

The Family in Shakespeare's Plays: A Study of South African Revisions

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS (ENGLISH)
of
RHODES UNIVERSITY

by

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January 2013

The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily attributed to the NRF.

Abstract

This thesis provides a detailed consideration of the family in Shakespeare's canon and the engagement therewith in three South African novels: *Hill of Fools* (1976) by R. L. Peteni, *My Son's Story* (1990) by Nadine Gordimer, and *Disgrace* (1999) by J. M. Coetzee. The study is divided into an introduction, three chapters each addressing one of the South African novels and its relationship with a Shakespeare text or texts, and a conclusion. The introductory chapter provides an analysis of the two strands of criticism in which the thesis is situated – studies of the family in Shakespeare and studies of appropriations of Shakespeare – and discusses the ways in which these two strands may be combined through a detailed discussion of the presence of power dynamics in the relationship between parent and child in all of the texts considered. The three chapters each contextualise the South African text and provide detailed discussions of the family dynamics within the relevant texts, with particular reference to questions of authority and autonomy. The focus in each chapter is determined by the nature of the intertextual relationship between the South African novel and the Shakespearean text being discussed. Thus, the first chapter, "The Dissolution of Familial Structures in *Hill of Fools*" considers power dynamics in the family as an inherent part of the Romeo and Juliet genre, of which William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is but a part. Similarly, the impact of a socio-political identity, and the secrecy it necessitates, is the focus of the second chapter, "Fathers, Sons and Legacy in *My Son's Story*" as is the role of Shakespeare and literature within South Africa. These concerns are connected to the novel's use of Shakespeare's Sonnets, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*. In the third chapter, "Reclaiming Agency through the Daughter in *Disgrace* and *The Tempest*", I expand on Laurence Wright's argument that *Disgrace* is an engagement with *The Tempest* and consider ways in which the altered power dynamic between father and daughter results in the reconciliation of the father figure with society. The thesis thus addresses the tension between parental bonds and parental bondage.

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Introduction: Shakespeare, the Family and Appropriation

“I love your majesty / According to my bond, nor more nor less” declares Cordelia in the first act of *King Lear* (1.1.81–82). Her direct reply to her father raises the question of what form the bond between a father and a daughter should take and thus implicitly suggests that an ethical familial relationship requires that there should be limitations. Certainly, Cordelia asserts, “I shall never marry like my sisters, / To love my father all” (1.1.92–93). She also declares her hope that when “I shall wed / That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry / half my love with him” (1.1.89–91). Desdemona in *Othello* explains to her father that she conceives of herself as placed between husband and father, her relationships marked by a “divided duty” (1.3.180). Similarly, other daughters – including Juliet (in *Romeo and Juliet*), Jessica (in *The Merchant of Venice*), and Hermia (in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*) – also challenge the demand, and the right, of their fathers to exercise control over their lives and choice of husbands. What these daughters do is to question the restrictions placed on them by the parental bond and to conceive of relationships based upon love rather than power. It is not only within the relationship between father and daughter that these power dynamics are at play, however. Shakespeare’s work is marked by a concern with familial relationships, particularly the question of when a child’s bond with a parent, in terms of love, duty and obedience, becomes a form of bondage.

This project seeks to address ways in which Shakespeare’s texts explore various power dynamics within the family and to explore the incorporation of those varying dynamics into South African texts which make use of them through the adaptation of themes, characters, and quotations. The project is centred on the family in Shakespeare’s plays and seeks to bring into conversation two important strands of contemporary Shakespearean scholarship. The first considers familial power dynamics as being of central importance to the play-texts’ impact on their audiences and advocates the importance of assessing the works within their original early modern context. The second has brought attention to the adaption, appropriation and revision of the Shakespearean text and is concerned to examine the impact on Shakespeare’s work when it is repositioned in different locations and cultures and the impact of the plays within these cultures. By evaluating the presence of a specific theme in the works of Shakespeare, viz. the family (particularly the relationships between parents and children), and its presence in South African reconsiderations of the plays, this project seeks to contribute to these two strands of Shakespearean scholarship and to offer a useful means to extend the priorities and preoccupations of both. The relationship between parents and

children is central in many of Shakespeare's plays and, even when not vital to the main plot or action of the play, greatly adds to either the tragic or comic elements. This is not to suggest, however, that concerns with the role of the family are unique to Shakespeare's works but rather that, through his varied approaches to the family, his work offers a useful means by which to trace the explorations of a variety of different relationships. This project will consider both the role of the family in the early modern context of the plays and the continued importance and function of family dynamics in South African reinscriptions of the plays. It thus seeks to interrogate the ways in which the family remains a key means by which to explore power dynamics, community relationships, and gender relations.

The Family in Shakespeare

Towards the end of the twentieth century a number of scholars began placing emphasis on the role of the family and gender in Shakespeare's texts. As Lynda Boose noted in 1982, there had been "growing inference among Shakespearean scholars that the plays may be primarily 'about' family relations and only secondarily about the macrocosm of the body politic" (Boose, "Father" 325). While much has been said and done with regards to characterisation, setting, language, sources and the plot of the plays, scholars are now increasingly attentive to the role played by the domestic sphere. The domestic sphere and relations within families are understood to serve as both a microcosm for the works' wider engagement with the socio-political realm as well as a central dramatic element which impacts on the characters and their actions. This link between the familial relations and the socio-political commentary within the plays is noted by Gary Taylor who observes that "in Shakespeare's life time political authority depended upon parental authority, because the structures of political power were familial in origin" (Taylor 228). A focus on the family, or on the relationships within families in the plays, is thus a valuable means of examining early modern concerns with subjectivity, gender and authority. Of central importance is an understanding of patriarchy, particularly in terms of its existence during the early modern period. Taylor, writing in 1990, explains the presence of patriarchy in Shakespeare's texts as follows:

Patriarchy is literally a social system ruled by fathers. The new feminist attention to the sociological and psychological structures of patriarchy calls attention to the relationship between fathers and daughters in Shakespeare's play, a love-and-death struggle in which daughters regularly must choose between 'domination and defiance'. At the same time, critics became increasingly sensitive to the problem posed for patriarchal theory by the reign of Elizabeth I; to the articulation of patriarchalism as 'a viable political theory' by Shakespeare's

contemporaries (including King James); to the Jacobean 'anxiety about the sexuality of the young' evident in plays like *All's Well that Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*, in which the father-ruler seeks to control the sexuality of his subject-children. (Taylor 343)

Taylor encourages critics to consider how families are affected by patriarchy and his observations concerning the relationship between father and daughter as being centred on "domination or defiance" captures the central concern of family studies of Shakespeare. The dual roles of father-ruler to subject-children creates an environment in which the autonomy of children is limited by parents because parents see themselves as rulers and their children as subjects. It is through patriarchy that fathers can dominate their children and that kings (as fathers of the state) can rule over their subjects (as children of the state). A close analysis of the family also leads to a consideration of gender and since "the study of gender cannot be disentangled from the study, and the exercise of power" (Taylor 344), studies which focus on the family structure within Shakespeare's plays also consider gender and power dynamics.

The interest in the role of the family in Shakespeare's work can, arguably, be traced to the introduction of Freudian theories into literary criticism. The publication of Ernest Jones's 1910 essay "The Oedipus-Complex as an Explanation of Hamlet's Mystery" marks the beginning of a continuous preoccupation with Freudian interpretations of *Hamlet*. Combined with the introduction of Freud into Shakespeare analysis came a concern to address the issues of sexuality and gender within the plays. Another field of criticism which has led to increased interest in gender and sexuality, and its portrayal within the family structures presented in Shakespeare's plays, is feminism.

A women-centred approach to reading Shakespeare is not a recent addition to varied engagements with the playtexts and in her article "The Ladies' Shakespeare," Juliet Fleming discusses the various ways in which women had been reading and appropriating Shakespeare long before decidedly feminist projects, such as Juliet Dusinberre's *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women* (1975) began to appear in the 1970s. Fleming's article explores the various ways in which women have read Shakespeare's plays and adopts the term 'The Ladies Shakespeare' in a reference to J. M. Barrie's mockery of feminist readings of the plays (1925) and as a means to explore what Shakespeare has meant to women. Fleming argues that "Shakespeare's reputation as the man who understood women has been established – though contested – since Margaret Cavendish remarked his capacity to "Metamorphose from a Man to a Woman" in the first critical essay to be published on his work (in her *Sociable Letters* (1664))" (Fleming 15). Her article discusses the wide variety of responses to Shakespeare by women and includes mention of the nineteenth-century critics who read Shakespeare from a

deliberately female perspective including Anna Jameson, Fanny Kemble, Mary Cowden-Clarke, Mary Lamb and Delia Bacon (Fleming 18). Fleming concludes that from the very beginning of women-centred engagement, female readers have been divided over whether Shakespeare is, as Kathleen McKluskie argues, the “patriarchal bard” intent on subjugating women or whether his plays actually condemn the dominance of male characters,¹ as the majority of scholars have suggested. This project will be following the latter approach.

Fleming’s article is not the only text to recuperate early readings of the plays by women. Marianne Novy, in *Women’s Re-Visions of Shakespeare: On the Responses of Dickinson, Woolf, Rich, H.D., George Eliot, and Others* (1990), and Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts, in *Women Reading Shakespeare 1660-1900: An Anthology of Criticism* (1997), also consider the ways in which readings from a women’s perspective have existed for almost as long as the plays themselves. In contemporary criticism many feminist readings pay particular attention to the treatment of women by other characters, the portrayal of women in the plays, and the relationships between men and women in the plays. The relationships between fathers and daughters and those between husbands and wives (or prospective couples) have often been foregrounded, together with considerations of the regular absence of a mother figure in the plays such as Janet Adelman’s *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare’s Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (1992).

Feminism has become the driving force behind studies of the family within Shakespeare but the two studies are not entirely the same. Lynda Boose, in her 1987 “The Family in Shakespeare Studies; or – Studies in the Family of Shakespeareans; or – The Politics of Politics” article highlights the complex relationship between feminist and family studies:

Shakespearean feminism and Shakespeare studies in marriage, family, and gender were twinned together, have developed in tandem, and during their approximate twelve years of kinship have come to be locked together in a fierce embrace, ever more aware of the dangerous slippage between bonds and bondage. (Boose, “Family” 719)

In recent years, it has become possible to distinguish, to some degree, between works with a purely feminist concern and those which place more emphasis on the family structure within the plays.

Some of the works which consider the importance of the family and the gender identities created by the family structure include Janet Adelman’s *Suffocating Mothers*:

¹ The term “patriarchal bard” is taken from the title of McKluskie’s article: “The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare: King Lear and Measure for Measure.”

Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest (1992), Lynda Boose's "The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare" (1982) and "The Family in Shakespeare Studies; or – Studies in the Family of Shakespeareans; or – The Politics of Politics" (1987), Coppelia Kahn's *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (1981) and *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women* (1997), Marianne Novy's *Love's Argument: Gender Relations in Shakespeare* (1984) and, Frederic Tromly's *Fathers and Sons in Shakespeare: The Debt Never Promised* (2010).

All of these scholars, and many others, make use of Lawrence Stone's *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641* (1967) and *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500–1800*, published in 1977, which outline the use of family dynamics in Shakespeare's plays by placing them within their historical context. Stone's study is extensive and detailed but often fails to consider the ways in which Shakespeare challenges the norms of early modern society. Considering the period in which Shakespeare was writing (during and immediately after the reign of Elizabeth I), it is evident that questions of inheritance, obedience (to fathers, monarchs and countries) and patriarchy were prominent. In a period focused on the "patrilinear, primogenitural, and patriarchal" (Stone, *Crisis* 38), it seems strange that Shakespeare should be so willing to address a variety of family dynamics and so frequently question the power of patriarchy and the father. It is this aspect, the questioning of patriarchy, which also highlights the motivation behind studies of the family in Shakespeare. If the family serves as a microcosm for the greater community and, within the family, Shakespeare is challenging the authority of the patriarch then Shakespeare's plays actually challenge notions of authority altogether and insist on the autonomy of the individual. Thus a study of the plays' commentary on the interaction between the individual and the community can help achieve a greater understanding of the concerns in the plays with a social hierarchy rooted in the family nucleus. An emphasis on the role of the family thus places the plays firmly within their social setting. My interest in the family stems from the questions of autonomy and authority which the plays address. Shakespeare's forward-thinking representation of the family, in which the authority of parents and the restriction of children's autonomy is presented as negative, contributes to the continued applicability of the plays' content in different places and times.

Appropriations of Shakespeare

Just as the family in Shakespeare addresses authority and autonomy, studies of the appropriation of the plays explore various ways in which the authority within the plays can be

altered. If the first strand of criticism I have discussed examines the microcosm of the family within the early modern body politic, the second strand seems to take Shakespearean scholarship in the opposite direction: moving away from a concern with Shakespeare as an early modern playwright to the changing socio-political impact of Shakespeare's texts within history and in the global imaginary.

In the past few decades, increasing attention has been paid to the ways in which any meaning or significance to be gained from the plays can be understood as a product of the differently located responses in various time periods and cultures. As a result, we have come to consider 'Shakespeare' to be his work in numerous forms. As Bate argues: "the history of appropriation may suggest that 'Shakespeare' is not a man who lived from 1564 to 1616 but a body of work that is refashioned by each subsequent age in the image of itself" (Bate 3). The works of numerous scholars have examined the different engagements with Shakespeare throughout the world, including Gary Taylor's *Reinventing Shakespeare* (1990), Jean Marsden's *The Appropriation of Shakespeare* (1991), Michael Dobson's *The Making of the English National Poet* (1992), Brian Vickers's *Appropriating Shakespeare* (1993), and Thomas Cartelli's *Repositioning Shakespeare* (1999), to name but a few. These texts all explore the different ways in which Shakespeare is approached in different settings (both physical and temporal) particularly because of socio-political concerns and the ways in which Shakespeare himself appropriated his source texts when writing his plays:

What gives an appropriation political significance is the fact that it is transacted not only in relation to specific Shakespearean texts, but in relation to specific *constructions* of Shakespeare that are themselves the products of earlier appropriations and have thereby acquired a political significance of their own. (Cartelli 19)

The variety of these different engagements is also captured in the various terms used to indicate the 'use' of Shakespeare: his work is considered to be appropriated, reappropriated, reinvented and repositioned – all of which suggests an alteration of the source text into a new and socially relevant representation, either as text or performance. These engagements thus offer revisions of Shakespeare's texts both in allowing us to re-see the texts in a new context and in revising the concerns to be contextually relevant. Furthermore, within the broader definition of appropriations it is also possible to categorise appropriations, as Cartelli has done, into satiric appropriations, confrontational appropriations, transpositional appropriations, proprietary appropriations and dialogic appropriations (Cartelli 18). These categories cover any form of engagement with Shakespeare because, as Taylor has noted,

with every new performance, relocation, or interpretation, Shakespeare is reinvented (Taylor 5). Due to both the continued celebration and critique of Shakespeare's central positioning within the English literary canon, emphasis is now frequently placed on the ways in which the plays have functioned as a means to authorise a variety of subject positions, especially those marginalised by hegemonic power structures or speaking from different cultural standpoints. This is particularly the case in countries which were British colonies and where Shakespeare is considered to be part of a colonial inheritance which must be challenged or rejected.

