-bed nuclear reactor." "I'll turn up in the afternoon and bring you some stuff to work over. We need you." [...] When he arrives he has to be backed away from as he throws out his arms for the African shoulder-hug that's come out of the expression of freedom fought for together among black men and has done away with the inhibition of whites that God-fearing heterosexual males don't embrace. (Thapelo at seventeen was in a Mhkonto we Sizwe cadre, another kind of combat in the bush). How was it these two had no fear; too easy to attribute this sentimentally, as white man descended from a history posited on the tenet that blacks were worse, to evidence that both were blacks, and better. Willing to take risks, in contact with fellow humans. More likely, for this ex-Freedom Fighter colleague in scientific research as for the uneducated woman, he's been exposed and accustomed to many threats in childhood in the quarantine of segregation, before those of war. (GaL, pp.59-61)

Again the relationship between these two men indicates a slow construction of new collective identities that do not follow the old strict rules of skin colour but allow new friendships to develop.

Another interesting aspect of identity construction and use of language is the fact that Thapelo speaks several different languages and uses them for his business career.

These words in the slang of his mother tongues (he speaks at least four or five) aren't italicised in Thapelo's talk, they belong in English just as his natural use of scientific terms and jargon of his profession does. Or maybe they're part of the identification with his boyhood street life of blacks he asserts as essential to who and what he is. It's not what he's emancipated from: it's what he hasn't, won't leave behind. (GaL, p. 83)

Even Paul's son Nickie learns one of the Bantu languages from Primrose's cousin. He learns to speak Setswana and Paul supports this as he might be aware of the fact that in a new South Africa, every spoken language will be useful for young people. He sees this as a chance for a better future for his son, when belonging to the white class will no longer be the sole reason for being promoted to important jobs.

The boy loved the woman, a cousin supplied by Primrose, and, without being aware of it, was learning to speak Setswana with her; a new generation that might produce white multilinguists [...]. The father grinned with every pleasure, each time, to hear the little boy's few words. (GaL, p. 125)

Affirmative action is another point that is mentioned in the novel and it is important to keep in mind the idea behind it. Nelson Mandela's plan was that black South Africa would need to constitute 69% of the workforce at all levels from the top down. Designed to prevent discrimination, affirmative action is regarded as a very real threat to many whites in South Africa: experienced, well-qualified teachers, clerks, executives, have to make way for affirmative action appointees. Young white boys and girls are told not to apply for bursaries or jobs because of their skin colour, which – at least partly – leads to a system of reversed apartheid in South Africa. Discussing the plans of an Australian company which offers a deal to a 51% black-owned company, Thapelo says:

Now the Australians have made a deal with a fifty-one percent black-owned company. The blacks are to have a fifteen percent share in the dunes mining project. [...] No-one can disagree with

the necessity for blacks to enter the development economy at a major level. (GaL, p. 183)

When the tribal Chiefs are offered 10 million Dollars for cooperating in the mining deal, Thapelo says:

“How does that look for protest [...] We don't want rural blacks to have a share in the growth of economic power?” “We have to live with it, Bra. Race sensitivity's out, my man, for this thing. Those big money boys know how to operate rings around us”. (GaL, p. 145)

*Get a Life* offers new ideas for constructing collective identities not solely through exclusion from different ethnic origins and shows that it is possible to work and develop friendships regardless of colour, where identities are built on different issues such as the fact that, independent of skin colour, all South Africans are in the same boat.

## 9.2 Ecology

Paul and Thapelo are working as ecologists trying to protect South Africa's environment. The importance of awareness for the consequences of several projects on nature unites the people in South Africa. Paul and Thapelo discuss the consequences of one project:

The Okavango is an inland delta in Botswana, the country of desert and swamp landlocked in the middle of the breadth of South West, South and South East Africa. That's it on the maps; nature doesn't acknowledge frontiers. Neither can ecology. The consequences of what happens to that inland delta affect the region. How far? (GaL, p.90)

South Africa faces toll roads, mines are built and roads are planned over the farmland of the Amadiba. But what is made clear right from the beginning is the fact that Paul and Thapelo are aware of a need for

projects while also understanding that any project will impact nature across any borders. It is no longer a national problem, but becomes a problem for an entire region.

There is [...] a consortium lobbying the government with assurance of exceptional tourist potential, economic uplift of the surrounding region (the full litany), for such a scheme to build an hotel, casino, yacht marina as part of the vast drainage plan the government envisages. Development Disaster. (GaL, p.57)

Companies investing huge sums in order to be allowed to build their hotel or casino at the most beautiful places, irrespective of the long-term consequences to nature, are a real threat to South Africa. This is exacerbated by the fact that local workers are paid little and the work they are offered is only short term. There is a certain fear in South Africa that this might lead to a new form of colonialism.

In the novel, nature is also described as a metaphor for technology and civilization:

For the first few moments there, eyelids alternately squeezing and lifting wide at the immersion in the benign illumination, of the sun, birds who ring out like mobile phones. But there is no connection to be made between wild creatures [...] and the summons of technology. Telephone ring. In the bush [...] the creatures ignore you. Devices that regulate your being have nothing to do with theirs - unless they are hunted, expelled from their places in the universe [...] - by logging, burning off, urban, industrial and rural pollution. [...]. (GaL, p.49)

As well as all the difficulties and dangers of ongoing projects in South Africa, an ecological standpoint might be a new way of looking at identity construction. It is no longer a pure black and white issue, but nature brings people of different ethnic origins together in one group, fighting for the same ideas, namely the protection of South Africa's nature.

