

2002

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### Recommended Citation

Samuelson, Meg, The Rainbow Womb: Rape and Race in South African Fiction of the Transition, *Kunapipi*, 24(1), 2002.  
Available at: <https://ro.uow.edu.au/kunapipi/vol24/iss1/10>

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# The Rainbow Womb: Rape and Race in South African Fiction of the Transition

## **Abstract**

A striking pattern is emerging in fictional representations of rape published during the South African transition from apartheid to multi-racial democracy.<sup>1</sup> It is a configuration that relentlessly inserts race into the scene of rape by focussing almost exclusively on interracial rape.<sup>2</sup> The light shone on rape is refracted through the prism of race as the country once characterised by racial divisions refashions itself into the 'rainbow nation'. Within this schema, the consequence of rape is measured in the birth of a 'mixed race' child. So dominant is this plot that even a narrative of male rape, K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, juxtaposes the rape of a black man by a coloured man with a black woman's conception of a child by a German father. The substitution of woman's body by body politic is highlighted in her name, Mmabatho ('mother of the people'). Compelling though this scenario may be to writers, it is one that fails to ring true in reality, where rape is overwhelmingly intraracial and the rate of conception comparatively low.<sup>3</sup> The literary script of rape thus distorts the realities of sexual violence in order to direct attention away from the violated female body — or the male body gendered female — and focus it on a trail of 'blood' weaving through the woman's womb.

MEG SAMUELSON

## The Rainbow Womb: Rape and Race in South African Fiction of the Transition

A striking pattern is emerging in fictional representations of rape published during the South African transition from apartheid to multi-racial democracy.<sup>1</sup> It is a configuration that relentlessly inserts race into the scene of rape by focussing almost exclusively on interracial rape.<sup>2</sup> The light shone on rape is refracted through the prism of race as the country once characterised by racial divisions refashions itself into the 'rainbow nation'. Within this schema, the consequence of rape is measured in the birth of a 'mixed race' child. So dominant is this plot that even a narrative of male rape, K. Sello Duiker's *The Quiet Violence of Dreams*, juxtaposes the rape of a black man by a coloured man with a black woman's conception of a child by a German father. The substitution of woman's body by body politic is highlighted in her name, Mmabatho ('mother of the people'). Compelling though this scenario may be to writers, it is one that fails to ring true in reality, where rape is overwhelmingly intraracial and the rate of conception comparatively low.<sup>3</sup> The literary script of rape thus distorts the realities of sexual violence in order to direct attention away from the violated female body — or the male body gendered female — and focus it on a trail of 'blood' weaving through the woman's womb.

Wary of adopting a prescriptive tone and insisting that literature should conform to a certain social vision, I am nonetheless concerned by the degree of disjuncture between literary plots and social reality, particularly when this disjuncture obscures a pressing reality. Central to my discomfit are the ways in which the metaphorical use of women's bodies eclipse and distort the social and political realities they inhabit. For rape is far from just a metaphor in South African society of the transition. It is an endemic — and proliferating — social disorder.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the metaphorical slippage between body and body politic that is exploited in representations of rape conceals and submerges a far more urgent narrative of an ascendant violence against women, which, in a country wracked by HIV/AIDS, is often deadly.<sup>5</sup>

Critiquing the erasure of gendered violence within its very representation, I take my cue from Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver who, in their introduction to *Rape and Representation*, observe 'an obsessive inscription — and an obsessive erasure — of sexual violence against women (and against those placed by society in the position "woman")' (2). They note a 'conspicuous absence' in configurations such as those with which we are concerned here, 'where sexual violence against women is an origin of social relations and narratives in which the event itself is

subsequently elided' (2–3). 'The term *elision*', the authors remind us, 'deriv[es] from the Latin *laedere*, to hurt or damage, and relating to *lesion*, suggests once again the secret ways in which representation is linked to the physical, and damaged stories can represent damaged bodies' (6).