The process of altering Shakespeare to make his texts more accessible and relevant is not a new process. As Dobson demonstrates in *The Making of the English National Poet*, the process of reworking Shakespearean texts began in the Restoration period (mid- to late 1600s). If the process itself is not new, however, the increased attention to this process is new in the history of Shakespearean scholarship. It is also likely to remain a central focus of Shakespearean scholarship as long as literary studies is concerned with the subject positioning and power of the reader and the ways in which the identity and context of the reader affects the reading of literary texts. This project will focus on reworkings and engagement with the plays within a South African context, which have always been complicated by the political power struggles within the country and its education system.

Shakespeare in South Africa

The first engagements with Shakespeare in South Africa, as with many other former colonies, involved the arrival of missionaries and the establishment of schools modelled on British schools. Shakespeare was thus a part of the colonial project in South Africa and formed part of the basic education all children attending school would receive. In his article "Whose Shakespeare? Early Black South African Engagement with Shakespeare," Brian Willan illustrates that it was not only through formal education that Shakespeare was introduced to black South Africans. Many schools adopted Shakespeare's plays into the school syllabus as part of the colonial project but many people were introduced to Shakespeare through stage productions. It was a stage production of *Hamlet* in Kimberley in 1897 by the "de Jong Haviland Company, one of a small number of travelling companies who brought Shakespeare (and other things besides) to the colonies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (Willan 3) which led to Sol Plaatjes's love for Shakespeare and his translations of the plays into Setswana – the first translation of the plays into an African language. For most of the early twentieth century therefore, Shakespeare was approached in South Africa in much the

same way as in the rest of the world, both as literature and as physical drama. Primarily, however, his plays were seen as part of the great selection of English works with which to educate the rest of the world. Natasha Distiller explains the use of Shakespeare in South Africa thus:

‘Shakespeare’, as a body of texts and as an icon of education and civility, was a key component of the literature disseminated during colonial education systems’ development. And yet the engagement with ‘Shakespeare’ by Africans is not any less ‘African’ for being implicated in cultural imperialism. There is a history of South Africans finding uses for Shakespeare. This is clear in critical and creative works which respond to, rely on, or utilise Shakespeare as a body of texts, as indicative of educational status and ability, and/or symbolically useful. (Distiller 41)

For Distiller, then, Shakespeare within South Africa was part of the international project of representing civilized, British rule but there was also, crucially, the desire to make Shakespeare relevant to the South African context.

Because access to power and education in South Africa has, for much of its history, been determined along racial and ethnic lines “to speak of Shakespeare in South Africa is to speak into a complex network of (political, historical, and linguistic) issues” (Distiller 47) particularly with the victory of the National Party in 1948 and the introduction of apartheid governance. Recent studies into the role of Shakespeare in education have highlighted how Shakespeare’s plays continued to be taught as an exemplary form of English culture. In *Shakespeare and South Africa* (1996), David Johnson highlights the conservative construction of Shakespeare in South African schools:

The nature of [Shakespeare’s] relationship both to his own context and to South Africa of the 1970s was assumed to be of no concern to teachers and students; and his plays were studied with a view to discovering the peculiarities of individual characters and the conservative themes encoded in the plot. (Johnson 200)

Within education, therefore, the plays were considered as texts removed from any social context and valued solely for plot and characterisation. (This limited engagement with Shakespeare continues in many secondary schools today.) Shakespeare was not only studied at school level, however, many of his former students, became political activists and prisoners, and turned to his plays as a means through which to couch their experiences in universal terms.

During the apartheid era, the struggle could be communicated and explored through Shakespeare's plays; the use of Shakespeare on Robben Island comes to mind in this regard. In the recently published *Reading Revolution: Shakespeare on Robben Island* (2012), Ashwin Desai highlights the various ways in which Shakespeare's plays, both as performance and as text, were an intricate part of prison culture and apartheid defiance. The Robben Island Bible, a complete works of Shakespeare on the island, bears testament to the importance of Shakespeare to political prisoners. In the text, thirty-two prisoners marked and signed quotations which were used to discuss "political and moral issues relating to the anti-apartheid struggle and what might follow its overthrow" (Battersby and Hahn para. 5). Those who 'signed' the 'bible' included Walter Sisulu, Govan Mbeki, Thabo Mbeki, and many other leaders of the black consciousness movement and other anti-apartheid movements. Quotations were taken from political plays (such as *Julius Caesar* which appears to have been a favourite for Nelson Mandela), tragedies (such as *King Lear* and *Hamlet*) and comedies (Govan Mbeki selected "If music be the food of love" from *Twelfth Night* as his favourite quotation). Engagements were not limited to political prisoners on Robben Island, however. In *Shakespeare against Apartheid* (1987) Martin Orkin considers the ways in which the plays addressed issues pertinent to the political struggle throughout South Africa. In his work, he offers:

a brief introduction to *Hamlet*, *Othello* and *King Lear*, three of Shakespeare's plays which raise issues of particular interest to a South African audience. I attempt to argue that we should, when we study Shakespeare, more readily and extensively acknowledge who, as well as where, we are. (Orkin 20)

For Orkin, therefore, the study of Shakespeare must take into account the context of the reader or audience. Specific plays, such as *King Lear* and *Hamlet* may have more bearing on a political situation than *Much Ado about Nothing* but it is always possible to relate a play by Shakespeare to a contemporary scenario. The selection of *Hamlet* and *Othello* by Orkin is repeated by Johnson who suggests that those two plays, together with *The Tempest*, are the most frequently studied plays in South Africa (Johnson 6).

Shakespeare was not only relevant to prisoners on Robben Island, however, and stage productions of the plays were also used as a means to protest the injustices of apartheid. Janet Suzman's production of *Othello* in the Market Theatre in 1987 was a blatant challenge to the apartheid government. Her production showcased John Kani as Othello and she explained her decision to produce the play (rather than boycott South African theatre) as follows: "One

must do what one must do. Putting on *Othello* with John Kani is infinitely more important than stamping my foot and saying, ‘I won’t set foot in the country’” (“John Kani” para. 6). It was not only as a means of protesting apartheid injustices that Shakespeare was used however. Welcome Msomi’s *Umabatha* (1970) is a stage adaption of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* into IsiZulu which uses Macbeth’s murder of Duncan to tell the story of Shaka’s assassination by Dingane. The play has been performed with great acclaim internationally with performances in the United States and at the Globe theatre in London. Msomi notes that he chose Macbeth as a vehicle through which to retell Zulu history so that “the world at large would be able to understand and follow the intended play” (Msomi “Preface”, n.p.). With *Macbeth* as his chosen medium Msomi hoped to “show the world the diversity of [South African] cultures” (Msomi “Introduction” n.p.). His IsiZulu adaptation examines community, authority and the consequences of the distortion of social relationships. As a retelling of *Macbeth*, *Umabatha* speaks as much of the importance of authority within an indigenous South African culture as it does to the tragedy which ensues when communal relations are undermined by ambition. *Umabatha* also shows a reverence for Shakespeare’s play and the ability to apply the story it tells in a different cultural context.

The end of apartheid did not signal the end of Shakespeare in South Africa, and since 1994 Shakespeare’s plays have continued to be revised and performed. John Matshikiza, the director of a June 1994 production of *Julius Caesar* at the Windybrow Theatre in Johannesburg, argues that “Shakespeare doesn’t belong to Margaret Thatcher and the British. His themes are universal, and can be made explicable wherever he is performed in the world” (Matshikiza, quoted in Johnson 201). Antony Sher and Gregory Doran share Matshikiza’s sentiments and their work *Woza Shakespeare!: Titus Andronicus in South Africa* provides an account of the challenges they faced in producing a multi-racial stage production of *Titus Andronicus* in 1996. The universal themes in Shakespeare’s canon, and the possibility for applying those themes to specific locations, allows for Sol Plaatje’s translations, Welcome Msomi’s *Umabatha*, Janet Suzman’s *Othello* and the incorporation of numerous themes and quotations from Shakespeare’s plays into countless South African novels, plays and poems. It is in the incorporation of themes and quotations that it is possible to see the coming together of studies of the family in Shakespeare and South African appropriations of Shakespeare.

The Family in Shakespearean Engagements

This study focuses on three novels by South African authors which may be said to make use of Shakespeare in a South African context: R.L. Peteni’s *Hill of Fools* (1976), Nadine

Gordimer's *My Son's Story* (1990) and, J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (2005). Each of these novels draws on aspects of different Shakespearean texts and adapt these to examine the means by which relations of power, gender and authority within families speak to wider power dynamics in South Africa. These works are not straightforward retellings of a Shakespearean work, but complex re-engagements which deploy the plays not as source texts but instead as intertextual resources in which the exploration of a particular family dynamic in one of the plays may have considerable resonance within a contemporary South African setting. The South African texts selected each represent a different time within South Africa's recent history. *Hill of Fools* is situated during apartheid within a rural community in the Ciskei, a homeland, and is therefore able to address the consequences of apartheid on a rural family and the community to which it belongs. In *My Son's Story*, Gordimer has placed her novel in apartheid South Africa, immediately following the state of emergency and just before the end of apartheid, in an urban setting. The last text to be studied, *Disgrace*, is placed in post-apartheid South Africa, and, in alternating between a rural and urban setting, addresses the concerns of subjectivity and authority in post-apartheid South Africa as it is found in both the rural and the urban. Each chapter of this thesis addresses one South African text and the Shakespearean text(s) with which it engages. The chapters each seek to highlight the ways in which the Shakespearean texts and the South African texts are in dialogue with one another through a consideration of the function of the family structure within each text. As each South African text is written during a different period (temporal and physical) in recent South African history, each chapter includes a brief discussion of the socio-political circumstances which are relevant to each respective novel.

Peteni's *Hill of Fools* (1976) appeared at a crucial time in South African history and, as Peteni himself notes, there are clear echoes of a *Romeo and Juliet* story in the novel. Some aspects of Shakespeare's version of the story have been mirrored, such as the violent but inexplicable conflict between two communities and the love between two teenagers from these communities. Yet Peteni's text offers an engagement with the story told in Shakespeare's text in the way that the community has a far greater role to play in the events of the plot, and it is this movement away from the nuclear family dynamic which leads me to consider the novel to be part of the tragic love genre, of which *Romeo and Juliet* is a part, rather than a South African retelling of *Romeo and Juliet*. *Hill of Fools* is also an examination of patterns of familial relationships within modern South Africa. By placing the novel in a rural context during apartheid, Peteni is able, through his attention to the restricted mobility of the lovers, to address consequences of apartheid, such as the problems faced by migrant

workers and their families. He also explores the ways in which gender power dynamics and social structures can alter the lives of individuals.

Nadine Gordimer's *My Son's Story* (1990) is written just before the fall of apartheid and the influence of the wider socio-political environment on domestic and private relationships is an important core of the novel. Gordimer offers a detailed view of a family torn apart by "father-child conflicts", and the novel's difficult familial dynamics are, as Karin Moller suggests, transposed from both *Hamlet* and *King Lear* (162). The novel echoes these two plays in its attention to the means by which political authority affects the private sphere. *My Son's Story* explores the tragedy which ensues when the socio-political encroaches on the family. Through his involvement in South African politics and his attempt to participate in the overthrow of an unjust authority, Will's father, Sonny, becomes involved with Hannah, a political activist. This affair, a direct result of his political activity, leads to the neglect of his wife and children and the eventual dissolution of his nuclear family. Will's knowledge of the affair undermines Sonny's authority as a father and Will blames Sonny's political activism for leading to the affair. The severance of the relationship between father and son because of the socio-political environment echoes the severing of the relationship between Hamlet and Gertrude, and the breakdown of Sonny's relationship with his daughter Baby recalls Lear's conflicted relationship with his three daughters. Also of importance in the novel is a concern with the creation of a legacy. In this respect, the novel pays attention to Shakespeare's sonnets in which writing poetry is portrayed as a means with which to ensure the immortality of both poet and subject. While no single Shakespearean text can be related to this novel, the importance of Sonny's role as an English teacher and his love of Shakespeare encourages such a comparison especially when combined with Sonny's desire that his son, named for Shakespeare, become a writer. *My Son's Story's* engagement with Shakespeare is the most complex of the texts studied. It deploys a wide range of reference to both the plays and the sonnets and includes a consideration of the role of Shakespeare in the creation of a South African author.

J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (2005) is a novel that has been examined as a key text of the post-apartheid era. The case of *Disgrace* offers perhaps the greatest challenge in this project in articulating how an intertextual relationship to a Shakespearean play might function. The novel has been explored as a rewriting of *The Tempest* by Laurence Wright who argues "that the intertextual engagement is more than fully determinative" ("*Coetzee's Tempest*" 314). While some aspects of the novel are derived from *The Tempest*, other elements are in no way indebted to the play. Where Wright's work only touches on the inversion of the relationship

between Lurie and Lucy when compared with Miranda and Prospero, my study will consider both texts through the lens of the relationship between father and daughter and thus extend the implications of the novel's commentary on the South African community in the post-apartheid period. The possibility of the father's re-entry into society is of vital importance in both texts, and in both cases this is only made possible through his relationship with his daughter. The interesting 'alteration' made by Coetzee is that while Lucy is, like Miranda, her father's ticket back into society, the authority by which Lurie might re-enter is, unlike Prospero's, Lucy's and not his own – which he views as compromised and radically diminished by the contemporary socio-political context. This alteration illustrates the effects of a post-apartheid society on the dynamics between father and daughter and emphasises the resonance of the Shakespearean play in various contexts and cultures. There is also a consideration of the role and reach of reconciliation within both texts and the importance of accepting guilt links Prospero's forced exile with Lurie's decision to exile himself to Salem. If *Disgrace* has a relationship to *The Tempest*, as Laurence Wright has argued, then any resemblance between the novel and the play raises questions about the extent to which the reader's interpretation of one text is pre-determined by knowledge of another. A central element to comparing these two texts is the way in which they challenge notions of authority and a comparison of the ways in which Lurie and Prospero attempt to control others adds further complexities to each character and the authority they are able to exercise within their social spheres.

The use of Shakespeare and his plays within these three South African texts is thus varied and provides a spectrum of the works, with *Romeo and Juliet* being among the early plays, *Hamlet* and *King Lear* written in Shakespeare's middle period, and *The Tempest* generally considered the last play written solely by Shakespeare. While many aspects of these three engagements with Shakespeare are different, a unifying element is the way in which each of these South African engagements with Shakespeare address questions of authority and autonomy. In all of the texts in this project, Shakespearean and South African, there is a deliberate assertion of authority by a parent, or both parents, in order to protect their child, or children, from becoming entangled in the complexities of the socio-political environment in which they live. This assertion of dominance is also, however, an attempt to change the parental bond into familial bondage as the child is forced to sacrifice their autonomy for their relationship with the parent. This desire to control the younger generation – both for their own protection and as a final illustration of dominance – is prevalent in all societies and at all times and offers an opportunity to consider texts written in such vastly different environments

(early modern England and late twentieth century South Africa) within the same study. The similarities of such assertions of authority and autonomy within the family in the South African and Shakespearean texts relies, however, on the reader identifying an intertextual relationship.

Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a very broad term which exceeds a single unified definition. I will be making use of this breadth throughout my analyses because there is no single umbrella term under which the South African texts examined in this project can be compared. At its most basic, intertextuality can be understood as the notion that “every text has its meaning [...] in relation to other texts (Allen 6). While this definition may be useful, it is also vague, open to interpretation, and has numerous consequences for literary studies. The presence of a relationship between texts can be deliberate on the part of the author, can be a subconscious action, can be deliberately inferred by the reader, or can be a combination of these. In each instance, the relationship influences the interpretation and meaning of the text itself.