Maybe we see disaster and don't, can't live long enough (that is, through centuries) to see the survival solution Matter with infinite innovation has found, finds, will find, to renew its principle – life: in new forms, what we think is gone forever. In millennia, what does it count that the white rhino becomes extinct [...], but we have the ingenuity of the evolved design of the giraffe [...]. (GaL, p.94)



As nature evolves, South Africa evolves and Nadine Gordimer points out that as long as nature can regulate itself if enough time passes, a united South Africa might not be absolutely impossible to achieve. The novel clearly states that some changes are negative, but some are positive as well and it leads to the idea that all South Africans are in the same boat and the threat of the destruction of nature is one reason why South Africans need to unite, irrespective of colour. Nadine Gordimer's novel *Get a Life* provides new ideas on how collective identities might be constructed in South Africa.

## **10 Different means of South African identity construction**

Several issues are of central importance to the creation of collective identity in South Africa.

### 10.1 Music

South African music has from the earliest beginnings to the present day been created by intermingling local styles with forms imported from foreign countries. Therefore, music plays an important role in South African identity construction. It can either be used to separate or to create a feeling of togetherness among members of different groups. Interestingly, no evidence could be found in any of the given novels supporting the idea that music may not only separate but also unite. Niq Mhlongo uses music in his novel in different situations, as already mentioned. He refers to Kwaito music to indicate that members of different groups will never have the same understanding of current problems in South Africa. Music generally seems to play an important role

for the main character Dingz, as music appears frequently throughout the novel in different situations. It offers a way to identify with a specific group and Niq Mhlongo uses his deep knowledge of music to provide a certain background for his character. Mhlongo specifically refers to Kwaito in the novel several times. However, even more important is the fact that Niq Mhlongo sees Kwaito as one way to construct a new identity in South Africa.

The important role of Kwaito music for young South Africans, who are trying to work on a new collective identity, should not be underestimated. Kwaito is definitely not limited to music; it expresses a new way of life in South Africa, reflecting life mainly in townships. Kwaito music is closely linked to the success of black artists in South Africa, which was made possible by the first democratic elections. It plays an important role in the history of South African identity construction. Although the question as to whether Kwaito should be seen as a force for social and cultural unity remains unsolved, Niq Mhlongo significantly points out the importance of youth culture for identity construction in general and also specifically in South Africa, where nearly half of the population is under 21. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Mhlongo's main character, Dingz, uses references to Kwaito music in order to create a feeling of belonging to an exclusive group. He does not refer to music to include the culture of other groups such as whites or coloureds, but uses any reference to Kwaito music to make a clear separation from any other ethnic group in South Africa.

Mandla Langa, on the other hand, does not use music as a means for separation. He includes music in his work mainly to give local colour to the novel. In contrast to Niq Mhlongo, who uses Kwaito to establish a separation from the whites, Mandla Langa's reference to music does not serve a specific purpose, although it is mentioned in several passages. He does not focus on one specific music style, but includes different music genres such as Mbaqanga, soul or jazz music. An interesting fact that should be discussed at this point is that those styles used in Langa's novel already existed during the apartheid regime, whereas Kwaito only

developed at the end of this regime. Whether or not this influences the construction of collective identity cannot be addressed here, although the idea warrants further research focusing on the importance of different music genres to the construction of collective identity.

## 10.2 Language

The use of native language in novels is an important indicator, helping to answer the question of how collective identity is formed in South African novels. Niq Mhlongo indicates in his novel that South Africa still faces national problems such as poverty, unemployment and violence.

Language plays a key role in most of South Africa's problems. One of these is the importance of English as the language of instruction in black communities, which underestimates the role of Bantu languages. Authors such as Niq Mhlongo use native languages in their novels to enhance the position of Bantu languages in literature. The importance of language as an indicator of identity construction in South Africa is evident in his novel *Dog Eat Dog*. Mhlongo does not use native languages merely to give local colour to his novel but also to indicate the importance of these languages to members of different ethnic groups in South Africa. In several passages, English is degraded to serve as a language of translation, whereas the main dialogues are in Sesotho. As some of the readers of the novel might not be able to understand Sesotho, it is necessary to provide a translation. Compared to everyday situations in South Africa, where English is still regarded as a language of success and where it is the dominant language of the public, it seems odd that it might serve as purely a language of translation. The importance of English has been reversed in this case. Although speakers of Bantu languages argue that they are, for example, not able to join a formal education programme because they speak a Bantu language and these languages have only little economic value, Niq Mhlongo emphasizes the use of Sesotho in his novel. These problems make it clear that language plays a key role in South Africa. It could be seen as a barrier between the South African