Higgin's and Silver's intervention is pertinent to Arthur Maimane's *Hate No More* (2000), where rape and childbirth are relegated to the blank space between two paragraphs, while remaining central to the novel's plot. First published in exile as *Victims* (1976), *Hate No More* was reissued, subtly revised and framed between a prologue and epilogue, under its new title after Maimane's return to South Africa. Set in the 1950s, the novel opens with the main protagonist, Philip, walking through the streets of Johannesburg. After being humiliated by a passing group of white people, he follows a white woman, Jean, into an alley and rapes her. Electing to keep the child born of rape, Jean is cast out by her husband and circle of white friends. She and her baby move to a 'grey' area on the fringes of both white and black society where, in a bizarre plot twist, she employs Philip's wife-to-be, Betty, who identifies her as the rape victim. Betty and Philip offer to adopt the child, but Jean refuses to give her up.

In both versions the primary authorial impulse appears to be the exoneration of Philip. While Maimane (or his editors) have removed *Victims*' claim that Jean actually enjoyed the rape (see *Victims* 57), Philip's new defence is that, 'lying there like a piece of wood. Ice-cold fish', she 'didn't feel anythin' (74–5). References to physical harm have been expunged from the revised text. Whereas in *Victims* Philip attempted to derive pleasure from 'hurting' Jean, in *Hate No More* this is achieved by 'defiling' her and pulling her down into 'the muck' (25). This is an important alteration in the novel's attempt to sketch the rape as a purely racial rather than gendered event. Philip wishes to muddy the 'immaculate whiteness' (24) of the 'white goddess' (21), 'the very fount' (27) of the white race. What he wishes to drag into the muck is white woman as treasured symbol of the white ethnic; what he wishes to sully is the white womb as boundary marker of racial purity. The gendered body evaporates and is transfigured into a symbol of the race. By justifying — indeed, glorifying — Philip's rape in these terms, Maimane's novel feeds directly into the discourse that he is trying to counter. Apartheid was an inherently gendered affair.<sup>6</sup> Irresistibly drawn to its gender politics, Maimane is unable to extricate himself from its overarching logic.

The post-apartheid framing of the narrative readjusts the novel's focus to draw our attention to the issue of rape. The prologue ends with Philip wondering 'What was her name again?' (13), and it is in her name, Beatrice, that her metaphorical function is illuminated. The child, supposedly, will lead us through the moral maze of Philip's past into the heaven of the new South Africa, just as Beatrice leads Dante out of the Inferno and into Paradise, but the epilogue recants even on this point as the 'mixed race' Beatrice is displaced in favour of the 'legitimate' black daughter, Bontle. As Philip recounts: 'Betty had believed that only adopting

“this *boesman* child of yours” could lift the crippling weight of guilt pressing down on his resentful shoulders. Bontle’s birth had slowly lifted that weight’ (290) [emphasis added]. Bontle, not Beatrice, becomes the redemptive figure leading Philip into the new South Africa. Murdered by the apartheid regime during the students’ uprising of 1976, Bontle was the catalyst that drove Philip into politics, and a plush new post-apartheid career as Chair of the Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality Portfolio of the Gauteng Legislature. The racist slur of ‘boesman’<sup>7</sup> and the transposition of redemption from Beatrice to Bontle are signposts of a troubling commitment to racial purity. This commitment is deeply entrenched in the gender politics implicit in this representation of rape, which are alarmingly at odds with Philip’s new post. Equally troubling are the final words of the novel, where attention is shifted from both daughters — ‘mixed race’ and ‘pure’ — in order to bequeath the future to the son-citizens. As Anne McClintock has shown in her study of the gendering of national time, women, ‘embodying nationalism’s conservative principle of continuity’, are called upon to bear the weight of the past while the national sons march forward into the future, ‘embodying nationalism’s progressive, or revolutionary, principle of discontinuity’ (92).