Intertextuality is thus both cause and effect. It is because writing is always influenced by other writing that the subjectivity of writing can itself be called into question. It was Julia Kristeva, responding to Mikhail Bakhtin, who first coined the term ‘intertextuality’ in her reformulation of Bakhtin’s notion of ‘dialogism’. Bakhtin’s writing makes no mention of the term ‘intertextuality’ and his focus is on specific authors and their use of language in general.

In *The Dialogic Imagination* (1975), Bakhtin argues that a dialogic text is one that is always in dialogue with other texts and authors. His argument is not limited to literature alone, language itself is dialogic. Most importantly, the relationship between texts is a dialogue and both texts are continually informed by this relationship: an earlier text is greatly enhanced by a text in dialogue with it, just as the response has been informed by the original. In Bakhtin’s words: “Being heard as such is already a dialogic relation. The word wants to be heard, understood, responded to, and again to respond to the response, and so forth ad infinitum” (Bakhtin, *Speech* 127) The relationship is thus not one in which a text can respond to or correct an earlier text – there is a continual dialogue (through the engagement of a reader or author) between the texts. Also important to consider is that dialogic literature is in communication with numerous works. When we say, for instance, that a novel is in dialogue with an earlier poem, we are also acknowledging that the novel is in dialogue with all of the influences which led to the creation of the poem, and vice versa. All of the works in dialogue are influenced by the dialogue and so it is a matter of continual influence rather than one of

immediate response. In considering the dialogue between texts, however, it is easy to place too much emphasis on sources or remove the text from its setting and consider it to be “a particular density among a myriad codes or discourses, whose origins cannot be traced and which stretch to the horizon in all directions” (Dentith 95). To combat the tendency to remove the importance of reader and writer from dialogism, Bakhtin introduces the notion of heteroglossia. Through heteroglossia, the text is once more fixed within its social setting and its sources are now extended to include social locations. Simon Dentith explains heteroglossia as follows:

The Bakhtinian notion of heteroglossia marks a qualitative move forward [...] It radically transforms the question of sources, making them a matter not just of individual influences or borrowing, but of the socially located languages that each and every text manages in its own particular way. (Dentith 95)

For Bakhtin, therefore, there is always a dialogue between texts but the extent of that dialogue is restricted by the social context of the texts and is “meaningful only to individuals who are related by some common conditions of life” (Bakhtin, *Speech* 166).

Kristeva suggests that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva 37). Working from Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism, Kristeva argues that “the notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of intersubjectivity” once we realise that a text’s meaning is not simply created by the transfer of information from author to reader (Kristeva 67). Instead, meaning is created, and mediated, by ‘codes’ which are communicated from author to reader through texts apart from the text engaged with immediately. Kristeva also adopts aspects of Barthes’s definition of text as “a multi-dimensional space in which writings, none of them original, blend and clash” (Barthes 146). Eventually, however, Kristeva came to regret some of the uses to which the term ‘intertextuality’ was put as it came to mean any interaction between two or more texts (Dentith 94). The reason for this is that intertextuality “has a history of different articulations which reflect the distinct historical situations out of which it has emerged” (Allen 52) and “constantly changes its aspect following the perspective chosen by the recipient” (Plett 22). Essentially, the problem with intertextuality is that it is ultimately limitless and thus opens the question of where to establish boundaries. This boundlessness allows a reader to discover intertextuality where an author has not intended it and to suggest a stronger intertextual relationship between two texts which may only be connected through a mutual source text.

It is important to remain conscious here of the fact that Shakespeare himself worked with source material for his plays. Stephen Lynch explores the ways in which Shakespeare worked with a mosaic of texts and with the social concerns of the early modern period. Many of the plays (including *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *King Lear*) were versions of well known stories which Shakespeare's audience would most certainly have encountered. Other plays adopted sections from Plutarch's writings on the Roman Empire (such as *Julius Caesar* and *Antony and Cleopatra*) while still others made use of recent English history (commonly classified as his 'History' plays). Shakespeare's texts are also of course heavily indebted to the socio-political and cultural preoccupations of the early modern period (including travels to the New World, questions of succession, and the conflict between nature and art). Shakespeare's plays are thus in constant dialogue with other texts and plays of the period: well known stories, ancient Roman history, English history, and the social climate within which he was writing. His plays therefore illustrate that intertextuality is not limited to fiction but also incorporate "discourses in circulation" during a specific period (Belsey 407). The dialogue between texts is, as Bakhtin suggested, one which extends beyond text and into language itself. Intertextuality, even when only applied to one author, is thus a multi-faceted occurrence which is difficult to define in terms of a single relationship. Rather than explore intertextuality itself, however, this project will explore the effects of intertextuality, in its various forms, on the reading of these South African texts when combined with Shakespearean plays.

Each of the three South African texts studied engages with its Shakespearean counterpart, or (in the case of *My Son's Story*) counterparts, in a different way. All of these engagements will be referred to as intertextuality as they all illustrate a dialogue between two or more texts. The bond which these texts all share is the importance of the family and it is here that the two strands considered in this study meet. It is through a consideration of the family within these texts that an intertextual relationship can be established. Once this relationship has been established it is possible to examine some of the various ways in which Shakespeare has been deployed, referenced or reappropriated into South African fiction. The family, key in all of these texts, provides a base from which to consider the intertextual relationship between early modern plays and sonnets and twentieth-century South African novels. The Shakespeare texts thus function as 'parent' texts to the South African texts and, in doing so, illustrate the way in which parental bonds influence the identity of the child. This study will thus consider the familial intertextuality of these texts as linking the early modern period with apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa.

The Dissolution of Familial Structures in *Hill of Fools*

R. L. Peteni's *Hill of Fools* was first published in 1976 by David Philip in South Africa, and by Heinemann, in the African Writers Series, internationally. The novel was also translated by the author into isiXhosa and is available as *Kwazidenge*. It has received little critical attention and Peteni is a largely unknown South African author. A search for criticism on *Hill of Fools* will provide little more than a study guide and a handful of articles – neither Peteni nor his novel are even mentioned in the recently published *Columbia Guide to South African Literature in English Since 1945* (2011)(Cornwell, Kloppe and Mackenzie). Initial reactions to the novel criticised its apolitical nature and found the simplicity of the novel offensive. For instance, in her report to Heinemann in June 1973, Ros de Lanerolle asked:

How can a competent writer (he is) in S. A. in 1973 expend his energy on a tale of simple tribal life – a moral tale, what's worse? Zuziwe's love for a boy of another tribe leads to a 'faction fight' in which a boy of her own tribe is killed. (qtd. in Currey 17)

De Lanerolle's response is indicative of the prevalence of political concerns in South African literature during the 1970s and also hints at the reason for Peteni's decision to largely avoid over-engagement with apartheid South Africa – the subject was being addressed in a variety of different ways by a number of other authors. Instead, as noted in "My Novel, *Hill of Fools*",² Peteni sought to address a problem he found to be prevalent in all communities and at all times – conflict between two feuding communities and the influence of that conflict on individual members – because "there is always drama and human conflict in the humblest rural village" (Peteni, "My Novel" 27). Other critics have been less condemnatory of Peteni's lack of political engagement and have focused more on the simplicity of the story, with M. Mahood finding it "artless but authentic" (Mahood 260). On the subtlety of the political awareness, Mahood suggests that "Mr Peteni makes one forceful protest: his heroine is driven to abortion and death by the 'endorsing out' of black South Africans from East London; the modus vivendi worked out by black and white elements in a rural world is profoundly disturbed by national policies" (*ibid.*). Both of these aspects – the authenticity of the story and its brief address of the impact of the apartheid government – argues Mahood, make the novel "moving and meaningful to many readers" (Mahood 260). The novel details the story of two young people from the different tribes, Zuziwe (a Hlubi) and Bhuqa (a Thembu) who

² "My Novel, *Hill of Fools*", which appeared as an article in the 2004 special edition on *Hill of Fools* in *English in Africa*, is a transcribed and edited version of a lecture delivered by Peteni on 7 July 1977 at the National Arts Festival, Grahamstown.

fall in love and embark on an affair which results in Zuziwe's pregnancy. It is not only the feud between their communities that they have to contend with, as Zuziwe is already engaged to Ntabeni, a church deacon. Her parents, Mvangeli and Mamiya Langa, are willing to support her rejection of Ntabeni but her brother, Duma, is firmly against her relationship with Bhuqa. In a faction fight, provoked by Ntabeni, Bhuqa kills Zuziwe's cousin, Katana, and the only option for the lovers is to move away together. When this proves impossible, Zuziwe aborts her child and haemorrhages to death. The novel concludes with Bhuqa, who has defied his father's wish that he marry a girl from his own village, living in Port Elizabeth and married to a girl from a different clan. The basic outline of the story thus highlights the difficulty of young love escaping the confines of a conflicted society. Why, then, does a relatively unknown novel warrant discussion in a consideration of South African engagements with Shakespeare's texts? The way in which *Hill of Fools* brings together an analysis of the family in Shakespeare's plays and a consideration of Shakespeare in a contemporary South African setting is through an intertextual relationship between the novel and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. This relationship was highlighted by Peteni himself in the *Sunday Tribune* when he suggested that the novel was "a black Romeo and Juliet drama" ("Shocked Parents" 6). It is important to note that Peteni does not suggest that the novel is a rewriting of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* but rather that it is a drama of the 'Romeo and Juliet' type in which the protagonists are black, with all of the implications that the term carried during apartheid South Africa. Peteni's distinction highlights an important consideration when discussing the intertextual relationship between texts: the difference between one text deliberately rewriting another and two texts belonging to the same genre.

***Romeo and Juliet* and the Genre of Tragic Love**

To begin with it is essential to distinguish between Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and a Romeo and Juliet story. The former refers specifically to the play as written by Shakespeare and as adapted by a number of authors and playwrights since, while the latter appeals to a thematic tool (and common plot) in literature. The love story of Romeo and Juliet is one which far exceeds the limits of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. R. White explains the scope which a Romeo and Juliet story covers as follows:

the phrase 'Romeo and Juliet' has become proverbial, two names fused into a single concept signifying a certain kind of love and certain kind of tragic destiny ... They refer to young lovers from 'different sides of the tracks,' divided by their families who represent warring religious or

ethnic groups or who disapprove for other reasons of their children's choices in love. They die for their love, either as a result of social persecution or in acts of self-destruction. (White 2)

The story has its roots as an Italian folktale which was adapted and translated into French by Pierre Boaistuau, a French author (1560), as well as translated and adapted into English by Arthur Brooke, an English author (1562). Ultimately, the Italian 'original,' Brooke's poem, and Shakespeare's play all explore the effects of conflict between two families – how it affects two young lovers and the society they inhabit. This central focus is prominent in many 'star-crossed lover' stories, those which are identifiably 'Romeo and Juliet' love stories as well as those in which the lovers are manifestly different. John O'Connor explores the different ways in which the Romeo and Juliet story is applied. There is the classic interpretation of "young lovers suffering because they come from different ethnic or religious communities" or a couple "connoting defiance in the face of oppressive convention" particularly in instances of forced marriage, or even more simply as victims of a "class divide" which "creates the right environment for impossible young love" (O'Connor 22). The immense variety of stories which include these elements suggests that any story in which an obstacle (created by a difference determined by society) must be surmounted by two contextually divided lovers may be influenced by Shakespeare's play. The caveat that "the general type of story represented by *Romeo and Juliet* has its roots in folklore and mythology" and is "best described as a separation-romance" (Evans 6) should not be ignored, however. The basic story Shakespeare uses is not of his own creation (though it is undoubtedly the best known in the English-speaking world). Moreover, not all English 'Romeo and Juliet' plots necessarily derive from Shakespeare's play "because Romeo and Juliet are anyone's for the asking" (Evans 6). For instance in 1901, Frederick Delius composed an operatic adaptation (*A Village Romeo and Juliet*) of Gottfried Keller's *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (1875) in which the lovers are Swiss peasants who are "casualties of a land dispute between their parents" (Conrad 65).

Part of the appeal of the Romeo and Juliet love story is that it is relevant to so many different cultures and time periods, with the result that "*Romeo and Juliet* seems less anchored to its era than do many other Elizabethan plays" (Bruster 61). The story of Romeo and Juliet is now so well known that it has achieved its own status as a genre with a variety of different stories falling into that genre. This is particularly evident in media parlance where "a 'Romeo and Juliet' couple are essentially any young lovers thwarted in one way or another by a divided or oppressive society" (O'Connor 23). There are also other elements which are often present (such as violence), but ultimately a divided social environment is vital. Another common

aspect is “the powerful overbearing patriarch” (O’Connor 24). As a couple, Romeo and Juliet symbolise thwarted young lovers but the fame of the lovers is so widespread that Romeo, separated from Juliet, symbolises something different and is usually a figure of fun or derision (O’Connor 26) – as Romeo is when in love with Rosaline. Ultimately, *Romeo and Juliet*, like all of Shakespeare’s plays, appeals to audiences, readers and artists alike because it addresses a problem which is universal. As O’Connor argues:

if the emotions experienced by Shakespeare’s characters – love, hate, jealousy, loss – are those that have been experienced by people throughout history and regardless of geography, and if the same can be said about the actions they perform – killing, stealing, kissing, betraying – then it is quibbling to reject ‘universal’ as an epithet for the characters themselves. (O’Connor 12)

The clearest indication of the universality of the play is its transformation from Italian folktale into international love story: a story with Italian roots now enjoying continued relevance in contemporary global culture.

Italian and French Roots

The story of tragic lovers has numerous sources but the story of the children of the Cappelletti and Montecchi became particularly “popular in Renaissance Italy” (Bullough 269) through Dante:

stories of star-crossed love, replete with plotlines involving sleeping potions and arranged marriages, may be traced back as far as ancient Greece, but it is not until the late Italian Renaissance that this theme becomes widely popular, materializing in the legend of Romeo and Giulietta. This legend has its origins in the historical feud of the Montecchi and the Cappelletti, political factions that eventually became associated with two hostile families. Though knowledge of the ‘ancient grudge’ between the households had virtually passed from Italian popular memory by the end of the thirteenth century, Dante revived interest in the Cappelletti and the Montecchi by invoking them in his *Purgatorio* as an example of the destructive nature of civil strife. (Lehmann 198)

Dante’s reference to Romeo and Juliet is not the only reference to the story and there are numerous Italian Renaissance texts which make use of the tragic love plot. Masuccio Salernitano’s *Il Novellino* (1476) includes the story of two lovers who are separated when the husband is exiled for killing a prominent citizen shortly after they have been married secretly by a Friar. The wife, to avoid being forced to marry a man of her father’s choosing, drinks a sleeping potion and feigns death. A message is sent to her husband but is interrupted by pirates and he is beheaded after rushing to her tomb following the news of her death; she dies in a

convent. This story provides the basic outline of two lovers united in secret and separated through deaths caused by the society in which they live. In Luigi da Porto's *Istoria Novellamente Ritrovata di due Nobili Amanti* (c. 1530) "the tale comes nearer to Shakespeare" (Bullough 270) and sets the format the play would later adopt (Levenson, "Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*" 45). The Montecchi and Cappelletti are feuding families in Verona and their children, Romeo and Giulietta, fall in love at a ball. The rest of the tale follows the same pattern as that later used by Shakespeare with a few variations, the most notable being: Giulietta asks the Friar for poison to "free [her] from grief and Romeo from shame" (qtd. in Bullough 271); Romeo exiles himself after murdering Theobaldo Cappelletti; and in the final scene, Giulietta awakes before Romeo dies from the poison (after which she stops breathing). There are other interpretations, also written around the same period, but the novella by Matteo Bandello is generally accepted to have been the primary influence on Brooke (who in turn became the source for Shakespeare's play). Bandello's *Le Novella del Bandello* (1554) "is intended to warn young people that they should govern their desires and not run into furious passions" (Bullough 271). The story is much the same as da Porto's in basic outline with a few variations all of which link it more closely to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* – the most important being that in Bandello's version Giulietta hopes that she "shall be the one to bring peace to these two households through her marriage" (Levenson, "Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare" 335). As with da Porto's version, however, Julietta awakes before Romeo has died and "before he dies he regrets the death of Tibaldo and urges Julietta to live" (Bullough 272). Julietta decides she cannot live without Romeo, holds him and dies without another word. Bandello adds on to the format produced by da Porto by establishing the 'style' of the story which "invited the audience to judge the story as if they were participating in a rhetorical occasion" (Levenson, "Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*" 45). Bandello's text thus suggests that the subject matter is familiar enough for a reader to participate in the judgement of the characters but "with the authority assumed by the Renaissance *histore*, [he] comments on the action, instructing the reader how to understand the story" (Levenson, "Romeo and Juliet before Shakespeare" 338).