people and economic prosperity and education. The dominance of English in the formal economy and the non-use of Bantu languages make this situation even more complicated. South Africa's past provides many examples which show how language has been used to manipulate and discriminate. Since Apartheid was based on dividing people into classes in order to gain control over them, the use of language as a means of discrimination should not be underestimated. On the other hand, language also played an important role with regard to collective identity and it offered conflict potential. South Africa is still regarded as a complexly divided society and tensions between different ethnic groups are still present. Nevertheless, it has to be argued that Niq Mhlongo's emphasis on using Sesotho in many dialogues throughout the novel might also be regarded as an indicator that language is used to separate in his novel. By reversing the importance of English and native languages, Mhlongo supports the growing influence of Bantu languages in South Africa, but at the same time partly degrades English, which has been seen as a symbol for liberation and economic wealth. So, generally speaking, it can be argued that language plays an important symbolic role in South Africa's process of finding a collective identity. English is still regarded as the lingua franca worldwide, especially regarding economic issues, and there is a need for South Africans to acquire knowledge of English in order to prevent manipulation, discrimination and to guarantee economic as well as political strength. Nevertheless, it is necessary to find a balance between English as a powerful language tool and other South African languages. Multilingualism, which should be supported by multilingual education, provides an interesting tool for including all South African languages. The question as to whether native languages are used in South African novels to separate is not an easy one to answer. Niq Mhlongo tends to use Sesotho to separate from those who are unable to speak this language.

Nadine Gordimer, on the other hand, clearly emphasizes the importance of multilingualism in her novel *Get a Life*. One of the main characters, Thapelo, speaks several different languages and uses them for his business career. Even Paul's son, Nickie, learns one of the native

languages from Primrose's cousin. He learns to speak Setswana and his father, Paul, supports this, as he is aware of the fact that in a new South Africa, every spoken language might be useful for young people. This idea of multilingualism is supported by the new constitution of South Africa. Nevertheless, the concept as such has not yet gained acceptance in South Africa. Due to the dominant use of English as the language of politics and the economy, it is difficult to create awareness for the other South African languages as well. This increasing awareness should include an acceptance of language as playing a fundamental role in public life and of language allowing access to education, basic rights as well as privileges. One of the main problems closely linked to promoting multilingualism is the question of the costs involved. It seems impossible from an economic point of view to create a policy of equality for all South African languages. However, Nadine Gordimer points out the importance of multilingualism in her novel, stating that this is a way to overcome old separatist regulations and find a way to construct new collective identities that are no longer based on separation but on including all aspects of different cultures.

### 10.3 Importance of land/soil for identity construction

As already discussed, culture in general and cultural identity specifically denote the shared learning of a given group. It has also been proven that it is not possible to speak of "the" identity of a person or a group, since an identity may change according to underlying circumstances. Closely linked to the idea that a community shows self-identification with a nation via national symbols is the insight that people live in places and particular spaces to which they are emotionally attached. In South Africa people were forced to leave the places where they were living, which led to the difficult situation that they were completely uprooted. Returning to such places of origin is always associated with returning to memory.

Mandla Langa describes this problem in his novel *The Memory of Stones* by pointing out the importance of land as a means of identity construction in South Africa. As an issue, being forced to leave the ancestral grounds is just as important as the recovery of ancestral land – it serves as the theme and as the subject matter of the novel. Right at the beginning of the novel, the people of Ngoza are forced to leave their ancestral land, being ejected from their homes. The novel shows how closely land occupation is linked to a sense of identity, even human worth, in a community. Closely linked to this is the idea that people live in places and particular spaces they are emotionally attached to. In KwaZulu-Natal people were forced to leave the areas they were living at, which led to the difficult situation of people being completely uprooted. The loss of land in South Africa also means losing contact with the forefathers, which brings great difficulties as it is important to be linked to the land of one's ancestors in all South African religions. Mandla Langa's novel is a clear statement that land and soil play an important role in identity construction in a new South Africa. People who were forced to leave their ancestral grounds and who were therefore also losing an important part of their identity have to confront memories that might be linked to negative experiences they had when they were uprooted, but for Langa, facing these issues is the only way of constructing a new form of collective identity.

Lisa Fugard points out another aspect of the importance of land for identity construction in South Africa. Fugard's novel focuses on a relation to the soil and to nature and is regarded as belonging to the tradition of South African farm novels<sup>25</sup>. According to the Group Areas Act of 1950, the apartheid regime had the power to forcibly remove people from areas not designated for them. During this era white farmers could count on receiving privileges even in difficult times such as droughts to allow them to stay on their farms and retain their links with this specific land. White farmers were granted loans from the government as well as crop

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<sup>25</sup> The farm novel is a literary genre that has been part of the South African literature since the nineteenth century. Farm novels written in Afrikaans are referred to as *plaasroman*. All farm novels have in common that the farm and its meanings are of central importance to the novel together with the landscape and the farmer living there.

subsidies, whereas black farmers were denied government help. Another reason for supporting white farmers was that farms such as Skinner's Drift were defending the borders for the South African government. The idea of land reform threatened the identity of many farmers, as its 3 main components were: restitution for those who had lost land rights as a result of the racially discriminatory policies in the past, redistribution of land to the poor and landless or land hungry black people and tenure security for black people living on commercial farms. The fact that not much effort was put into land reform resulted in farm labour remaining highly flexible and insecure, land was still owned by whites, farm murders continued and farmers as well as workers fled to the cities. However, Martin would never give up his farm as this would mean being completely uprooted and also losing his identity. Skinner's Drift offers an interesting point of view of the same issue as Mandla Langa – namely the importance of land for identity construction. But Lisa Fugard describes these problems from a white perspective. She gives voice to members of this group, who were formerly linked to power but also oppression. However, since the end of apartheid even this collectivity needs to redefine its identity and soil plays an important role in its construction. Martin stands for white farmers who are not willing to give up their relation to the land, as this would mean giving up parts of their identity. He is in absolute despair as drought destroys his farm, which might also be interpreted as his close links to the land he owns. Lorraine, on the other hand, never felt such close bonds with the land, and she is shown to be willing to give up Skinner's Drift in several passages in the novel, suggesting a new life in the city. She ultimately insisted on being cremated, which could be regarded as an act of rebellion against Martin's close link to the soil. For Martin, giving up Skinner's Drift would have meant giving up part of his identity, which was never an option for him at any stage.