This is a point that J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* takes up. Petrus, Lucy’s erstwhile black labourer, informs her father, David, that she, a white woman, is a ‘forward-looking lady, not backward-looking’ (136). David, on the other hand, fears that his daughter is being made to carry the burdens of the past. ‘You wish to humble yourself before history’, he tells her (160). In which direction is this novel, so preoccupied with tense and season, taking us? *Disgrace* is a complex and finely wrought novel. This cursory analysis is admittedly unable to do justice to its nuanced layers of meaning as I restrict myself to dealing with aspects of the novel that resonate within a broader pattern.<sup>8</sup>

The novel’s diptych structure sets up a partial mirror between two sets of sexual relations. The first, located in Cape Town, is David’s ‘arrangement’ with Soraya, a sex-worker of Asian descent, and his affair with a coloured student, Melanie Isaacs,<sup>9</sup> which is subsequently labelled abuse. The scene then moves to the Eastern Cape, where David’s daughter, Lucy, is gang-raped by three black men. The rapists flee from the scene of the crime in David’s car, a 1993 white Toyota *Corolla*. This small but carefully placed detail nudges us to see David’s sexual relations with Soraya and Melanie as a *corollary* of Lucy’s rape. The white Japanese model car reminds us of the arbitrariness of racial classification under apartheid, which labelled Chinese non-white and Japanese white in order to suit economic interests. Thus, while Lucy and Melanie initially appear to be antithetical (Lucy the light, ‘Meláni: the dark one’ [18]), this opposition is undercut, as is the ideology behind the classification of ‘disparate’ races.

That the two sets of sexual relations are situated in specified locations is significant. Cape Town, along with Melanie’s reference to the African American writers, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, recalls the legacy of slavery so repressed

and submerged in South African history, not least because it speaks of the constitution of Afrikanerdom within a milieu of racial and cultural mixing. It is repressed, too, among descendents of slaves as a shameful reminder of primary miscegenation (see Wicomb 100). For the institution of slavery was one of unseen and permissible rape of women of colour by white men. This history of rape provides the backdrop to David's sexual relations with Melanie and Soraya. Soraya's profession as a sex-worker is drawn within its frame as David remarks that the agency, Discreet Escorts, 'own[s] Soraya [...], this part of her, this function' (2). Similarly, during David's hearing on sexual harassment, Farodia Rassool insists that David recognise 'the long history of exploitation of which this is a part' the ethnic trace of her name suggesting her own place within this 'history of exploitation' (53). Thus, while David sees these relations as innocuous, the text creates a radically different reading of them.

The setting of Salem is as eloquent, invoking, as it does, 'a history of frontier wars waged over the issue of land between the British settlers and the Xhosa people in the nineteenth century' (Marais 36). In the time of the novel, the tide is turning once again as the land in Salem, once part of 'Old Kaffraria' (122), later the heart of settler country (see the visit to Settler's Hospital), is now being reclaimed by Petrus as representative of the black majority. Given this background, the rape of Lucy's body begins to stand as an allegory for the rape of the land. Indeed, David is urgently aware that 'Petrus would like to take over Lucy's land' (117). These suspicions are validated when one of the rapists re-emerges as a member of Petrus' family during the party to celebrate the success of his land claim. Here one may wish to take issue with the metaphorical substitution of women's body for the land. Or, one might say that Coetzee merely takes to its logical conclusion what it may mean to be 'a child of this earth' (216) in a land marked by rapine and plunder.