While it seems unlikely that Shakespeare was familiar with the Italian versions of the story, he did have access to William Painter's 1567 translation of Pierre Boaistuau's French adaptation of Bandello's 1554 work (Wells 1; Evans 7). Boaistuau's work is notable for its emphasis on "moralizing and sentiment" (Bullough 272) which is not present in Bandello's "plain, naturalistic style" (*ibid.*). This adaptation adds a number of extra details which are incorporated into Shakespeare's version, many of which involve the use of rhetoric to support

emotional turmoil; in Boaistuau's version, Juliet laments the loss of both her cousin and her husband, and Capulet reacts violently against his disobedient daughter. Other additions (vital to Shakespeare's play) are: the presence of the apothecary (who is hanged for his crime), Juliet's death at her own hand by Romeo's dagger (there is no exchange between the lovers as Romeo dies before Juliet awakes) and the explanation provided by the friar (which results in his forgiveness). Like Bandello's version, the focus is on the lovers and the results of their passion. Boaistuau's story, and therefore Painter's translation, is interesting because of "the variety of strange accidents, the novelty of so rare and perfect amity, and its illustration of the violence of passion" but neither author shows "moral disapproval" (Bullough 275). The love story of Romeo and Juliet is thus simply a love story. There may be some indication of the role played by the external world but ultimately the focus is divided between the two lovers who are separated because of their identities within their own families and the external chaos in society.

Shakespeare's Version

By the time Shakespeare wrote his version of Romeo and Juliet the love story was already well known. The love story of Romeo and Juliet "was popular in the reign of Elizabeth" (Bullough 275) and Brooke's poem "The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet," published in 1562, was reprinted in 1582 and 1587. Painter's translation appeared in 1567. Both of these texts would thus have been available to Shakespeare and it is possible that he familiarised himself with both while writing his play. The popularity of Romeo and Juliet provided a challenge to Shakespeare: in order for his play to be successful it had to appeal to an audience which already knew the likely ending of the story. Rather than alter the conclusion of the story, Shakespeare's play builds on the story as presented by Brooke and Painter. Both Brooke and Painter "offered ... a public and private dimension: the blood-feud with its larger social implications in the life of a city state and the intimate, private love of two young people tragically caught in the web of a world inimical to their private vision" (Evans 8) but Shakespeare's use of the public/private divide places far more emphasis on the way in which the two domains influence one another. The focus on the divide is central to the play and "Shakespeare established this important duality in the first scene" (*ibid.*) which stresses the atmosphere of discord which will haunt the lovers and their union throughout the play. From the opening scene it is already clear that Shakespeare wishes to increase the scope of the play by emphasising its public aspect in the opening lines and then embarking on "the comedy of the underlings [which] presents the whole complex of hate and disorder against which the lovers are to move" (Bullough 278)

before introducing Romeo and Juliet. (Brooke describes the lovers immediately after his summary of events in his poem.) This interplay between the chaos of society and the unity of the lovers continues throughout *Romeo and Juliet* and is what most clearly separates the structure of Shakespeare's play from Brooke's poem. Throughout the play "Shakespeare modulates from the public to the private ... and makes Romeo's conventional passion express itself in contradictions and paradoxes suited to the pattern of the whole play" (Bullough 278), thus presenting his audience with familiar content presented in a new, and challenging, format. Apart from the increased interaction between the public and the private realms, and possibly as a result of this, there is also a greater description of the Nurse and Mercutio. Though both of these characters are present in Brooke's poem, it is Shakespeare who provides them with full characterisation and uses them as a foil to the lovers through their burlesque approach to sexuality and love. Similarly, while Shakespeare follows the more sympathetic approach adopted by the speaker in Brooke's poem, Brooke's "sympathy is with the parents, and the lovers' deaths are seen as a righteous punishment for their disobedience" (O'Connor 28).³ Brooke does not condemn the Friar and emphasises "Juliet's modesty and Romeo's integrity" (Bullough 277). (Lawrence Stone's reading of *Romeo and Juliet* as a commentary on the tragedy which results from filial disobedience seems more suited to a reading of Brooke's poem than Shakespeare's play.) Shakespeare outlines the different ways in which everyone in the society is affected by the tragedy and his *Romeo and Juliet* thus approaches the well known story of two ill-fated lovers from different angles. Shakespeare may have "found his subject well laid out and ready for quick dramatization" (Bullough 278) in Brooke's poem but it was "told with a turgid emotionalism and pedestrian repetitiveness" (*ibid.*). Part of Shakespeare's contribution to the Romeo and Juliet love story was to improve upon his source, preserving most of it, while adding a new complexity by exploring the interplay of individual and community. Following Shakespeare's dramatisation of the well known story, Romeo and Juliet moved away from literature and towards the physical arts: music and dance.

Romeo and Juliet in Music and Dance

In the chapter, "Romeos, Juliets, and Music," from his book, *To Be Continued: Four Stories and Their Survival*, Peter Conrad focuses on the ways in which the play has been adapted into musical pieces, operas, classical music pieces, and ballets. He attributes this movement away from language and literature to the Romantic desire to transcend the language of Shakespeare's

³ Brooke himself, however, in his "Address to the Reader", accuses the lovers of lust and disobedience and declares that they bring shame to themselves, their families and the institution of marriage, both by their marriage and their suicides.

play and aspire to music which rescues the poetry from “adulteration by drama” (Conrad 48). Essentially, these works illustrate that the names Romeo and Juliet became “a convenient shorthand; they were the embodiment of a local, contemporary idea of love which is continually amended by time and space” (Conrad 65). As such, the central ideas could remain while the setting was moved to different performance genres which did not use words. An illustration of this is the use of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* by two Russian writers. Stanley Wells suggests that “there is no reason to suppose that Tchaikovsky went beyond Shakespeare for his immensely popular fantasy overture of 1869, or Prokofiev and his choreographers for their ballet” (Wells 4). Each was aware of the story in its Shakespearean form and chose to adapt it from that form. Both Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev chose to interpret the play as “an indictment of the state and its persecution of individuals” (Conrad 83) and to use it as such in their own works. Tchaikovsky, writing in 1869, begins with a prohibition of the (as yet unrealised) love of Romeo and Juliet and “with Church and State already advertising their disapproval, the lovers have only a brief, fugitive interval of lyricism” (*ibid.*) before their tragic deaths. In 1934, Prokofiev also adapted *Romeo and Juliet* into a ballet but as he was working in “a culture in which classics were tolerated only if they underwent political transformation” he quickly used his work as a “denunciation of the power which interfered with its creation” (Conrad 84). These two works illustrate the universality of the love story; while for Shakespeare “the story of Romeo and Juliet starkly exposed the limits of Renaissance humanism” (Conrad 88), it is also used to “mourn the frustration of Romantic idealism” by Prokofiev who “makes it take cognizance of a Twentieth-Century tragedy: it becomes an account of the breach between modernism and revolution, and the betrayal of revolutionary hopes by totalitarianism” (Conrad 89).

It is not only as an adaptation of Shakespeare’s play that the story of Romeo and Juliet is altered to make social commentary. In Bellini’s opera, *I Capuleti e I Montecchi* (1830), the story is transposed into a “test case of the factionalism that fragmented Italy between the internecine battles of the thirteenth century and the country’s eventual unification later in the nineteenth” and so “the lovers matter here less as individuals than as members of their families, which is why the opera is named after the belligerent clans” (Conrad 64). The two lovers function as indicators of the tragedy which befalls the whole society, rather than experiencing their own tragedies of identity. The play draws on the original Italian sources and “appears to owe nothing to Shakespeare” (Wells 4). The story of Romeo and Juliet has thus enjoyed numerous transpositions throughout the globe since its first creation, both as *Romeo and Juliet* written by Shakespeare and as a folktale, seeming to originate as Romeo and Giulietta in Italy.

In the twentieth century the transposition of the love story has resulted in film adaptations and it is in film that the varying engagements with the love story and the play are visible.

Film Adaptations

With the introduction of Shakespeare into the world of film the conflicting views of academics and artists, on the best way to approach Shakespeare's plays, were brought to the fore. The academic's view that "it is both naïve and wrong to think of Shakespeare's characters as though they were anything more than the sum total of the words on the page (literary products of the 'social energy' which circulated in the Early Modern Era in which Shakespeare lived and worked)" (O'Connor 6), is contrasted with the view of actors, directors and audiences who find that it is necessary to speculate on the reality of the characters (their lives outside of the confines of the text) because when watching, acting in, or directing the play, it becomes evident that "every one of the characters is unstable" (O'Connor 7) and portraying the character visually requires a decision as to which interpretation of a character is adopted. An instance of this is the portrayal of the pre-Holocaust Shylock being very different from the post-Holocaust character. That a play is interpreted in different ways at different times in history is evident when comparing film adaptations of the plays.

There is a distinction between films which are overtly related to *Romeo and Juliet* and those which adopt elements of the play but cannot be thought of as film productions of the play. The distinction O'Connor makes is between "'off-shoots' and 'adaptations' – works which, however different from Shakespeare's stage play in style or medium of artistic expression, nonetheless have characters at heart who are recognisably Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet in name and characteristics" (O'Connor 44–45). According to this separation, "Russel Jackson lists both *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and *West Side Story* (1961) as Shakespeare 'off-shoots'" (*ibid.*) while Franco Zeffirelli's *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) and Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996) are adaptations. One of the benefits of film and stage adaptations is that they provide a modern audience with an experience which attempts (at least) to mimic the original ways in which the play would have been performed. This mimicry is made possible by highlighting the interaction between audience and actors together with the continuation of action – when reading the texts a reader does not experience audience/actor interaction and is able to pause and reflect on the action and dialogue before continuing to the event. The way in which different directors and actors approach and present the material indicates what affinities they believe exist between a contemporary and an early modern audience.

In film adaptations, there are marked differences between the first English film version of *Romeo and Juliet* and the most recently produced. In George Cukor's 1936 film, he sought to emphasise the ways in which *Romeo and Juliet* can be understood as a classic drama. The actors and actresses were well known and fulfilled gender stereotypes: women were "waiting to be rescued" (Davies 154) and men were "agile, athletic and handsome" (*ibid.*). The primary interest was not in showing individual character development but in illustrating the tragedy of the situation with recognisable characters. Cukor's film, though it has many merits and made great strides in the cinematic leap from written word to theatrical productions to film, is "more the drama of situation than of character" (Davies 154). As such, the film is as much a comment on the cinematic style of the 1930s as it is an interpretation of the play. The same can be said for Renato Castellani's 1954 film in which visual aspects were favoured over the poetry of the play. The actors and actresses cast are young enough to agree with the ages provided in the play (not so in Cukor's film) but they are not experienced enough to deliver their lines convincingly. Related to this, is Castellani's "obsession with spatial detail" (Davies 157) which, though pleasing to the eye, often detracts from the central issues of the play. Thus, though Castellani makes an effort to meet with the visual criteria of the play, his film suffers from a "clash of styles" (*ibid.*) with the emphasis on "cinematic realism being radically at odds with the heightened dialogue of Shakespeare's play" (Davies 157).

In 1968, Franco Zeffirelli released his version of *Romeo and Juliet* which addresses some of the problems of his predecessors but created a few of his own. He too sought to "stress the generation gap in the social world of the play" (Davies 157) and suggested that the feud was "an outlet for repressed aggression within the families themselves" (*ibid.*) His focus is thus on the individual dramas in the play (and some which are not, such as Lady Capulet's suggested affair with Tybalt), resulting in substantial character development. Despite the film's success, it too fails to equal Shakespeare's poetic style, however. This failure is most evident in scenes between the lovers in which the emphasis on the visual aspects of the scene result in a superficiality of dialogue.

The BBC production, directed by Alvin Rakoff in 1978, continued the trend set by Castellani in casting age-appropriate actors and actresses and, as a result, suffers from the same problems as its predecessors. In contrast to Zeffirelli's production, though in keeping with the style of Shakespeare adaptations for BBC Television, Rakoff's version was filmed in a studio using sets similar to imagined sets of the Early Modern period. While the use of sets was an attempt to maintain the authenticity of the play and stress the themes, it was also "spatially confined, predictable, poorly lit and awkward in attempting to match stylised sets with spatially

conceived action” (Davies 160). Despite its shortcomings, however, this production succeeds where others failed in representing the universality of the play without undermining the characterisation and central themes.

In 1996, Baz Luhrmann released his version of *Romeo and Juliet*, entitled *William Shakespeare’s Romeo + Juliet*. The film indicates most aptly the desire to make the play relevant to a contemporary audience and Luhrmann “tapped into the popular modern understanding of what the Romeo and Juliet story is all about: a boy and girl from different social groups whose love is thwarted by the mistrust or hatred that exists between their two communities” (O’Connor 21). Set in “a curious hybrid of Shakespeare’s Veronese setting, LA’s Venice Beach, and the film’s on-location shots of Mexico City” (Lehmann 192), Luhrmann’s film deliberately attempts to provide a modern equivalent of chaos in Shakespeare’s Verona. The Montague and Capulet families resemble competing modern gangs: swords are replaced with guns, Mercutio is a flamboyant drag queen, and the tragedy is retold to society through a newscast. The result is what has been described as “an extended music video” (Jones Welton qtd. in Lehmann 190) but one which successfully tells the story of Shakespeare’s lovers within a modernised setting. What Luhrmann essentially does is to move Shakespeare’s play into a completely different society in order to show that the play is not dependent on its place or period.

Luhrmann may transpose *Romeo and Juliet* into a highly stylised setting but he maintains the majority of Shakespeare’s characterisation and dialogue. Leonard Bernstein’s reinterpretation of *Romeo and Juliet* is one which adopts the basic storyline but rejects the names, setting and poetry of Shakespeare’s play. *West Side Story* began as a stage musical and was adapted to film by Robert Wise and Jerome Robbins in 1961. The story concentrates “less on Romeo and Juliet than on the discontents that environ them, and its originality is the liberal conscience it brings to the study of these problems” (Conrad 89). The movie explores the suggestion that “the contention in Shakespeare’s play is nominal: nothing distinguishes Montagues from Capulets except the name (which might easily, as Romeo and Juliet point out, be altered)” (Conrad 92) and in so doing it “retrieves reasons for the division and traces it as a fissure throughout society” (*ibid.*). *West Side Story* thus shows the universality of the tragedy portrayed in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and suggests that it exists at all times and in all places. Though *West Side Story* is generally acknowledged as an adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, it could just as easily be a film inspired by the personal experience of Bernstein or a folktale told to him.