Nadine Gordimer finally provides a third view of the importance of land to the construction of identity. Although she is a white author as well, her point of view clearly differs from Fugard's. Gordimer points out that soil and nature could serve as unifying elements in contemporary South

Africa. She does not focus on the importance of land for constructing identities of specific groups, but argues that land and soil are issues integral to creating a collective South African identity. Therefore, her point of view can be regarded as unique. The two protagonists of the novel, Paul and Thapelo, are working as ecologists trying to protect South Africa's environment. The importance of awareness of the impact of several projects on nature unites the people in South Africa. Gordimer addresses problems that arise when globalization leads to the destruction of South Africa's nature. South Africa faces toll roads, mines are built and roads are planned over the farmland of the Amadiba. But what is made clear right from the beginning is the fact that Paul and Thapelo are aware of a need for projects, while also understanding that any project will impact nature across any borders. It is no longer a national problem, but becomes a problem for an entire region. Companies investing huge sums in order to be allowed to build their hotel or casino at the most beautiful places, irrespective of the long-term consequences for nature, are considered a real threat to South Africa. This is exacerbated by the fact that local workers are paid little and the work they are offered is only short-term. There is a certain fear in South Africa that this might lead to a new form of colonialism.

Nevertheless, an ecological standpoint could offer a new way of looking at identity construction. It is no longer a pure black and white issue, but nature brings people of different ethnic origins together in one group, fighting for the same ideas, namely the protection of South Africa's environment. As nature evolves, South Africa evolves, and Nadine Gordimer points out that as long as nature can regulate itself if sufficient time passes, a united South Africa might not be absolutely impossible to achieve. The novel clearly states that some changes are negative, but some are positive as well and it leads to the idea that all South Africans are in the same boat and the threat of the destruction of nature is one reason why South Africans need to unite, irrespective of colour. Nadine Gordimer's novel *Get a Life* provides new ideas about the importance of nature to constructing new forms of collective identities in South Africa.



#### 10.4 Ethnicity as sole means of identity construction?

In general, it can be argued that the concept of collective identity refers to the component of one's identity in the context of a larger group. It manifests as a shared feeling of "we" or "groupness" and common goals of the collective derive in part from the group's shared sense of identity, strengthening the group's sense of solidarity. The danger with this concept is that a feeling of invulnerability may create excessive optimism and encourage members of the collective to take risks. An unquestioned belief in the morality of the group may cause members to ignore the consequences of their actions and stereotyped views of leaders could be passed on within the group. During the South African Apartheid regime, collective identity was based solely on exclusion, where ethnicity served as the only factor of identity creation. South Africans were divided into ethnic groups such as whites, coloureds and blacks.

*David's Story* deals with ethnicity, and it is the only novel dealt with in this context that discusses this issue from a coloured point of view. It not only takes a closer look at the resistance movement itself, but also deals with the question of how coloureds were accepted in this movement. This becomes obvious when David goes to the Eastern Cape to find out about his coloured roots, and his trip arouses the suspicion of his comrades. It suggests the important role of the resistance struggle in identity formation, but at the same time identity formation is complicated by ethnicity. The main characters in the novel are coloured, a term deriving from the apartheid era, indicating a condition of being not black and not white. Being registered as coloured meant belonging to a group that was privileged above black South Africans but subordinate to the group members of the whites. Related to this issue, *David's Story* deals with the status of the Khoisan people and therefore also the status of the Griqua. The main plot of the novel focuses on specific Griqua issues such as the question of ethnic identity. David feels an urgent need to document his origin, having a sense of being rooted somewhere in the past. By going

back to his ancestors, he tries to find traces of his origin and prevent a feeling of being uprooted.

Lisa Fugard, on the other hand, focuses on the use of ethnicity during the apartheid era as a decisive force. Throughout the novel, racism serves as a means of identity construction. It shows clearly that during the apartheid era, identity was mainly constructed through exclusion and according to ethnical issues. The novel clearly indicates that identities were constructed first and foremost based on race issues. Nevertheless, Skinner's *Drift* does not provide an answer to the question as to whether or not ethnic issues are still a predominant factor in constructing collective identities. It hints to the fact that things have changed for some South Africans, however, as Eva has a strong feeling of not belonging to this place any longer. Her aunt, who did not support ethnic equality during the apartheid era, supports the new government. For Eva, South Africa only offers a past she is not willing to include in her present state of being, which might be regarded as one reason why she no longer feels she belongs to this place. She has been disconnected from her land and therefore had to construct her own identity, which is different from those identities of other white South Africans.