The multivalent meanings arising from the location of Salem cast back also to the witches of Salem and warn of the ways in which women have historically borne the crucible of transitional states.<sup>10</sup> Marianne Hester argues that, like rape, witch-hunt persecutions function 'as a means of social control' (4) over women and 'were an attempt at maintaining and restoring male supremacy' (107) within the context of major social and economic restructuring. Anxieties around inheritance and female property ownership lay at the heart of the Salem hysteria (Karlsen 213). Similar anxieties cluster around female sexuality, particularly patterns of behaviour labelled 'sexually deviant' (Hester: 196); that is, sexual behaviour beyond or in excess of the patriarchal family's reproductive requirements. Thus Lucy's lesbianism, like the gay sexuality of Duiker's Tshepo and Melanie's earlier reference to Adrienne Rich, is pivotal, as David realises: 'Raping a lesbian worse than raping a virgin: more of a blow. Did they know what they were up to, those men? Had the word got around?' (105). The rape, following a similar logic to witch-hunts, reinserts Lucy into the patriarchal family

as reproductive body and annuls the menace of the self-sufficient, land-owning woman. Living under the threat of future rapes, she is forced to seek protection by creeping in under Petrus' wing. Ceding her land to him after being seeded by the rapists, she keeps only the house, the domestic sphere, as emblem of her autonomy. 'How they put her in her place', thinks David, 'how they showed her what a woman was for' (115). Here we see again a carefully historicised representation of rape that acknowledges the act of power being performed over women's bodies. Of lingering concern, though, is Lucy's accommodation to this status quo.

Living alongside one of her rapists, Lucy says that she is 'prepared to do anything, make any sacrifice, for the sake of peace' (208). This returns us to Salem, literally meaning 'peace', and, in its local application, refers to reconciliation between sects of settlers (Raper 288). In the New International Bible (1987), Salem, mentioned before the promise of Isaac, is also glossed as Jerusalem. Thus Salem bespeaks the discourse of reconciliation and the 'promised land', with a specific appeal to women to bear the messianic son. This is played out in the narrative through David's thoughts on becoming 'A grandfather. A Joseph' (217), reminding us of the biblical allusions within his own name. Similarly, the reference to 'Three fathers in one' (199) finds an ominous echo in the three wild geese that visit Lucy annually. 'I feel so lucky to be visited. To be the one chosen' (88), says she, at the start of the chapter in which the rape occurs.

This imagery turns women into vessels carrying the future (the messiah). Lucy, lucky to be 'chosen', is transfigured into the Virgin Mary. By a sleight of hand, a violent gang rape is transformed into an immaculate conception. These are the ways in which sexual violence is erased even as it is written. Just as Lucy becomes the vessel for reconciliation and redemption, she, Melanie and Soraya become vessels of history as they carry within them the heritage of place. These women embody the past while Lucy's womb carries the future.

David defends the force that drove him into Melanie's arms as being the 'seed of generation, driven to perfect itself, driving deep into the woman's body, driving to bring the future into being' (194). He uses similar terms to describe Lucy's rape: 'They were not raping, they were mating. It was not the pleasure principle that ran the show but the testicles, sacs bulging with seed aching to perfect itself' (199). The terms resonate with the novel's close focus on tense. '[U]surp upon means to intrude or encroach upon. *Usurp*, to take over entirely, is the perfective of *usurp upon*' (21), David informs his disinterested class. It is reiterated that Lucy, a woman alone on a farm, has no future. The future can only come into being once Lucy has been usurped by the rapists' seed. The novel itself is written in the present tense, like David it awaits the birth of the child before the future can come into being.

Returning to our diptych structure, I suggest it is around Lucy's pregnancy that the hinge holding the two frames together begins to come undone. Neither

Melanie nor Soraya are impregnated by David, and a condom is conspicuously brought into view when he has (intra-racial) sex with Bev Shaw. This even though David defends his affair with Melanie in terms of 'the seed of generation'. Why does this seed only get to perfect itself in the white woman's body? Perhaps, Melanie and Soraya are already 'children of this earth'? Implicit once again in their location is their racially 'mixed' status. It is Lucy, as white woman, who falls pregnant. The only one of the rapists to be named is the boy, Pollux. While his name ostensibly alludes to the Dioscuri, Castor and Pollux, read phonetically it also suggests both pollution and cleansing (after the popular brand of soap, Lux). This along with the language used to describe Lucy's rape, which has 'marked', 'soiled' and 'darkened' her (124 and 199), foregrounds the white womb as racial boundary marker. As a white woman, Lucy has no future until her womb has been 'soiled' and 'darkened'. Here the novel slips back into a symbolic reading of rape and the carefully historicised backdrop slides out of view.