The most recent filmic engagement with *Romeo and Juliet* is the 2011 animation film, *Gnomeo and Juliet* which was directed by Kelly Asbury and distributed by Walt Disney studios.⁴ A comedic retelling of *Romeo and Juliet*, it makes use of both the play (including names, characters, events and parts of dialogue) and Shakespeare as an icon of popular culture. Apart from the lovers being garden gnomes, the biggest difference is the film's ending in which Gnomeo and Juliet share a 'happily ever after' denouement.⁵ This altered conclusion is the result of numerous things, including the tendency in animated family films to avoid death (even Tybalt who is smashed against the garden wall, reappears – glued back together for the final scene). The *raison d'être* for the happy ending, however, is presented within a self-reflexive moment during the film itself. In a conversation between the exiled Gnomeo and Shakespeare's statue Gnomeo asks "they both die? What kind of an ending is that?" and the rather bewildered Shakespeare answers "I suppose that he [Friar Lawrence] could have made it back in time to avert disaster but, I like the whole death part better." What the film is highlighting is that the deaths of the lovers are ultimately unnecessary – there is no reason why the two individual lovers should not be free to escape the limitations placed on them by the outside world. Of course, such a solution is easier to achieve when the biggest obstacle to the power of individual love is a spat over a wisteria bush but this children's version indicates that, not only is the story of *Romeo and Juliet* accessible to all, but love can triumph over social conflict. The ease with which the play has been altered in order to suit changing cinematic approaches indicates its relevance to all societies and one could easily remove the Shakespeare connection and still have the same end-result.

Romeo and Juliet's Universal Appeal

As this brief history indicates the story of *Romeo and Juliet*, though often accessed primarily through Shakespeare's play, is one which far exceeds the parameters set by it. It may act as a model for a number of other works because of its dominance in English but not all *Romeo and Juliet* stories use *Romeo and Juliet* as their source. It must also be remembered that even if an artist acknowledges Shakespeare's play as primary source, Shakespeare himself made use of a well known story. James Welsh argues that "Shakespeare's prime achievement was his poetry" and so he should "not be valued for his borrowed plot" (Welsh 112). Stephen J. Lynch's study

⁴ At the time of writing, a new film adaptation (directed by Carlo Carlei) is in production. The film is reported to be similar to Franco Zeffirelli's version and the actors and actresses cast have been chosen primarily to meet the age descriptions provided in the play.

⁵ James Howard's version (original date unknown) also omits the death of the lovers as does Georg Benda's operatic adaptation, *Romeo und Julie* (1776) and many others (Levenson, "Introduction" 71).

of Shakespeare's use of sources also suggests that it is the "textual complexity" (3) of Shakespeare's work that separates his plays from his sources. This sentiment is summarised by Terence Hawkes who suggests that in interpreting and transposing Shakespeare's plays, the focus is not what Shakespeare means but what "we mean *by* Shakespeare" (qtd. in O'Connor 9). The love story of Romeo and Juliet, with its interplay of social obligations and individual desires, is one which appeals to any society in which social conditions place restrictions on love. As these restrictions are usually the result of conflict, either within or between communities, Preljocai suggests that "Romeo and Juliet will always be modern because there will always be conflict between people" (qtd. in O'Connor 39). Consequently, it is possible to find a Romeo and Juliet story in any society at any time because the story of an ill-fated love rings true in a variety of different cultures. Bearing the distinction between *Romeo and Juliet* and a Romeo and Juliet story in mind, how should Peteni's *Hill of Fools* be categorised? Is the intertextual relationship one of direct and deliberate influence or is it one dictated by genre? Expressed more basically, is *Hill of Fools*, together with *Romeo and Juliet* and many other stories, part of the tragic love genre? Or, is it a rewriting of *Romeo and Juliet*? Peteni's suggestion is that it falls into the tragic love genre: *Hill of Fools* is a Romeo and Juliet story. Laurence Wright, however, has recently suggested that the relationship is more finite and argues that *Hill of Fools* is a South African *Romeo and Juliet*.

Romeo and Juliet in the Ciskei?

In 2004, *English in Africa* brought out a special edition focusing on *Hill of Fools*. Included in the seven articles dedicated to the novel is an article by Laurence Wright entitled: "*Hill of Fools: A South African Romeo and Juliet?*" Here Wright explores both the tendency to associate the two texts, the ways in which such an association is possible, and the benefits of viewing *Hill of Fools* as a South African *Romeo and Juliet*. The connection to *Romeo and Juliet* is not limited to "*Hill of Fools: A South African Romeo and Juliet?*" and, in another article, "The Early Reception of *Hill of Fools*", Wright suggests that "a high proportion of the reviewers accessed the work through the *Romeo and Juliet* parallel, mostly as a means of conveying to their readerships a swift characterisation of the kind of tale Peteni was telling" (Wright, "Early Reception" 105). *Romeo and Juliet* was thus one way in which *Hill of Fools* was made accessible to a number of readers. Wright argues that in his novel, Peteni insists on "an important congruence between the culturally specific and the humanly essential" (Wright, "Peteni in Context" 19) and draws attention to "the problem Peteni came to explore in *Hill of Fools*: could local tensions, without abandoning their cultural specificity, be made to speak to

a universal audience” (*ibid.*). It is vital to understand, Wright suggest, that the conflict in *Romeo and Juliet* is universal and the chaos which ensues from communities at war is not limited to any specific culture. As Wright argues:

Obviously, similar conflicts must arise in many small-scale, traditional societies round the world, as well as those modernizing societies where the pull of tradition is still felt. In this sense, the subject matter of *Romeo and Juliet* was present in Africa before Africa met Shakespeare. (Wright, “South African *Romeo and Juliet*” 81)

For Wright, then, the relevance of *Romeo and Juliet* within an African context is evident even without a consideration of *Hill of Fools* as “the real power of *Romeo and Juliet* in Africa stems from its relevance for issues of relationship, family, love and marriage, in the context of tensions between traditional clan hierarchies, histories and mythologies, and the dynamics of the modern world” (Wright, “South African *Romeo and Juliet*” 81). The universal themes of communal violence and impossible love which Shakespeare chose to address in *Romeo and Juliet* exceed the limitations of the plays and so, with regard to a tragic love story, “Peteni didn’t have to invent the story. It was happening all round him” (Wright, “South African *Romeo and Juliet*” 75). The similarities to be found between the two texts are thus related to universal themes and “it is cognate social structures and customs that determine any affinity with Shakespeare’s play” (Wright, “South African *Romeo and Juliet*” 79) rather than a conscious (or subconscious) effort on the author’s part. Thus, while it is true that “some kind of parallel is patent to anyone who reads *Hill of Fools* with Shakespeare’s play in mind” (*ibid.*), these parallels are a result of the reader’s familiarity with the play. To suggest then, as Wright goes on to do, that we should view “*Romeo and Juliet* as an exemplar, a thematic model, a provocation” (Wright, “South African *Romeo and Juliet*” 75) ignores the existence of the story outside of Shakespeare’s play. *Hill of Fools*, though it tells the story of two lovers (Zuziwe and Bhuqa) separated by conflict between two communities, is not *Romeo and Juliet* because it is not dependent on the play for its content. It is, instead, part of the tragic love genre and as such can be referred to as a Romeo and Juliet story. This does not, however, rule out a discussion of the two texts because an intertextual relationship still exists. Both *Hill of Fools* and *Romeo and Juliet* belong to the same genre and “individual genres can imply attitudes toward human behaviour” and “genres are structured by assumptions about life, society, and the function of families” (Bruster 65).

In both these texts, tragedy is a result of chaos within the society which filters into relationships within the family. The intertextual relationship which exists between the texts is

most evident in the family dynamics at play within both texts. By considering these family dynamics it is possible also to consider the ways in which *Hill of Fools* offers a contemporary South African engagement with the themes adapted by Shakespeare in his version of the Romeo and Juliet story. The discussion has been divided into two main sections: a discussion of *Hill of Fools* and a discussion of *Romeo and Juliet*. First, however, it is useful to have some knowledge of the author, R. L. Peteni.

R. L. Peteni's Milieu

Randall Langa Peteni was born on 6 December 1915, the third son of Shelton John Peteni of the (Mfengu) Zizi clan and Janet Mzimba of the Hlubi clan. His parents were both educated at Lovedale College. His father was employed as a clerk in the Magistrate's court and later in the Native Recruiting Company office in Keiskammahoek. These occupations provide insights into the sort of family Randall Peteni was raised in. Shelton Peteni's social status, as an active member in his church interested in farming, was one which was "in many ways typical of the Mfengu elite" (Wright, "Peteni in Context" 10).⁶ All of Randall Peteni's siblings were educated and became highly successful individuals and the "family was part of the stable, educated Christian elite" (*ibid.*). The success story of this family, chronicled in *The South African Outlook* prior to Peteni obtaining any fame himself, provides the background for Peteni's own successes and the approach to communities that he was later to exhibit in *Hill of Fools*. Peteni's own heritage was deeply entrenched in the Ciskei region and his Mfengu identity played a vital role in his professional life.

The Mfengu were originally groups of Nguni refugees fleeing the upheavals created by Tshaka in his consolidation of the Zulu Kingdom (Manona, "Ethnic Relations" 99). They settled in the Eastern Cape, divided into three main groups: the Hlubi, Zizi and Bhele, and were incorporated into the Gcakela by Chief Hintsa who saw them as "a military and economic asset" (Manona, "Ethnic Relations" 100). During the Frontier wars, the Mfengu, "having lost their own lands, and living to a degree under Xhosa patronage as a result, were more open to British influence, especially in terms of religion, education and agricultural techniques" (Wright, "Peteni in Context" 11). Consequently, the British "expelled the hostile Rharhabe chiefs from their own territory and allocated the land to the Mfengu chiefs who had requested protection from the British" (Groenewald 83) as a way of strengthening relations between the British and the Mfengu. The relationship between the British and the Mfengu

⁶ I am largely indebted to Laurence Wright's "An Introduction: Peteni in Context" for the bulk of this section. His article remains the only comprehensive discussion of Peteni's familial and social background.

resulted in Xhosa antagonism towards the Mfengu who were understood to have benefitted from British influence. This antagonism continued throughout the twentieth century with periods of relatively peaceful coexistence. It was highlighted in 1968, however, by the installation of Justice Thandatha Jongilizwe Mabandla, a Xhosa chief, as Chief Executive Councillor and in 1972 as the first Chief Minister of the Republic of the Ciskei. His appointment “drew attention to the unresolved question of the status of the Mfengu in relation to the Xhosa in the Ciskei” (Manona, “Ethnic Relations” 106) as he was not believed to represent the interests of the Mfengu. Thus, while the Peteni family were respected within their community, “making the best of artificially limited opportunities, using the social formation rather than struggling against its inequities and iniquities” (Wright, “Peteni in Context” 12), they were treated as Mfengu who had benefitted from colonialism rather than as Xhosa who belonged on the land.

Peteni spent all of his childhood in the Ciskei and received a scholarship from the Ciskeian General Council which he used to further his studies at Fort Hare. After graduating from Fort Hare with majors in English (with distinction) and Social Anthropology, he was appointed vice-principal of the combined primary and secondary school in Heilbron. While teaching in Heilbron in the Orange Free State, Peteni met his Sotho-speaking wife and then moved to the Transvaal. After a further few years of teaching, he was appointed Supervisor of Schools in the Krugersdorp circuit. This appointment did not last long, however, as he and his wife were persecuted because of their ethnicity, particularly by Peteni’s superior who “felt that Nguni-speakers had been advantaged educationally and vocationally through their superior (mission) education, and who saw his role as advancing the interests of northerners in general, and his own people in particular” (Wright, “Peteni in Context” 13). This view was not held only by his supervisor but also by his neighbours and colleagues and Peteni eventually returned to the Eastern Cape and continued teaching. While in the Eastern Cape, Peteni “was actively involved in two interconnected spheres of practical life: the world of the African teachers’ unions and the cut-throat arena of Bantustan politics” (Wright, “Peteni in Context” 14). After another few years of teaching, Peteni obtained an Honours degree through UNISA and in 1969 he became a lecturer in English at Fort Hare.

It was while lecturing and completing his Master of Arts through UNISA that Peteni was first inspired to write a novel. His MA focused on the work of Chinua Achebe and he was particularly interested in the “manner in which Achebe succeeded in transmuting the stuff of ordinary village life into works of art” (Wright, “Peteni in Context” 14). The appeal of Achebe’s work is found in his ability to “make a singular experience reverberate across

space and time to map out a relation to world history that, while remaining singular and inassimilable to any readymade universal values, is designed nonetheless to reverberate in each of us” (N. Brown 87). The experiences portrayed in his novels are not those found in well known stories but rather in the everyday experiences of people in Nigeria. His purpose in writing stems from “a humanistic compulsion to translate the realities and verities of precolonial African cultural and social life into universal understanding – or into common humanistic sense” (Korang 1). It is this desire, to portray the everyday lives of people as not only part of universal experiences but also as works of art, that Peteni adopted in his own novel. Essentially, Peteni wished to “turn ordinary life, the life he had known as a boy as well as his adult experience, into art” (Wright, “Peteni in Context” 14). The result of Achebe’s influence was *Hill of Fools*, Peteni’s only work of fiction.⁷

Peteni retired from Fort Hare in 1981 and moved to Soweto to take up a contract post at the College of Education there. In 1989 he became Chancellor of the University of the Transkei. In September 2000, Peteni, aged 82, passed away in East London leaving a widow and four children. His novel *Hill of Fools* remains his most tangible influence on the literary world. Though no specific mention of the setting of the novel is provided, it is useful to have a general impression of the period within which Peteni was writing.

Peteni’s Setting in Context

Despite being written and published during apartheid, *Hill of Fools* does not primarily seek to address the injustices of the apartheid period. Its focus is on the difficulties two young lovers face because of the communities to which they belong. Peteni’s intention was to highlight that while people concern themselves with “political upheavals and industrial conflicts centred in large metropolitan areas” (Peteni, “My Novel” 27) these concerns are fixed within specific periods, unlike the everyday suffering of people within small, remote areas. His choice of setting, a small fictitious village in an obscure corner of Keiskammahoek is meant to illustrate the universality of conflict and appeals to the human experience as a whole. As Peteni indicates in his article “My Novel, *Hill of Fools*”:

I did not want anybody to sit back, complacent, feeling that the spotlight was on Lennox Sebe’s Ciskei alone, or Kaiser Matanzima’s Transkei, or John Vorster’s apartheid South Africa. The spotlight is on the Ciskei, yes, on Transkei, on South Africa, on any other country where public life and personal relationships are bedevilled by tribalism or racialism or any form of sectionalism. I did not wish to analyse the present Ciskei as politically constituted, as

⁷ Peteni published only one other book: a history of the South African teacher’s Union ATASA.

one of the 'homelands' of South Africa, because I feared that I might be carried away by criticism of the policy of 'separate development' and weaken the impact of the theme of clan or tribal prejudice which was my main concern. Separate development is a temporary dispensation and is limited to South Africa. Perhaps in a few years it will be remembered by students of history alone. But tribalism or sectionalism in one form or another will I believe continue long after separate development has disappeared from the body politic. (Peteni, "My Novel" 27)

Peteni's intention in *Hill of Fools* is to present the dangers of tribalism or sectionalism which, he believes, are universal problems posed at all times under all political dispensations.