Mandla Langa writes about the situation of blacks in recent South Africa. He includes apartheid humiliation, oppression, exile and anti-apartheid work in South Africa as well as in Europe. His way of describing how violence destroys communities throughout different ethnic groups is brutal but realistic. Mpanza, for example, has great difficulties returning to a normal life after the end of apartheid. It was clear for Mpanza in former times that he was united with his comrades in a fight against oppression and Apartheid. But he discovers that after the end of Apartheid, little has changed, except that his former comrades are trying to cut pieces from the juicier parts of the national cake, betraying what they had fought for. Mandla Langa's work attempts to emphasise the fact that even within one collectivity there is hardly any consensus about the group's goal. Therefore, members of this collectivity are trying to construct a new form, a shared identity, which is no longer characterized

through a fight against oppression but through a quest for a feeling of togetherness.

Although Niq Mhlongo also deals with identity construction and ethnicity, it is not really possible to compare *The Memory of Stones* with *Dog Eat Dog*. The latter is a novel showing that ethnicity is still a decisive factor in South African identity construction. Collective identity in the novel is mainly built by exclusion rather than inclusion, based upon a shared feeling of a specific group - the "we" as opposed to "the others". The main character, Dingz, lives in a black society and, from his point of view, he is part of the majority. Based on this, white people are regarded as not belonging to the same group and therefore as outsiders. The novel is generally written from the perspective of a member of black society and any problems that occur are described from within this group's shared sense of togetherness. The fact that the group as such is not homogenous will be discussed later on. Throughout the novel Dingz constantly tries to play the race card. In a way, Dingz uses the exclusion of one part of the South African population to construct his identity as a black South African. There is a clear reference to the fact that *Dog Eat Dog* is written from a black perspective in chapter 27, when Dingz and his friends discuss the differences between black and white students at university. In this novel, a concept of collective identity is mainly built upon race. It manifests itself as a shared feeling among Dingz's group - the black "we" as opposed to the group of "the other" to which other ethnicities such as white South Africans belong. As already mentioned above, collective identity was solely based upon exclusion during the Apartheid era, where ethnicity served as the only factor of identity creation, and Niq Mhlongo uses the same method to construct collective identity in his novel. Dingz states that he has the same goals as other members of his group; he feels he belongs to this group, sharing the same troubles in the past and therefore sharing a similar sense of identity. He is definitely prone to those dangers that lie within the concept of collective identity, namely an increasing feeling of invulnerability. His unquestioned belief in the fact that playing the race

card will solve any upcoming problems enables him to ignore the consequences of his actions.

Nevertheless, it should be remembered that, as a result of the apartheid regime, members of certain collectivities – in this case mostly those of the black collectivity – suffered from horrendous events which left their scars upon the group consciousness. Using race as a decisive force in this novel to construct collective identity might be regarded as inversed racism, but it always has to be considered as racism that developed from historical events throughout the last centuries.

Nadine Gordimer finally draws a completely different picture of how influential ethnicity is for the construction of a new collective identity in South Africa. Towards the beginning of the novel, Adrian and Lyndsay decide that they have to talk to their housekeeper Primrose about the therapy of their son. This passage shows a different form of relationship than any other novel so far. Primrose is a black housekeeper working for Adrian and Lyndsay Bannerman, but their relationship seems to be a rather friendly one, irrespective of skin colour. Although it is a professional relationship Primrose is engaged in, this relationship is characterised by respect and friendship. Another relationship which traverses the colour barrier is Paul's friendship with Thapelo. Again the relationship between these two men indicates a gradual construction of new collective identities that do not follow the old strict rules of skin colour but allow new friendships to develop. *Get a Life* offers new ideas for constructing collective identities not solely through exclusion from different ethnic origins and shows that it is possible to work and develop friendships regardless of colour, where identities are built on different issues such as the fact that, independent of skin colour, all South Africans are in the same boat.

## 10.5 Coming to terms with the past as a way of constructing new identities

Two novels dealing with this issue are Mandla Langa's *The Memory of Stones* and Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*. Both novels offer completely different approaches to this topic, however.

*David's Story* deals with problems of memory, truth, betrayal and social issues that the New South Africa had to confront in 1991. David has great difficulty throughout the novel recounting the story of Dulcie, and he ultimately fails to describe Dulcie's role in his story. David's inability to tell the story of Dulcie is closely related with an inability to recount South Africa's bloody past during the apartheid era. Wicomb uses trauma and its effects to paint a vivid picture of how collective trauma influences identity construction in South Africa. She links physical objects such as bodies or places with memories of the past. The importance of places and landscapes in *David's Story* is partly derived from the fact that these are linked to traumatic episodes and histories to which they have born witness. Having stable connections to the region of one's origin is also important in the context of another concept, namely the concept of nationality. Nationalism is based on the idea of either belonging to a specific nation or being excluded from that citizenship. For Wicomb, it is obvious that in a country like South Africa, where national or tribal identities have long been conceived in relation to landscape, displaced symptoms of trauma shift from violated bodies to damaged landscape in a movement that binds the body to the land. She argues that places and landscapes have always been a political issue in South Africa. Here Wicomb clearly tries to highlight the fact that different groups in South Africa have had different experiences of post-apartheid modernity. Members of two different groups feel completely different about the same event. Given that *David's Story* deals with the influence of trauma on collective identities, it is important to take a closer look at the trauma of a collective as well as cultural trauma. Collective trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous

event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memory forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways. Through symbols of trauma, Wicomb uses David, Dulcie and Sally in the present and combines them with Andrew and Rachel Le Fleur and Sara Baartman in the past. In so doing, Wicomb points out that the historical trauma from the past influences the lives of those in the present. Generally speaking, it has to be said that Wicomb sees the only way to a shared collective identity through digging up past events and reconstructing even the most painful events in the past. Digging up the past allows collective traumas that were experienced by members of different groups to heal.