Thus the corollary between Lucy and Melanie and Soraya begins to fray around the nexus of race and gender. While the parallels between the two frames seemingly prevent the reproduction of a racially exclusive patriarchy implicit in the division of men into rapists and protectors, the novel persists in displacing the violence of rape onto this set of oppositions. Violence inheres only in the black rapists and is erased from David's trysts. He can afford to 'buy' Soraya for one afternoon per week and his seduction of 'passive' Melanie (19) is described as 'not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core' (25). Into the space created by the phrase 'not quite that' pours the avalanche of racial meanings explicit in Homi Bhabha's famous dictum '*almost the same but not quite ... Almost the same but not white*' (89 [emphasis in original]). When comparing David to the rapists we might say, 'almost the same but not quite, almost the same but ... white'. Radical difference is entered into apparent commonality *along the axis of race* and the corollary is shattered,<sup>11</sup> and it is this that has provoked in some a fierce reaction against the novel.

Difference, too, is apparent between the symbolic import of Lucy's pregnancy and that of Petrus' wife. Though we are treated to a pastoral image of Lucy, lightly pregnant as she tends her flowerbeds with the spring crop blooming, this optimism is muted. Lucy works in the long shadow cast by Petrus' new house. His 'pure' race child will be born in the spring with all its suggestions of renewal and growth, while Lucy's, expected only in late May, will be born into the frosts of an early Eastern Cape winter. It is hard to determine whether the novel's stance is ironic or allegorical here. Perhaps we should give the last word to Lucy, who resists being turned into an allegorical seme when telling her father of her pregnancy and decision to keep the child:

You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life. You are the main character, I am the minor character who doesn't make an appearance until halfway through. Well, contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor.

I am not minor. I have a life of my own, just as important to me, as yours is important to you, and in my life I am the one who makes the decisions. (198)

Lucy, who is a supporting character in *Disgrace*, making her appearance halfway through this story narrated from her father's point of view, reminds us that her story is not David's story and suggests that his story cannot tell her experiences of rape. Nonetheless, it remains troubling, that through her agency 'over the body of woman silence is being drawn like a blanket' (110). Lucy gives us just one justification for this silence, and it is not a comforting one. 'In another time, in another place', the rape would not be unspeakable, she says. 'But in this place, at the time, it is not.... This place being South Africa' (112), this time being the years of political transition. This is an ambiguous point on which to end this analysis. Is Lucy speaking the language of pessimism, or white guilt, which some have found to pervade the plot? Or, is she attempting to evade the very master-narrative of rape in South African literature of the transition that this paper is critiquing?

Prepared to pay any price for peace, any price to stay on in Salem, she is drawn into a further 'stock theme' of post-apartheid literature: that of reconciliation (Mzamane 13). This is a plot David has taken care to distance himself from. Lucy, however, who says, 'Women can be surprisingly forgiving' (69), seems entrapped therein. In *Disgrace*, then, reconciliation and a future in the country are negotiated through Lucy's child of rape. André Brink's *Imaginings of Sand*<sup>12</sup> operates on a similar set of dynamics. The primary impulse of this novel appears to be the construction of a 'rainbow family' during the heady days leading up to the 1994 election. Constituting this family requires the recognition of mixed bloodlines, specifically the recognition of the hired coloured 'help' as 'family'. The white protagonist, Kristien, is able to claim the coloured domestic worker, Trui, as a sister before casting her vote when a family history of revenge rapes across the colour line is told to her. The overdetermined narrative drive towards rainbow nationalism eclipses the violence done to both Kristien's and Trui's foremothers and racial mixing means very different things to the two women. The acknowledgement of 'mixed blood' within whiteness is celebrated and creates for Kristien a sense of national belonging. Her decision to stay in South Africa is one 'which has been shaped inside myself', she says, 'like a child in the womb' (349), a child now infused with the blood of Trui's family, but the novel's construction of colouredness ventriloquised through Trui is stereotypical: 'First the whites gave us hell, now it's the blacks. For us in-between people nothing will ever change' (169).