Focusing on apartheid South Africa or the Ciskei as a homeland would limit the universal aspect of the novel and restrict its story to a specific period of South African history. In choosing not to emphasise the apartheid setting of the novel, Peteni ensures that his story can be read and understood regardless of the reader's knowledge, or lack thereof, of South Africa during apartheid. Having accepted this rationale, there is no use in attempting to link events in the novel to a detailed history of apartheid or even homeland politics in the 1970s as these do not play as integral a role in the novel as the more universal experiences it explores.

Despite Peteni's intentions, however, two political aspects are important in his novel and warrant brief discussion. The first is the lack of an overarching authority in the novel to align legislation and traditional customs. When the Thembu warriors are arrested and charged with murdering Katana (a man of the Hlubi clan), they are tried in Queenstown by a magistrate who is unfamiliar with the customs of their village. This brief section highlights a serious problem faced in the areas which later became independent homelands: who is to take charge of a village once a chief has been displaced. The second socio-political aspect introduced affects the entire outcome of the novel. Once Bhuqa is aware of Zuziwe's pregnancy, he tries to obtain work and accommodation for them in Port Elizabeth. Laws concerning migrant labour restrict his movement – and hers to an even larger extent – and they must eventually accept that it is not possible to move to Port Elizabeth together. Zuziwe's response to this is to choose to abort her child and marry Ntabeni. These two issues – tribal authority and the effect on families of the migrant labour system – were problems throughout apartheid South Africa, but in keeping to the parameters of the novel, will only be discussed as regards the Ciskei, particularly the Keiskammahoek region prior to its being declared an independent homeland in 1981, and Port Elizabeth. The issue of tribal authority is introduced first in the novel and will therefore be discussed first.

Tribal Authority

The apartheid government attempted to impose separate development by separating people according to race and ethnicity. This resulted in the creation of four homeland areas for different ethnic groups. The hope was that these homelands would eventually become independent functioning states, but as none of the homelands contained a metropolitan area it was necessary for them to rely on the nearest South African metropolitan area for administration. The approach to homeland areas changed numerous times but I shall focus on the period from the 1950s until the late 1970s in the Ciskei. Cecil Manona explains the changes which occurred in the 1950s as follows:

The passing of the Black Authorities Act in 1951 effected a radical change in the local government in the Ciskei and other homeland areas. Up to that time the policy of the white administration had been to rule blacks through government-appointed headmen who were placed in charge of demarcated 'locations'. The act shifted the official administrative focus from headmen and provided for the establishment of so-called Tribal Authorities which in many cases were associated with the chiefdoms which once existed in the former Ciskei. While headmen continued to play a key role in location administration, Tribal Authorities were headed by chiefs who were assisted by councillors under a system which sought to revive traditional leadership. This implied chiefly rule and rule through elders. (Manona, "The Collapse of the 'Tribal Authority' System" 49)

The separation between headmen and chiefs was problematic since the headmen and sub-headmen had originally been appointed by the white government to replace the chiefs and "had essentially governed the reserve under the authority of the white resident magistrates" (Switzer 330). The new act separated administration (run by chiefs and the Tribal Authority) from land allocation (arranged by the headmen) but both were, essentially, government controlled. The allocation of common land, though decided by headmen, was controlled by the government (since the state owned it), and became a means through which those who showed favour to the government were rewarded (Westaway 17). Thus, the processes undertaken to transform the Ciskei into an independent state undermined the authority of the headmen (Westaway 40) as they had no actual power and were often seen simply as the puppets of the apartheid government. A similar problem was faced by the chiefs and Tribal Authority in the area. The Tribal Authority, though nominally comprising the executive leaders of the homeland "had limited executive powers and on many issues it could not act independently of the central government; instead, it had to focus its attention mainly on

means of carrying out instructions received from higher authorities” (Manona, “The Collapse of the ‘Tribal Authority’ System” 57).

Another problem with the Tribal Authority was that, despite representing the interests of the villagers, they were not elected and were “largely out of touch with the practical problems faced” (Manona, “The Collapse of the ‘Tribal Authority’ System” 58). Despite being the executive power within villages, the Tribal Authority made very little difference to the lives of villagers and the majority of legal matters were referred to courts outside of the homeland. Chiefs fared little better in the system and were “appointed – often on dubious grounds – until they controlled all levels of local government” (Switzer 330). The chiefs also raised the issue of ethnicity, particularly between the Mfengu and the Xhosa inhabiting the Ciskei, and led to renewed violence during the 1960s (Switzer 331). Even in those areas where chiefs did fulfil an effective role, their influence was not widespread and many villages “were not formally subordinate to any ‘tribal’ authority figure” (Switzer 330). The question of leadership in the Ciskei during the period in which Peteni was writing was problematic, particularly in the smaller villages. Despite the system in place, many leaders used their roles in order to further their own interests rather than to assist the people they were meant to govern. The majority of villagers had no contact with their headmen or chiefs and lived according to traditional laws. Problems arose when these laws resulted in a legal hearing in which a magistrate, unfamiliar with the traditions of a village, was called upon to judge the actions of villagers, who were unfamiliar with the country’s legal system.

Migrant Labour Laws

Throughout history, people in search of economic gain have commonly moved from rural to urban areas. South Africa during apartheid was no different and there was a tendency for those who lived in rural villages to seek employment in the larger metropolises where social conditions and pay were perceived as better. The result of this was an influx of labour in metropolitan areas (which far exceeded the work opportunities) and an influx of families into squatter camps created on the outskirts of the cities to decrease the distance between home and work. With the apartheid government’s desire to move the African population into homelands, the number of people allowed to work within cities was monitored, population growth within cities was curbed, and many ‘nonessential’ workers were relocated to the homelands (Switzer 317). The removal of the black population from the metropolitan to homeland areas had two direct implications: firstly, workers were moved back to their ethnic homelands regardless of the upheaval caused to numerous families, and secondly, “tribal

labour bureaus were set up in 1968, and reserve migrants now had to apply for work permits from these local officials and take the jobs they were offered; they could no longer seek work outside of the reserve on their own” (Switzer 316). Workers were encouraged to seek employment within their homelands, or, if that was not possible, to seek employment close enough to the homelands that commuting was possible. When this failed to sufficiently keep people within their designated areas, new steps were introduced and during the 1970s “permanent resident rights for Africans in the cities were eliminated for all but a privileged minority, and vigorous attempts were made to prevent African women from entering the urban areas” (Switzer 315). Regulations limiting the accessibility of urban areas to those living in homelands continued to increase and by the mid-1970s “male Africans living in the reserves, who were forced to rely on recruiters and Tribal Authorities for gaining necessary job permits were in an even worse position,” struggling to find employment outside of their villages. They were still better off, however, than African women living in the homelands who “ranked at the bottom of the labour force” (Switzer 323). Ultimately, those living in the homelands were largely unable to find employment in the metropolitan areas and were thus forced to remain in their villages and look for a means of gainful employment there.

In *Hill of Fools*, Bhuqa and Zuziwe suffer because of both these consequences of apartheid. The villages, lacking a compassionate and informed chief, continue to fight according to their customs and are unable to find a peaceful solution to their feud. Had there been chiefs to mediate between the two villages, it is possible that a solution could be found or (at the very least) that the feud could be continued in a way which was not contrary to the laws of the country. As a result of the feud, Zuziwe and Bhuqa are forced to seek an alternative place in which to live, where the violence of the feud will not affect them. Though Bhuqa hopes to find employment in Port Elizabeth, legislation governing migrant labour limits the possibility and makes it impossible for Zuziwe to accompany him. Migrant labour laws are thus key to the tragic deaths of Zuziwe and her unborn child as it is because of these laws that Zuziwe and Bhuqa are unable to begin a new family away from the Hill of Fools. The tragedy in the novel is a direct result of the folly of the people living in the Hill of Fools but the socio-political environment prevents Bhuqa and Zuziwe from escaping the feud. Having a basic understanding of the socio-political environment of the novel, it is now possible to consider *Hill of Fools*, with particular emphasis on the family and relationships between parents and children.

Hill of Fools: A Society Torn Apart by Violence.

Hill of Fools portrays the consequences of tribal rivalry on the community as a whole and on individuals within that community. The Hlubi (Mfengu) and Thembu (Xhosa) villages have had regular faction fights for as long as anyone can remember, and with each fight, the community suffers losses. The feud's origin is uncertain but the oral history has been passed on for generations:

No one could remember when the rivalry between the Hlubis and the Thembus began. It was much older than any living man in the two villages. The oldest men remembered vaguely something of the early feuds which had been recounted by their fathers or grandfathers, and the versions differed from family to family. But a common factor in all versions was the Xesi River. The story was told that there was a time when the river was much wider and had more water than it now had. In those days the big boys of the two villages swam regularly in the river pool in summer and held organized swimming contests. The leading warrior boy of the two villages, who was the most skilled at stick-fighting, was always at the head of the boys' affairs and automatically took charge of these swimming contests. Boys moved freely from one village to the other and made love to any girl they fancied. The leader always had the best of everything, including girls. (Peteni, *Hill* 78–79)

Within the cultural memory of both villages there is thus an awareness of a period before the feud when village identity was fluid and there was a single leader, amongst the boys, for both villages. The interchangeability of the boys between the villages can only function, however, for as long as the leader is selected by both villages and as soon as there is a conflict of leadership, the boys are forced to identify with one village. This conflict occurs one year when there is a Hlubi and a Thembu, equally talented, vying for leadership:

But one year there were two bulls, one a Hlubi, the other a Thembu, and they were evenly matched. Their stick-fights always ended in a stalemate. Neither could penetrate the defence of the other. The two bulls quarrelled over the girls and the direction of affairs. The other boys took sides in the dispute, each according to his village. Every swimming contest ended up as a faction fight. Boys went to the Xesi river to fight, not to swim. After a time the art of swimming was lost and the art of fighting was cultivated. It was many years later that young children took to swimming again, and Thembu and Hlubi youngsters swam together in the river pool. But every boy had to give up the pleasure when he joined the ranks of warrior boys. He had to keep himself ready to fight at all times, and he could not do this if he plunged naked into the river. Besides, the river had grown smaller and was no longer suitable for organized swimming contests. (Peteni, *Hill* 79)

The existence of two boys equally suited to assume leadership results in a schism between the boys. Where they had once held friendly swimming contests for pleasure, they now find pleasure in violence – it becomes a replacement past-time. As the river decreased in size, the swimming contests which had once brought the boys together became impossible and the only source of excitement for the boys became physical fighting. The problem with the fighting is the real danger it poses and “the feud grew increasingly bitter with time and some of the fights ended in death” (Peteni, *Hill* 79). While the feud remains a matter between the boys, the power they feel from the fighting also extends into their interactions with the elders. Eventually, it is impossible to reason with the boys and the origin of the feud is completely lost in the excitement that accompanies a faction fight:

Sometimes even the men of the two villages joined in the fight. But this was rare. And it was always possible for the older, mature men to come together and talk the younger out of their violence. This was impossible with the wild, uncircumcised boys. When the boys met at the hill-top it was as if the world had already turned upside down. They became mad, intoxicated maniacs, ready to violate village maids, bully younger boys and rush madly into battle without knowing why they fought. (Peteni, *Hill* 79)

The fervour with which the feud is continued is a testimony to the pleasure and power the boys feel from the physical conflict. In its destruction, the story depicts “the consequence of human folly” (Wright, “Politics” 68) and illustrates “the futility of violence” (Kaschula, “*Kwazidenge*” 100) within a small community which Peteni used as “a microcosm of humanity in general” (Wright, “Politics” 56). In his novel, he hoped to show that “cultural and political behaviour is part of a species-specific inheritance, common to humanity, and that people all over the world might be interested in the diverse ways in which this inheritance finds cultural manifestation” (*ibid.*). Thus, while the novel has a specific setting, Keiskammahoek in the Ciskei, the story it tells is not bound to that setting and “the happenings of *Hill of Fools* have an air of timelessness, a consequence of their partial basis in slow-moving tradition” (Wright, “Politics” 58). In the *Hill of Fools* all interactions are governed by violence which results from and is perpetuated by the feud between the amaHlubi and abaThembu. In the ultimate destructions of all of the families, the novel illustrates the danger of a senseless feud and shows that it is at work within relations in the community, the family and the formation of identity. In a society dominated by violence, tragedy is the only alternative for those who seek to distance themselves from the accepted practices of a community.

A Community of Violence

The first indication of the chaos which governs the setting of the novel is in its title. Peteni indicates that “the name of the book, taken from the name of the hill above the Hlubi village, is meant to stress the folly of people who resort to violence to settle their differences” (Peteni, “My Novel” 33). Russel Kaschula furthers this by suggesting that “Hill of Fools” makes reference both to the name of the hill on which the warrior boys meet to plan their faction fight and to Zuziwe’s declaration that only fools fight (Kaschula, “*Kwazidenge*” 98). The setting is thus a village living in the shadow of human folly and the extent of that folly is quickly introduced. The first action in the novel, Zuziwe’s trip to the river to collect water, already introduces the extent to which the conflict is integral in village life. On her way to the river alone she is joined by Diliza, a boy from the Hlubi village who wishes to accompany her. Zuziwe is collecting water alone as an act of defiance against her parents and assertion of her independence by not listening to “her parents’ warning” (Peteni, *Hill* 2). Diliza’s reason for offering his company is to protect her from the Thembu boys who occasionally cross over to the Hlubi side of the river. When Zuziwe fails to see the danger and cannot understand why a Thembu may not step on Hlubi land, Diliza embarks on a tirade against the Thembu which is worth quoting at length:

I hate them because I must. I was brought up to hate them. I know that a Thembu boy must be attacked and hit very hard and be killed. Don’t ask me why I must kill them. Ask the sun and the moon and the stars. Ask the rain and the wind. Ask the mountains. Ask the valleys and the rivers; the trees, the grass, the flowers. Ask the insects and the beasts and the birds. Don’t ask me. Ask the maker of these things and the maker of me. If you ask me why I must kill the Thembus, you may as well ask the wind why it blows dust into my eyes, or the sun why it dries up the streams, or the bee why it stings me and the snake why it bites me. I can no more suppress my urge to kill than the other creatures which God created. (Peteni, *Hill* 3)

Nothing in Diliza’s reply answers Zuziwe’s question. Diliza takes no responsibility for his actions but rather emphasises that it is both natural and necessary for the Hlubi to kill the Thembu. His participation in the feud has been dictated by his upbringing and, at a very basic level, he has been raised to kill Thembu boys. He does not question this social obligation and believes that he is impelled by the natural world to participate in the feud. He also argues that the feud is an uncontrollable and incomprehensible force, just as the sun, moon and stars shining. It is not necessarily a task he enjoys, he compares it to dust blown into the eyes, drought, bee stings and snake bites, but it is necessary and a part of nature. Diliza’s final justification is that he cannot suppress the urge to kill – like all other creatures with the urge to

kill, he cannot control himself. Interestingly, Diliza makes no mention of the pleasure he obtains from fighting. His anger is not only directed at Thembus, as Zuziwe discovers when Diliza strikes her, but at anyone who fails to accept the realities of the feud. She is again reminded of the violence which the feud inspires when Ntombi, Ntabeni's cousin, attacks her for speaking to Bhuqa. Prior to the anger she feels at Zuziwe's interaction with Bhuqa, Ntombi is jealous of Zuziwe whose "beautiful face and shapely figure always made her feel bitter that she had uneven features" (Peteni, *Hill* 12). When she has seen Zuziwe with Bhuqa, Ntombi uses the pretence that Zuziwe is betraying Ntabeni with a Thembu boy to violently attack her. Both of these attacks result from the feud which seems to permeate the interactions of people within the Hlubi community. Diliza strikes Zuziwe because he believes so strongly in the feud and Ntombi is enabled by the communal hatred of Thembus to attack Zuziwe.