Mandla Langa's novel *The Memory of Stones* deals with the same issue of trying to cope with the past. He describes the effects of black-on-black violence in his work, an important part of South African identity. Langa points out that this complicates the situation for blacks in South Africa as they have to deal not only with racism towards blacks and whites but also with problems within their ethnic group. Nevertheless, Mandla Langa's attempt to make these problems central in his novel is a rather sensitive issue. He makes no attempt to romanticize the important work of the ANC, nor does he herald members of the ANC as heroes. For Mandla Langa, it is obvious that the former enemies are gone and it is therefore important to build a new identity by creating a new history through coming to terms with the past, even if this coming to terms has to be done by dirtying the nest. As already discussed, identity was constructed according to strict ethnic guidelines during apartheid, but the identity of an ethnic group itself is highly inhomogeneous. Mpanza can be regarded as a symbol for the danger of group thinking and collective identity construction. His unquestioned belief in the morality of the group led him to assassinate his comrade and friend. He was aware of the consequences of his actions, but the fact that the group he belonged to was using him did not occur to him and was simply unthinkable. His identity is shattered by the fact that he was betrayed and used by one of his own group, one of the people whom he felt closest to. He is insecure as he no longer knows to which collectivity he belongs. Mandla Langa

states clearly that black-on-black violence is one of the issues that must be dealt with in order to be able to construct a new form of collective identity, and he is aware of the fact that dealing with such an issue as a black author is regarded by some South Africans as dirtying the nest. Nevertheless, Mandla Langa is aware of the fact that a new South African identity can only emerge after coping with the unpleasant past.

### 10.6 Religion and myths as a means of identity construction

Religion plays an important role for South Africans. Most of these people believed in a kind of God like Being who could either support them or bring them misfortune. However, more influential than the Supreme Being was a group of ancestral spirits, which were closely linked to the soil. The male leader of a tribe was normally also the ritual leader who was responsible for performing rituals or healing the sick. Ancestral spirits were generally benevolent, whereas any evil was attributed to witches and sorcerers. As opposed to Christianity, Bantu religions did not normally have priesthoods, nor did they have one specific person who functioned as mediator between the tribe and the spirits. It was furthermore believed that the political leader of the tribe was also responsible for religious matters. Myths were used by most Bantu religions to explain religious issues such as the existence of human beings. Those myths also described appropriate behaviour and they might therefore be compared to the basic idea of the bible.

Myths are used in *Memory of Stones* to show the importance of religion to the people of Ngoza. The Ngoza express their sense of identity and their reason for being through these stories. But myths are also used to provide security in difficult times, in times of struggle, by recounting old rites and rituals. Zodwa is deeply rooted in a religious context, following her father as new leader of the people of Ngoza. She cannot include this part in her identity at first but realises she must help her father's people to find a new identity. The question as to whether this has to be achieved

at such cost is one that seems important to identity construction. It is a process that will take time in South Africa, as the effects of the apartheid era are still omnipresent, but it is an ongoing process. Mandla Langa's novel shows how important it is to accept myths and rites to create a collective identity, but at the same time to accept that it is not possible to build a collective identity without coming to terms with one's past. Not only do individuals have to come to terms with their past, but collectivities also have to work on their past and build a new identity for their members by accepting what has happened. The past as well as myths both help to build a collective memory and therefore help to construct collective identities through shared memories. Collective memories as well as ancient myths, rites and traditions play an enormous role in creating collective identities. No other novel shows so clearly how important it is to include religion in an identity-finding process.

### 10.7 Identity and National symbols

According to Anderson's concept of nation, the nation must be introduced as a natural entity allowing deep trust in its authenticity. If a nation does not have a recorded history, myths are invented that go back to prehistory in order to claim legitimacy. Anderson also argues that national identity is perhaps not the most important identity to people. Regional and local identities matter, as do social, racial and religious identities. Given the importance in defining who individuals believe they are it seems astonishing that these identities are often founded on symbolic grounds. This symbolism is shown by purposeful deployment of national symbols as well as daily habits of which people may not even be aware. Dealing with South Africa's anthem and flag and the important role it plays in promoting collective identities in South Africa, the inevitable question must be asked: why has the quest for a new collective identity been accompanied by the development of new national symbols in South Africa?



Its transition from apartheid to democracy and the first free democratic elections can be regarded as a time of birth for South Africa, the rainbow nation. No other national symbol is more appropriate to the new South Africa. According to Anderson's definition of nation, this new South Africa is characterized by an imagined nation constructed in the post-apartheid era. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that the rainbow is of importance to native South African religions, being a symbol for hope and a bright future (cf. Baines, pp. 2-4). Another image that is supported by the rainbow nation of South Africa is the image of a multicultural society. South Africa's new constitution does not clearly state whether the term refers to different colours in the sense of ethnic groups. It only mentions that the colours of the rainbow symbolize South Africa's diversity without any further definition of the term diversity.