All these representations of the violent appropriation of women's bodies depend also upon an appropriation of the female voice: Lucy drawing a veil of silence over her rape; Maimane's Betty issuing the racist slur against 'mixed' blood while Jean, the victim of rape, eroticises sexual violence (142–43); *Imaginings of Sand*

speaking throughout in the voice of a woman as the title becomes an extended metaphor for a female, matrilineal historiography which nonetheless eclipses rape, imagines women's future through childbirth and repeats a discourse of in-betweenness when conceptualising coloured identity. Equally unsettling is a female representation of rape that speaks through the male voice, which we find in Jo-Ann Richard's best-selling novel *The Innocence of Roast Chicken*. One of the few narratives that does not follow rape with childbirth, this novel quickly dispenses with the sexual assault of an elderly white woman in order to turn its attention to the act of retribution, as the black rapist is forced to castrate himself. The former is glossed over while the latter 'cut into [the female narrator's] insides and slice[d] away [her] life' (244). In contrast, the rape is narrated solely by male characters, who define it as 'not something men should allow to happen to their women' (50).

Turning now to women writing rape from the female perspective, I suggest that Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* and Farida Karodia's *Other Secrets* successfully shatter the symbolic script surrounding rape and fulfil Higgins' and Silver's injunction to 'reclaim the physical, material bodies of women from their status as "figures"' (4). Once again, though, contradictions continue to cluster around the children of interracial rape. *And They Didn't Die* is set in a world overshadowed by Bantustans, influx control and pass laws. Exploring the ways in which this web of legislation has exposed black women to white power manifest in the sexual aggression of white men, the novel carefully sketches the social reality of rape rather than employing it as a literary trope.

Unable to support herself and her children on the depleted lands of the Bantustan, Jezile seeks domestic work in the city. There she is raped by her white employer and falls pregnant. On her return home she is ostracised by her husband's family, as shame is shown to adhere to the rape victim rather than the perpetrator. The contradictions of African patriarchy and white supremacy through which Jezile moves are carefully sketched, but the authorial handling of the child of rape is disappointing. Lungu, whose name refers to whiteness and highlights his racial status, rallies to support the anti-apartheid struggle, but, in a curious move that reveals a marked suspicion for 'mixed-blood', Ngcobo has him gunned down during the 1976 student protests and 'paralysed from the waist down' (235). After carefully resisting the symbolic plot of rape, Ngcobo's novel remains enmeshed in discourses of racial purity as Lungu is rendered sterile — the end of the line.

The child of rape suffers a similar fate in *Other Secrets*. Like Maimane, Karodia has recently returned to South Africa after twenty-six years in exile; also like Maimane, she has reissued an earlier novel with revisions and extensions as *Daughters of the Twilight* (1986) becomes the first section of *Other Secrets* (2000). Both culminate in the rape of Meena's older sister Yasmin by the son of a prominent Afrikaner family. Subtle differences between the two renditions of the rape scene and its aftermath are revealing, as the revised text unshackles itself from the

symbolic script. While in *Daughters* the rape is positioned as a symbolic act that stands in for the invasion and appropriation of the family's home (126), *Other Secrets* explicitly distances itself from this representation and drives a wedge between the trauma of the forced removals and the horror of rape. 'Nothing', says Meena, 'could compare' with Yasmin's ordeal (277). Similarly, while Yasmin rejects the child of rape in both novels, the emphasis again differs. No longer fearing that the unborn child 'would end up disowned in its father's world and despised in its mother's world' (*Daughters* 137), Meena realises that Yasmin 'was not capable of loving a child who was a constant reminder of the rape' (278). The focus is on the anguish caused by the rape, rather than on the consequences of race 'mixing'.