The dominance of the feud in the lives of the villagers is also evident in their everyday interactions with each other. The men in the village dominate women and children both within individual households and in the communal space. The violence with which men control women and children is captured in the behaviour of Dakada, Ntombi's father. While Mvangeli shows respect for both his wife and daughter, Dakada rules his household with an iron fist. Nyamende summarises the situation by arguing that:

Dakada's violent reaction and his beating of his daughter and his wife, when the latter tries to stop him, are indicative of an authoritarian figure who rules his household with a whip. It is evident that Dakada 'owns' his women and does whatever he likes with them. (Nyamende 117)

Dakada's approach to his family in which "women are perceived as inferior beings not to be listened to" is the accepted one within the community, however, and not even Mvangeli is willing to interfere when "Ntombi maintains her obstinate silence [while] her father beats her up" (Nyamende 117). It is only when violence is meted out against his wife, who did not participate in the attack on Zuziwe, that the spectators are willing to involve themselves telling him: "you have no right to hit your wife" (Peteni, *Hill* 27). Men also dominate children who are not their own. Once the fight between the Hlubi and Thembu boys has broken out, it is a group of men who approach Mlenzana and call him a "coward" when he indicates that he does not wish to participate in the fight (Peteni, *Hill* 94). Similarly, it is only once the men of the community have accepted that Mlungisi, who has seen a dead cat, should not participate that his absence is accepted by the rest of the community (Peteni, *Hill* 95).

Despite the insistence that the boys fight, it is important to note that "the men themselves do not go to battle to protect their honour, but instead they send the boys to do the

fighting for them” (Nyamende 115). The violence they encourage, and enact upon their families, does not extend outside of the borders of their community and thus is actually a suggestion of weakness – they control the women and children in the community with violence in order to mask their impotence outside of the shelter of the family. The men’s lack of control outside of the community is also stressed by the way the laws of the country affect their actions. Dakada is forced to stop beating his wife because “the law doesn’t permit a man to use a sjambok excessively, even on his own daughter” (Peteni, *Hill* 27). Similarly, following Katana’s death during the faction fight, the Thembu boys are charged with murder by the state for the role they played in his death even though the men of their village do not see that they have done anything wrong. The acts of violence which the men perpetrate on the women and children of the novel are a result of the impotence they face outside of the community – outside of their villages they are subject to the laws of the state – and so they encourage the feud as it supports the dominance they enjoy within their respective communities. It is not only men who inflict violence on women and children as the community gives the boys (‘boys’ as they have not yet been initiated) “licence to perpetrate violence” (Nyamende 114). Two instances of this violence have already been explored but these are not the only instances of violence inflicted by children on children. Diliza and Katana are “notorious bullies” who “spread terror wherever they went” (Peteni, *Hill* 34) and their actions are encouraged. The desire to control, through violence, is both a result of the pleasure they feel from power and a result, as Diliza rightly points out, of their upbringing. The violence which dominates the outlooks of the villagers is fostered within the home.

The Family Disrupted

The turmoil within the community, which results in and is perpetuated by the feud, also filters into family relations. The Langa family is interesting in that it contains, on the one hand, one of the loudest proponents in favour of the faction fights, Duma, and, on the other, Zuziwe who is presented as “a rational and compassionate person” who cannot see the reason for the fights (Kaschula, “*Kwazidenge*” 93). The disparity between the siblings is a result of their respective statuses within the community. As a young man, Duma is involved in village politics and accepts without question the social norms dictated by the rest of the village, it is also likely that he is still young enough to view the fights in the way the boys do, rather than the older men. As a woman, Zuziwe is separated from the politics of the community and is instead influenced by her parents. Her father Mvangelu Langa is a level-headed and peace-loving man. He clearly loves Zuziwe and when she is attacked by Ntombi he chooses the best course of

action with which to address the matter. His decision, to discuss the matter with Ntombi's father, as "the Dakadas and Mlilos are one family" and as "Ntabeni Mlilo will soon be Zuziwe's husband", is one sensitive to Zuziwe's betrothal (Peteni, *Hill* 19). Mvangeli also clearly respects his daughter and, though he is protective of her, he allows her certain freedoms. Apart from being allowed to fetch water alone, Zuziwe is also free to visit her uncle in the Thembu village. When Zuziwe decides not to marry Ntabeni, her parents' concern is for her wellbeing and Mvangeli tells the elders that "in these affairs of the heart, if the girl is persuaded instead of compelled, it is better by far" (Peteni, *Hill* 131). A further illustration of the positive relationship between Zuziwe and her parents is the openness of their relationship which ensures that they are aware not only of the troubles she faces at her home village but also of her love for Bhuqa. In fact her only deception, keeping her pregnancy a secret, is what ultimately results in her death. It is only on her deathbed that Mvangeli insists that his daughter obey him and even then, he speaks "in a hoarse voice, his eyes filled with tears of grief, for Zuziwe was his favourite child, the child of his old age" (Peteni, *Hill* 143). Mamiya Langa also cares for and supports her daughter, even after learning of her relationship with Bhuqa. She comforts Zuziwe when the latter agrees to accept Ntabeni's proposal and pleads with her to go to hospital when she discovers the abortion. The Langa family, when limited to Zuziwe and her parents, is thus a unit of mutual love and respect. The reason for the willingness of Mamiya and Mvangeli to treat Zuziwe with so much freedom and care is partly attributed to her status as favourite child but also because of their investment in both communities – Mamiya is originally a Thembu and still has family living in the Thembu village. As parents, the Langas' primary concern is for their children and, unlike other families, they do not encourage the feud, though they seem to accept its existence as inevitable and outside their control.

Despite their best intentions, however, the feud is brought into the family unit through Duma and his unashamed and inexplicable hatred for another group of people. He is very protective of his sister and listens to her retelling of Ntombi's attack with "a quiet voice which conceals the anger inside him" (Peteni, *Hill* 17). He is, however, also protective of his community and when he hears of Zuziwe sitting with Bhuqa he is furious and is "ashamed that [his] own sister was caught showing favour to a cursed Thembu boy" (Peteni, *Hill* 19). His loyalty shifts between his sister and his community and though he is enraged by Zuziwe's action at the river, he is also the one to discover the truth of the events which transpired by questioning Ntombi "almost like a trained lawyer" (Peteni, *Hill* 24). (Though immediately after he has done so, Mvangeli informs his wife that "Duma is very angry with Zuziwe" (Peteni, *Hill* 31).) Following Zuziwe's trip to the Thembu village, however, he makes no effort

to hide his displeasure and even their mother knows how much Duma “hates Thembus” (Peteni, *Hill* 63). He cannot accept Zuziwe’s love for Bhuqa and despite not seeing Zuziwe for a few weeks, he “did not greet her, nor did he ask about her health, as was expected after so long an absence” (Peteni, *Hill* 64). When Zuziwe makes her intention to reject Ntabeni known, it is Duma who insists that Ntabeni “marry her at once” and is enraged by his parents’ acceptance of her decision (Peteni, *Hill* 65). Duma represents the danger of absolute hatred for rivals and, though he takes pleasure from the feud and is “excited [that their] boys have decided to teach those Thembu boys a lesson” (Peteni, *Hill* 89), he ultimately suffers the loss of a cousin and a sister. When Zuziwe is buried, it is Duma who most clearly illustrates that nothing has changed in the Hill of Fools by attempting to dismiss Bhuqa from Zuziwe’s funeral. Bhuqa’s attempt to attend the funeral, however, suggests that he no longer believes in the feud.

Bhuqa’s family structure is largely absent from the novel but his father is clearly a dominant figure whose determination that Bhuqa marry a girl chosen by his father is the sole reason for Bhuqa’s failure to care for Zuziwe. Bhuqa’s father is opposed to Zuziwe, and Bhuqa declares “Zuziwe died because my father didn’t want her, not because I didn’t want her” (Peteni, *Hill* 146). The importance which the older generation, represented by Bhuqa’s father, places on the feud is seen by Bhuqa’s father’s disinterest in Zuziwe’s death: he simply reflects that “the death [of Zuziwe] had been a fortunate thing for him and his son” (Peteni, *Hill* 151). His assertion is soon undermined, however, when Bhuqa exiles himself to Port Elizabeth and refuses to marry his father’s choice of bride. Ultimately, the schism created by the feud extends so far as to separate father from son and the novel ends with Bhuqa’s father pleased that “his son had at last decided to marry, not a wild, giddy-headed town girl, but a girl with a good, respectable rural background” (Peteni, *Hill* 151), even though that girl is not of his own clan.

The last family in the novel is one which is never really complete. Though Zuziwe and Bhuqa’s relationship is consummated, they are never married. For a brief period they function as a family unit, however, and on hearing about Zuziwe’s pregnancy, Bhuqa takes time to “think out what [they] should do” (Peteni, *Hill* 127). The difficulties they face as an unmarried couple are not limited to the feud, though the enmity between their two communities necessitates that they leave their homes. In order to care for their child, Bhuqa and Zuziwe must leave KwaZidenge and Bhuqa presents Zuziwe with two options: she can either live with his aunt in a village nearby or move with him to Port Elizabeth. Both of these options present new difficulties as Bhuqa’s aunt is “very poor” and if Zuziwe moves there he will have to feed Zuziwe and “[his] aunt and her children. In Port Elizabeth they will have to live with a friend of Bhuqa who is married and has a child and it will be “quite a crowd for a two roomed house”

(Peteni, *Hill* 135). Once they decide that Zuziwe cannot live with Bhuqa's aunt, steps are taken to have her move with Bhuqa to Port Elizabeth. His friend cannot accommodate them both, as "his mother-in-law slept in the kitchen with children of relatives" (Peteni, *Hill* 136) and, more importantly, "it was unlikely that Bhuqa's wife would be permitted to live in Port Elizabeth" as "influx laws were very rigid" and men were placed in hostels and "were not allowed to bring their families with them" (Peteni, *Hill* 136). Bhuqa is thus forced to face the realities of an apartheid regime that does not allow him to move with his family to Port Elizabeth but instead encourages a migrant worker lifestyle to the detriment of family life. The only other option Bhuqa explores is to move to another village but even this proves impossible:

he could not obtain a hut or site at another rural village. There were influx control laws of a sort even there. Sites, he was told by the headmen to whom he applied, were scarce enough for their own children, children of the soil. He, the headman, would be torn to pieces by the villagers if he allotted a site to a stranger. (Peteni, *Hill* 137)

After exploring all of these options and having every other option ruined by the state of affairs in the country, Bhuqa tells Zuziwe that she must live with his aunt – a solution that is not agreeable to anyone. Zuziwe also faces her own challenges, though not immediately posed by the apartheid government. She is forced to conceal her pregnancy, which should be an outward indicator of her relationship, in order to arrange for her future with Bhuqa, a task which becomes increasingly difficult. Her decision to abort is frowned upon by her aunt, who suggests she keep the baby and if her father should chase her away, which would be unlikely, her aunt is "always ready to receive [her], whatever [her] misfortune" (Peteni, *Hill* 137). Zuziwe's rejection of this advice and her ultimate rejection of motherhood is also a rejection of the community and country in which she lives. She does not wish to bring a child into a community of hatred or a country that is unjust. Ultimately, the destruction of her new family occurs before it is even fully formed and "the innocent unborn child of Zuziwe becomes the ultimate victim of the senseless behaviour of the people of Kwazidenge" (Nyamende 117). Relations between family members are thus influenced by the feud which demands specific approaches to members of the opposed community. In a society dominated by violence, there is no room for a loving and peaceful family unit.

The Impact of Violence on the Individual

It is not only in relations between people that the prominence of violence is evident. Individual characters construct their identities in relation to the role they play within the community and their approach to the violence which dominates relations. Zuziwe refuses to accept the feud,

Bhuqa enjoys the glory he can obtain because of the feud, Ntabeni allows the violent culture to infiltrate his ministry and the warrior boys are all associated with the faction fights. Zuziwe is the only daughter and “the child of Mr and Mrs Langa’s old age” (Peteni, *Hill* 1) and is “rather spoilt” (*ibid.*). Her father is a kind and caring man who is interested only in her happiness and her mother supports her every decision. Zuziwe is initially a carefree young girl. She enjoys the attention she receives from the boys but does not allow them to abuse her; when Diliza attempts to rape her she refuses to be intimidated and immediately reports the incident to her mother (Peteni, *Hill* 36). She is also capable of standing up for herself when she is wrongly persecuted both by Ntombi at the river and by Duma in her own home. Zuziwe’s strength of character is most clearly seen in her refusal to accept or participate in the feud. From the first pages of the novel Zuziwe separates herself from the violence by not only refusing to accept Diliza’s assistance but also by speaking to Bhuqa in public and by not allowing Ntombi to bully her. Even in separating herself from the violence she is acknowledging its prominence, however, and Russel Kaschula highlights that, despite being against violence throughout the novel, Zuziwe is the cause of most of it (Kaschula, “*Kwazidenge*” 91). The relationship between Zuziwe and Bhuqa brings the feud between the Hlubis and the Thembus to the fore and results in the violence in the Dakada household, the tension in the Langa household, and the death of Katana. Zuziwe is also the only character to sacrifice herself entirely for another. Her love for Bhuqa is long lasting and withstands the disapproval and criticism of both their families and the community. This is not the sole determining factor in her life, and she shows concern for the effect of her choices on her parents and her unborn child. When she sees no other solution, however, Zuziwe agrees to marry a man of her father’s choosing while resolving not to, a deception which causes her death. Once Zuziwe has isolated herself from her family, by deceiving them, she begins the inevitable spiral to her death. In her death scene, Zuziwe seems unable to control her own actions and her literal inability to stop her haemorrhaging parallels her emotional inability to control her future happiness. When Zuziwe shows the most autonomy, in her decision to abort, she also, literally, removes herself from the community through suicide. Similarly, Bhuqa’s final decision is to separate himself from the identity imposed on him by his community by extracting himself from that community.

Bhuqa also suffers the consequences of living in a village in which his function is prescribed by his gender. As his father’s only son he must marry a woman of his father’s choosing or be disowned and though he chooses to try and make another arrangement, his identity as a black man from a rural village during apartheid with its migrant labour laws limits

his abilities to do so. His name is taken from the verb *ukubhuqa* which means to break down or cause havoc and this, combined with his position as leader of the Thembu warrior boys, suggests that he can be “associated with destruction and violence” (Kaschula, “*Kwazidenge*” 95). He is a strong and determined character and seems to stand alone for most of the novel. (His parents are not mentioned until he informs Zuziwe that his father will not allow him to marry her and, even then, his father remains a background figure who haunts the last pages of the tragedy). There is no mother-figure to speak of and his sister, though initially acting as a go-between for his relationship with Zuziwe, plays no serious part in the events which unfold.