As already mentioned in the chapter on national identity, identity had been characterized during the apartheid era by the dominant ethnic group through the exclusion of any other ethnicity. A white minority excluded the majority of other South Africans and this separation was only based on ethnicity. This had the effect of dividing identity into ethnic groups and separating "us" from "them". With the apartheid era now over, a new South African identity has been constructed, spread throughout the country by communicating messages of unity. A new constitution was agreed upon, guaranteeing the rights of different cultural and ethnic groups and focusing on South Africa's multiculturalism. In order to allow a sense of belonging to the new South African community, a new flag and a new national anthem were introduced. However, Lisa Fugard is the only author who gives credit to these new national symbols. When Eva van Rensburg returns to South Africa, she feels insecure in this new country as several changes had taken place during her absence, including the new version of the South African anthem and a new flag. South Africa's flag from 1928 until 1994 was based on the *Prinsevlag*, which was originally the Dutch flag. Added to this flag were 3 smaller flags in the centre of the white middle stripe. The 3 flags were the Union Flag, the Orange Free State *Vierkleur* and the

Transvaal Vierkleur. The Prinsevlag is said to have been the first flag ever hoisted on South African soil.



Fig. 7 South African flag 1928 -1994<sup>26</sup>

The new South African flag was first adopted after the elections in 1994 and symbolizes a new South Africa.



Fig.8 South African flag 1994 - present<sup>27</sup>

Although officially denied, three of the colours - black, green and yellow - are also part of the flag of the African National Congress. The other three

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutgovt/symbols/flag.htm>  
<sup>27</sup> Ebd.

- red, white and blue – were used in the South African flag from 1928-1994.

Another national symbol that underwent changes is the national anthem of South Africa. From 1928 until 1994 *Die Stem van Suid-Afrika* was accepted as the national anthem, going back to a poem written by Langenhoven in 1918. Although first used together with *God save the King*, it finally became the official national anthem of South Africa in 1959. After the end of apartheid, a proclamation was issued stating that the Republic of South Africa would have two national anthems. They were *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* and *The Call of South Africa (Die Stem van Suid-Afrika)*. *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* was composed in 1897. The words of the first stanza were originally written in Xhosa as a hymn. Seven additional stanzas in Xhosa were later added. It became a popular church hymn that was later adopted as an anthem at political meetings. It was sung as an act of defiance during the apartheid years. The final South African anthem that was introduced in 1997 includes new English lyrics, *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika* and *The Call of South Africa (Die Stem van Suid-Afrika)*. It is referred to as *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika*.

Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika

Maluphakanyisw' uphondo lwayo, (Xhosa)

Yizwa imithandazo yethu,

Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo. (Zulu)

Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso,

O fedise dintwa le matshwenyeho,

O se boloke, O se boloke setjhaba sa heso, Setjhaba sa. (Sotho)

South Africa, South Africa! (English)

Uit die blou van onse hemel,

Uit die diepte van ons see,

Oor ons ewige gebergtes,

Waar die kranse antwoord gee, (Afrikaans)

Sounds the call to come together,

And united we shall stand,

Let us live and strive for freedom,  
In South Africa our land. (English)

The importance of creating new national symbols in South Africa indicates that national identity is seen as a means of constructing new collective identities. It is by no means the only form of cultural identity but it is related to other forms of cultural identity defined by culture, history, language, ethnicity or religion.

## 11 Conclusion

In each of the novels discussed, the authors try to construct a new form of South African identity. After the end of apartheid a general struggle to redefine a "we" took place in South Africa, as identity was formerly shaped mainly by ethnicity. The apartheid regime strove to divide and separate different cultures and ethnic groups and collective identity construction took place mainly along these separating principles. In dealing with the novels of Mhlongo, Wicomb, Langa, Fugard and Gordimer, it becomes obvious that redefining the identity of a collectivity is a process that is mostly painful and might take years, but the idea which unifies the novels of these authors is that a new South African identity construction is possible.

Nevertheless, it has to be stated clearly that this new collective identity can only partly be created in these novels. Each of the novels shows different means of constructing identity, but all of them have an open end in that no final solution is offered. Facing and overcoming the past is a central theme in these 5 novels, along with the idea that only by including past events in present identities can a future be built for all South Africans, irrespective of ethnicity, religion or other separating principles. Wicomb and Langa clearly focus on coming to terms with the past as a means of constructing new identities in their novels. Wicomb's main character has to face his inability to talk about the central event in his life, whereas Langa's novel mainly deals with the importance of dirtying the nest in order to be able to construct a new identity in the future. Lisa Fugard's novel shows the importance of land and space to redefining identity. In *Skinner's Drift* white as well as black inhabitants of the farm define themselves through this farm and through their connection to land and soil. However, Martin's fight for his farm even in the most hopeless situation also clearly indicates his fear of losing part of his identity through losing his farm. Niq Mhlongo on the other hand tries to examine identity construction from a different point of view. His main character, Dingz, is part of the black collectivity and he uses ethnicity as

a basis for playing the race card. His unquestioned belief in the fact that playing the race card will solve any upcoming problems enables him to ignore the consequences of his actions. Another interesting fact is that Mhlongo uses references to Kwaito music in this novel. It offers a way to identify with a specific group and Niq Mhlongo uses his deep knowledge of music to provide a certain background for his character. Nadine Gordimer finally offers a new ecological standpoint which could provide a new way of looking at identity construction. It is no longer a pure black and white issue, but nature brings people of different ethnic origins together in one group, fighting for the same ideas, namely the protection of South Africa's environment. As nature evolves, South Africa evolves, and Nadine Gordimer points out that as long as nature can regulate itself if sufficient time passes, a united South Africa might not be absolutely impossible to achieve. The novel leads to the idea that all South Africans are in the same boat and the threat of the destruction of nature is one reason why South Africans need to unite, irrespective of colour.