Once again, though, the child's name foregrounds this mixing. Initially called Fatima, *Other Secrets* renames her Soraya.<sup>13</sup> Her namesake, Princess Soraya Esfandiari Bakhriari, ex-Empress of Iran, was of mixed Iranian and German descent. Divorced and banished,<sup>14</sup> Soraya Esfandiari Bakhriari's story fits into the tragic mould, confirming the 'tragedy of mixed blood' that has held sway over the South African imagination since Sarah Gertrude Millin's infamous diatribe against miscegenation in *God's Step-Children* (1924). Millin's message, according to Coetzee, is that 'Mixed blood is a harbinger of doom' (*White Writing* 152) and it is one whose reverberations continue to be felt. Echoing the fate of Lungu in *And They Didn't Die*, Soraya is killed in a car accident. In a closing symbolic gesture, she is kept on life-support until the foetus that she is carrying (fathered by a white British man) is delivered and her heart is donated (455). Neither the beneficiary of the heart, nor the baby is given any racial markers; the latter is simply described as 'beautiful'. Here racial 'mixing' introduced by rape is treated without the ambivalence that emerges elsewhere. Yet the inability to imagine a life for Soraya herself, like the failure of imagination surrounding Ngcobo's Lungu, is sobering.

*Other Secrets* treads carefully around the symbolic plot of rape, yet persists in hailing Soraya's birth as 'The dawning of a new day' (139), thereby slipping into the clichéd discourse of the South African 'miracle'. In the novels analysed here, imagining the dawning of this new day through the imagery of childbirth is a process fraught with contradictions. Marshalled to the task of blending blood, permeating boundaries and violently shattering the classificatory borders of apartheid ideology, women are being asked to bear the burden of South Africa's past and the fruit of its future. Their violated wombs become the privileged site out of which the rainbow nation will issue, as stories of their violation are subordinated to those of their swelling figures. Even this schema is handled with much ambivalence. The children, so relentlessly inserted into the plot, are an insurmountable stumbling block as the substitution of mother for rape victim rearticulates the apartheid discourses of blood purity enshrined in what Aletta Norval calls the 'pillars of apartheid' (125): the Population Registration Act, Mixed

Marriages Act and Immorality Amendment Act. The South African literary imagination has shown itself, as yet, unable to extricate itself from this web of legislation grouped around the female reproductive body. Thus, not only does the metaphorical use of women's bodies in much of this fiction deny and distort the reality faced by South African women, it also acts as an anchor, securing us to the past and preventing the nation from being imagined in terms beyond the all-too-familiar ones of blood and race.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this paper, I delineate this period as being 1990 to 2000, though I do refer briefly to K. Sello Duiker's novel published in 2001.
- <sup>2</sup> Though representations of inter-racial rape can also be found in fiction of the apartheid years, they lack the accumulative emphasis of more recent fiction. Notable examples of intraracial rape are those by Njabulo Ndebele and Gcina Mhlope (in *Fools* and 'Nokulunga's Wedding'), while Lewis Nkosi's and J.M. Coetzee's accounts of interracial rape (in *Mating Birds* and *In the Heart of the Country* highlight ambiguity and uncertainty. Siphso Sepamla does break from the mould of transition literature in *Rainbow Journey* (1996) by narrating an intraracial rape, and it is notable that this rape does not bear fruit. But an allegorical structure is still foregrounded: Beauty is raped while travelling to her lover, Justice. Elsewhere, representations of intraracial rape plot themselves on the metaphorical suggestiveness of incest as signifying Afrikaner nationalism. Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples* is the most significant text in this regard, further examples can be found in Brink (*Devil's Valley*) and Karodia (*Other Secrets*).
- <sup>3</sup> Carmine Rustin's study of rape in post-apartheid South Africa notes that, though interracial rape constitutes a statistically insignificant percentage of rape cases, it continues to receive more prominence in the media (4). Rustin, citing statistics provided by the South African Police, the Crime Management Information Centre and the National Crime Investigation Service, shows that between 1992 and 1996 interracial rape gradually declined from comprising 2.57% of total rape cases reported to a negligible 1.65% (Rustin 77). U.S. statistic set the rate of conception arising out of rape at 4.7%. According to Charlene Smith, who bases her argument on these statistics, in South Africa 'Many raped women contract sexually transmitted diseases and HIV, a lesser percentage fall pregnant' (248).
- <sup>4</sup> Human Rights Watch notes that the incidence of rape rose by 81% between 1990 and 1995. The years 1995 to 2000 saw a further escalation of sexual violence. Johannesburg alone witnessed an increase of 16% in 1996 (Johnson). On the 3rd of July 1999 a *Cape Times* headline renamed Cape Town 'Rape Town'.
- <sup>5</sup> A non-fictional portrayal, journalist Charlene Smith's autobiographical account of her own rape, draws awareness to this aspect generally ignored or glossed over in fiction. A white woman raped by a black man, Smith insists 'it has nothing to do with race' (8). Her narrative attempts to redirect attention towards the struggle for the provision of anti-retroviral drugs to rape-victims. President Thabo Mbeki, however, has continued to respond from within the discourse of race, accusing Smith of 'racist rage' (268).

- <sup>6</sup> The separation of racial groups ('apartheid') was maintained through legislation grouped around the female reproductive body in the form of the Mixed Marriages Act of 1949, that forbade interracial marriages, and the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950, that outlawed sexual relations between members of different 'racial groups'. In the wake of the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), solidarity between English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking whites was in part achieved through the dissemination of 'Black Peril' scares, which constructed white womanhood as under threat of black sexual assault.
- <sup>7</sup> 'Boseman' (literally 'Bushman') is a racist slur directed at peoples of so-called 'mixed-race' ('coloureds') and peoples of San descent.
- <sup>8</sup> A profitable way to read the rape in *Disgrace* would be to see it as an intertextual response to Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*, which Coetzee has written on in his collection of essays, *Stranger Shores*. This is not, however, a reading that this paper is able to undertake.
- <sup>9</sup> Many reviewers have identified Melanie's racial group as coloured. Derek Attridge adds a cautionary note to the kind of reading offered here: 'The resultant allegorical scheme [based on reading Melanie as coloured] is something that only South African readers schooled in the niceties of apartheid thinking would be tempted into' (106n13). Melanie's performance of colouredness, as she delivers her predictable but deftly timed lines 'in a whining *Kaaps* accent' (191) does, however, substantiate my reading.
- <sup>10</sup> At the same time, the suggestions of a witch-hunt sit uneasily alongside the novel's oblique references to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.
- <sup>11</sup> Aggrey Klaaste writing in the *Sowetan*, for example, finds that the novel 'depicts a white male fear about black male sexual potency' (in Paulette Coetzee and Crystal Warren 127)
- <sup>12</sup> Though this paper will only consider *Imaginations of Sand*, it is notable that rape looms large in Brink's novels of this period — see *The First Life of Adamastor*, *Devil's Valley*, and *The Rights of Desire*. *Imaginations of Sand* purports to tell the her-story of the South African past as Kristien's grandmother bequeaths to her the story of their foremothers. The novel ends with Kristien deciding to return to the country that she had fled as a young woman.
- <sup>13</sup> Published after *Disgrace*, this could also be an intertextual reference to David's sex-worker.
- <sup>14</sup> Her jewellery, kept under the divorce terms, later made its way to South Africa, and was auctioned in Pietermaritzburg in 1998.

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