In conclusion, it has to be said that the process of identity construction still has a long way to go, but all 5 of the novels dealt with here show that it is possible to work on the construction of a new South African identity which is no longer based on exclusion but which includes all different colours of the rainbow.

***"We enter into a covenant that we shall build a society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world."*** (Mandela, Speech)

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## 14 German Resumé

Südafrikas Geschichte war über Jahrzehnte hinweg bestimmt durch Apartheid und deren Folgen für die schwarzafrikanische Bevölkerung. Durch die hier vorgestellten Romane versuchen 5 Autoren, die Konstruktion einer neuen südafrikanischen Identität nach dem Ende des Apartheidregimes zu unterstützen. Während es zu Zeiten dieses Regimes üblich war, Kulturen und ethnische Gruppen streng anhand unterschiedlicher Rassendefinitionen zu klassifizieren, ist man in Südafrika heute versucht, Identität anhand anderer Richtlinien neu zu definieren. Niq Mhlongo, Zoe Wicomb, Mandla Langa, Lisa Fugard und Nadine Gordimer verdeutlichen in ihren Romanen, dass die Schaffung einer neuen kollektiven Identität ein Prozess ist, der über Jahre hinweg dauern wird und der ein zumeist schmerzhaftes Auseinandersetzen mit der Vergangenheit voraussetzt. Trotz allem beschreiben alle fünf Autoren, dass es möglich ist, zu einer neuen Form von Identität zu gelangen, auch wenn an dieser Stelle klar dargelegt werden muss, dass dieses Unterfangen – nämlich die Konstruktion einer neuen Identität – im Rahmen der vorgelegten Romane nur begrenzt möglich ist. Es werden unterschiedliche Wege aufgezeigt, um zu einer neuen kollektiven Identität zu gelangen, wobei speziell den Themen Verarbeitung der persönlichen Vergangenheit, wie auch der Vergangenheit des Landes größte Wichtigkeit beigemessen wird.

Im Versuch die Vergangenheit zu bewältigen, sehen diese Autoren auch die Möglichkeit eine gemeinsame Zukunft des Landes zu erschaffen. Zoë Wicomb und Mandla Langa beziehen sich in ihren Werken deutlich darauf, dass es unumgänglich ist, sich mit der Vergangenheit zu beschäftigen, wenn man neue kollektive Identitäten erschaffen will.

Lisa Fugard beschreibt in ihrem Werk die Wichtigkeit der Verbindung zu Grund und Boden, um Identität sowohl der weißen Farmbesitzer als auch der schwarzen Farmarbeiter zu definieren.

Niq Mhlongo betrachtet Identitätsfindung aus einem anderen Blickwinkel heraus. Sein Hauptcharakter Dingz ist der Teil der schwarzen Mehrheit in

Südafrika. Aus seiner Sicht wird das Thema Rassismus und Identitätsfindung neu beleuchtet. Auch sein Bezug zu Kwaito Musik ist an dieser Stelle erwähnenswert, da er sich dadurch als Mitglied einer bestimmten Gruppe von anderen Südafrikanern abhebt.

Nadine Gordimer offenbart schließlich einen völlig neuen Ansatz zum Thema Identitätsfindung. Für sie ist kollektive Identität keine reine Angelegenheit der Hautfarbe mehr, sondern vielmehr ein Kampf gegen die Umweltzerstörung in Südafrika, der auch dazu genutzt werden kann über jegliche Grenzen hinweg, Menschen der unterschiedlichsten Kulturen zu vereinen.

Abschließend muss erwähnt werden, dass der Prozess der Identitätsfindung in Südafrika definitiv noch nicht abgeschlossen ist. Trotz allem verweisen alle hier behandelten Romane auf die Möglichkeit einer neuen südafrikanischen Identität, die nicht mehr auf Ausschluss anderer, sondern auf einer Einbeziehung aller unterschiedlichen Farben dieses Regenbogens aufbaut.



## 15 Curriculum Vitae

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Name	Andrea Navratil
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2002 – heute	Studium LA Anglistik/Amerikanistik; Germanistik in Wien;
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### Berufspraxis

Seit 2007	Übersetzer IBM Österreich, Mitarbeit im Recruiting/Hiring Team für HR IBM Österreich
2006	Übersetzer juristische Texte: Ziviltechnikerbüro <i>Knoll • Planung &amp; Beratung</i>
Seit 2002	private Nachhilfe unterschiedlicher Altersklassen (Focus: Military English)
Sommermonate 2000 – 2005	Operettenfestspiele Bad Ischl