As such, it is Bhuqa as an individual that is of most concern in the novel. His loyalty to Zuziwe is questionable, he continues his relationships with both of his other girlfriends after explicitly promising Zuziwe that he will no longer see them (Peteni, *Hill* 61). These relationships, while unsettling for Zuziwe, are unimportant and are pursued by Bhuqa simply for the status they give him. He is not particularly interested in marrying either of the girls and sees them as commodities with which to strengthen and highlight his superiority within the community. Despite the important position he holds, as leader of the Thembu boys, Bhuqa is only made important by the feud and he enters a self-imposed exile after Zuziwe has died with no one left to mourn for him. A large part of this lack of family structure is compensated for by the role he fulfils in the community as leader of the Thembu boys but this too creates a crisis of identity. As leader of the Thembu boys he is expected to participate in the battle against the Hlubis but, as Zuziwe’s lover, he is expected to avoid harming those she loves. Bhuqa places his identity of Thembu leader above that of lover of Zuziwe when he kills Katana. The reason for this is Bhuqa’s approach to the feud as he “fought against the Hlubi boys because it was expected of [him] and because of the excitement it gave [him], not out of hatred” (Peteni, *Hill* 135). Bhuqa fights because the culture of violence entrenched in the community provides him with excitement. Even after embarking on a relationship with Zuziwe, he continues to participate in the faction fights and it is only after her death that he comes to realise that the excitement he enjoys from acts of violence is costly. His identity as a warrior and his entrenchment in the violence of the community results in the death of Zuziwe and it is only by casting off these aspects of his identity that he is able to escape the violence which reigns in the Hill of Fools. His ultimate rejection of violence can be contrasted with Ntabeni who remains entrenched in the culture of violence throughout the novel.

Ntabeni shows little care for Zuziwe. He is much older than her and wishes to marry her because she is beautiful and will increase his status within the community. His expressions of love are empty and though he prays loudly to “impress Zuziwe” (Peteni, *Hill* 51), his desire

to impress her is inspired by his longing for status rather than love for her. Not only does he have very practical reasons for wishing to marry Zuziwe, but he also has a very restricted approach to the nature of their relationship. When Zuziwe does not agree with his behaviour during a church service he feels that “his position as a man, as the dominant partner in their love relationship, [is] being challenged [and] decide[s] to assert himself” by forbidding her to speak of the matter further (Peteni, *Hill* 52–53). Zuziwe, who is challenging Ntabeni’s masculinity by suggesting that he is acting incorrectly, must be reminded of her subordinate role as a woman. Ntabeni’s approach to Zuziwe throughout the text is that she is a commodity for which he must pay dearly; he begrudges her family the lobola he has offered, and so she must act as he dictates. This approach is not unique and it is the same one he adopts towards his own family. Through Ntabeni’s interactions with his immediate family the reader gains insights into his approach to women. As the oldest male in the household, Ntabeni is the most important member in the family and he is waited on by his mother, sister and nieces. They bring him his food, things with which to bathe, and clean up after him, all without acknowledgement – it is simply expected. This dominance over women is a clear indication of his assumed authority and when Zuziwe reacts against this dominance, his “short temper” (Peteni, *Hill* 45) is shown as he calls her a “filthy thing” and “attack[s] her with his walking stick” (Peteni, *Hill* 54). Ntabeni’s interactions with his family thus provide a benchmark for the way in which he will treat Zuziwe as his future wife and the reader cannot help but sympathise with her desire to end their engagement. He is a violent character, despite being a man of the church, and uses the feud to avenge Zuziwe’s betrayal by spurring the boys on into fighting (Peteni, *Hill* 81). In his capacity as church deacon he uses his role to sing his own praises and benefit from the reverence of the village for Christianity. The dominance of violence in the formation of identity is thus also at work in Ntabeni who, like the majority of the men is not physically active in the feud, exercises his role, both as deacon in the church and fiancé to Zuziwe, with violence.

Other minor characters also illustrate the extent to which individual identity is constructed in accordance with the feud. Diliza and Katana are both in favour of the feud and this informs their approach not only to the Thembus but also to the other boys in their community. They are the most visibly excited at the prospect of the fighting and participate with vigour. Katana becomes symbolic of the futility of the feud and his death serves to emphasise the folly of the fighting. Much like the cat killed by the dogs in a fit of frenzy in the early pages of the novel, Katana, whose name means small cat (Kaschula, “*Kwazidenge*” 95),

dies with no greater purpose being fulfilled. The description of the dogs after killing the cat echoes the actions of the boys after Katana's death:

When the cat was dead, the dogs left, returned to their homes and went about their daily business as if nothing had happened. They were not in the least interested in the carcass. They had not attacked the cat because they wanted food to eat, but because the instinct to kill had been roused, and had grown into a force as terrible, as irresistible, as destructive as the raging torrent of the Xesi river when it overflows its banks. (Peteni, *Hill* 23)

In a community in which individuals are valued only for the contribution they can make to the group, identity is defined by a single attribute. Katana, whose focus is on the continuation of the feud, is defined by violence and his senseless death associates him finally with the violence he assisted in perpetrating. Katana's death, at the hands of boys fighting simply for the pleasure it brings, illustrates the truth in Diliza's words that: "I can no more suppress my urge to kill than the other creatures which God created" (Peteni, *Hill* 3) – the feud, and the pleasure fighting brings, has reduced the boys to the baseness of animals who kill for no reason other than the ability to do so.

Mlenzana is also defined by his approach to the feud although for him it works in a negative light as he is opposed to it. Essentially he "wishes to see a long-term future peace between the Hlubis and the Thembus" (Kaschula, "*Kwazidenge*" 94) and so he becomes associated with weakness. His stepmother believes that he chooses not to fight out of cowardice and refers to him as "cowdung" and "human refuse" (Peteni, *Hill* 99), rejecting him as excrement for his failure to adhere to the norms of the community. She therefore illustrates the way in which women are also instrumental in maintaining the feud. Not only do they raise their sons to take part in the feud, they also accuse those who do not participate of cowardice. Mlenzana does ultimately participate in the faction fight, albeit unwillingly, but after the death of Katana and Zuziwe he becomes more vocal in his condemnation of the violence. It is Mlenzana who walks with Bhuqa to Zuziwe's funeral as he "was one of the few people in Kwazidenge, apart from Mvangeli's own family, who fully understood why Zuziwe died" (Peteni, *Hill* 147). When Duma threatens Bhuqa with violence at the funeral, Mlenzana jumps up to defend him and he challenges the necessity to continue a fight whose cause is no longer remembered. He is also the only character whose future is discussed and the narrator indicates that:

with a depth of penetration beyond his years, he saw Zuziwe as a victim of prejudice and hatred. He hoped her blood was not spilt in vain and that it would help put out the angry fire in the

villagers' hearts. He hoped they would learn to value a man as a human being, and not hate him just because he came from the other village. Mlenzana's influence grew as he grew older. He became accepted as the leading spirit of the youth of the day. Other young men listened to him respectfully when he spoke against faction fights because they knew it was not cowardice but conviction which made him condemn the fights. They remembered that in the actual fight he was as brave as the bravest of them. (Peteni, *Hill* 147)

The boys may listen to him respectfully but the narrator also indicates that they "they d[o] not agree with him" (Peteni, *Hill* 147). Mlenzana, the brave and peace-loving character in the novel contrasts the violence of Diliza and Katana but he is a lone voice in the community. Though he is provided with a leadership role within the community, the message of peace he tries to spread is restricted by the ingrained desire to continue fighting. The leadership he has is thus very limited, as is his influence.

Two more characters merit a brief discussion, the *sanuse* (the spiritual healer) and the magistrate who tries the Thembu boys after Katana's death. Both of these characters are introduced because of the prevalence of violence in the Hill of Fools. Ntabeni approaches the *sanuse* to obtain a love potion for Zuziwe, rather than attempting to woo her because he believes that force (and in this case witchcraft) is more likely to succeed. The *sanuse* is approached by people from all of the surrounding villages and could use his power to encourage peace. Instead, he remains a minor character who, through his talent for "making sure that his divinings are well informed through prior strategic inquiry" (Wright, "South African *Romeo and Juliet*" 85), highlights the similarities between "African traditional religion and the indigenized practice of Christianity" (*ibid.*). The *sanuse's* practises are not far removed from Ntabeni's, both use religion as a means to further their own role in the community rather than to promote the qualities of peace and love. The misuse of religion is not overtly explored but its lack of influence on the villagers emphasises the limited perspective which dominates. The magistrate in Queenstown, despite his brief appearance in the novel, also fulfils an important role. He highlights the contrast between traditional clan authority, in which the boys involved in the murder of Katana are innocent of any crime because of the context in which the murder occurred, and state authority, in which the boys are all guilty of the murder. Bhuqa may argue that:

It is not in our power to stop these faction fights. They have become a tradition, a way of life of the two villages. If a boy stayed away from a faction fight, he would find that life for him afterwards was worse than death. There is no choice for a boy in this matter, mhlekazi. If you

punish us severely today, if you send us to prison, you will be punishing us for something beyond our control. (Peteni, *Hill* 118)

But his argument denies the existence of the community within a greater national framework: as the judge points out “there is the law of the land to consider” and “faction fights are illegal” (Peteni, *Hill* 119). The faction fights may be considered acceptable, and even necessary, by the tribal authorities but ultimately the laws of the state have priority. Though the magistrate may make a valid point and hand down a judgement which attempts to take into consideration the traditions of the villagers, his message of peace is so far removed from the everyday existence of the people he is addressing that his message is largely useless. In a community of violence there is little room for change, even if there is the possibility of serious repercussions when the communal way of life leads to the breaking of state laws.

Hill of Fools is thus an illustration of the damage conflict between communities can inflict on the domestic realm. Not only do Zuziwe and Bhuqa (who long to begin their own family unit) suffer, but each family and character within the novel suffers loss. The largest sense of loss, however, is the loss of individual freedom. No one is free to act without first considering the reaction from the community as a whole and it is the community which passes the harshest judgement on the lovers. The community thus overshadows the family in this novel and it is the community which dictates the actions of its individual members rather than the head of the family. This is perhaps the largest difference between *Hill of Fools* and *Romeo and Juliet* as the latter maintains the importance and power of the father within the family structure.

Romeo and Juliet: The Societal Implications of Familial Chaos

In Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* suffering is not limited to Romeo and Juliet but impacts on everyone who has been tainted by the feud between the Montague and Capulet households. Each household suffers loss through the deaths of Mercutio, Tybalt, Paris, Romeo, Juliet, and Lady Montague. In each instance, the blame can be apportioned to the disorder which prevails in Verona. The effects of chaos within a society on its members are thus illustrated through the personal tragedies in the play. Glenn Clark notes that the whole play is “filled with defiance of authority and hierarchy in act and image”; further, he explores the different ways in which this defiance is presented:

[T]he lovers defy their families. Romeo imagines that in death he will shake off ‘the yoke of inauspicious stars’. Friar Lawrence defies his social superiors by aiding the young protagonists.

The aristocrats defy Prince Escalus. Early in the play, Tybalt resists his uncle's demand that he act hospitably toward all guests at the Capulets' feast and endure Romeo's presence. (Clark 281)

These various challenges to authority all contribute to "the play's tragic sense of disorder" (*ibid.*) With each action that undermines the authority of the established hierarchy, the Veronese society inches closer to the state of disarray in which two young lovers come to believe suicide to be the only viable option. It is not the state of society which provides the greatest sense of tragedy, however. Nor is it the ultimately unnecessary deaths of so many characters but rather the necessity for Romeo and Juliet to deny their identities within the family structure. Tragedy occurs when Romeo and Juliet defy the expectations placed on them by society and their families because those expectations have been created by structures which are themselves not functioning correctly. The state of chaos, both within the family and in the wider community, calls for a denial of the self within that environment and the only solution is a restoration of order to the society and the family. Ultimately, the authority exerted by the Prince over the families and society as a whole ensures that, though the lovers die, their deaths are not entirely futile. As the effects of the feud are first illustrated through the way the community is affected, it is necessary to consider the chaos within the community before examining each of the families. Once the structure of the families has been established it is possible to analyse the ways in which Romeo and Juliet challenge the identities imposed on them by their roles within society and by their respective families. It is also important to consider the Friar (who acts as a catalyst for many of Romeo and Juliet's actions) and the Prince (who ultimately restores peace to Verona, ending the chaos which reigns until the deaths of Romeo and Juliet).

Verona: A Disrupted Community

In the prologue of *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare outlines the central conceit of the play: an "ancient grudge" (1.1.3) between "two households, both alike in dignity" (1.1.1) and the consequences of the ensuing strife. There are two consequences: it causes a disruption in the community of Verona as "civil blood makes civil hands unclean" (1.1.4); and it leads to the death of the "star-crossed lovers" (1.1.6) – the children of the two households. Immediately after this introduction to the play and its concerns, the reader is confronted with the realities of the feud. Sampson and Gregory, two servants of the Capulet household, discuss the ways in which they will violate the Montague household by killing the men and raping the women (1.1.17–22). The bawdy humour employed in the discussion does not detract from its sinister

intent and when retainers from the Montague household arrive, the Capulet servants are willing to engage them in a brawl. It is important to note that none of the men initially involved in this first brawl are part of the immediate family for whom they are fighting. Instead, they belong to the household and have chosen loyalty to the family they serve as their primary loyalty, rather than to their own immediate family or to the community of Verona as a whole. They acknowledge this primary loyalty by declaring: “the quarrel is between our masters, and us their men” (1.1.17). This does not suggest that the servants blindly accept their involvement in the feud. As Barbara Cobb indicates, “the commoners in Montague and Capulet employ know that this ‘quarrel’ is not theirs” but feel the need to perform in front of the nobility – thus, once they form part of the larger family or community to which they belong, they become part of a feud from which they are usually absent or disinterested. Ultimately, the servants are “forced by social inferiority and servitude to participate in a ‘quarrel’ that is not their own” (Cobb 16–17). It seems that everyone in Verona has chosen a household with whom to side and only those who have a specific function within the community – Prince Escalus as ruler and Friar Lawrence as religious advisor – are not aligned with a specific household. Even Paris (through his suit of Juliet) is drawn into the feud and dies at the hand of a Montague while defending (the body of) a Capulet. That the feud is acted out through brawls in public spaces is perhaps the clearest indication of the extent to which the feud affects the community. Each fight occurs during the day and in an open and public arena. Verona is the playground of the feud and, as such, must be controlled by the patriarch of Verona, Prince Escalus. The feud between the two families thus disrupts the entire community and introduces chaos into the everyday activities of innocent citizens. The underlying cause for the feud is never revealed but seems intricately connected to power struggles between the two families. It is not only in the public arena that challenges to authority are present, however. Within the two families it is also clear that power struggles are detrimental and it is true, with regard to both Capulet and Montague, that “while they fail to exercise authority over the younger generation in the streets, they wield it selfishly and stubbornly in the home” (Kahn, “Coming of Age” 5). The result of this obsession with control and obedience within the family is that “both Romeo and Juliet seem to have distant relationships with their parents” (Herman 102).

The Capulet Family: Filial Disobedience

The audience is provided with much more detail of the Capulet household than of the Montagues. This does not suggest that they are the more dominant or powerful family but is a result of their alignment with Paris who, like the Friar and the Prince, is affected by (though

not involved in) the feud. As patriarch, Capulet should be the dominant figure but his power is undermined by Lady Capulet in his first stage appearance. She undermines him by questioning his sexuality and implying that he needs “a crutch” (1.1.67) as his sword would be ineffectual. From the opening scene then, “Lady Capulet is clearly casting doubt on her husband’s martial – and perhaps marital – swordsmanship” (Garber 191). She is not alone in doing this, and it is true with regard to both Capulet and Montague in this first scene that “both noblemen are immobilized by the force [and] power ... of their wives” (Cobb 18). In a community in which dominance is asserted through physical violence, a man who is unable to participate physically cannot be considered in control. Capulet, although the ‘head’ of the family, cannot control those he governs. This is illustrated by Tybalt’s blatant challenge to his uncle’s authority, when he declares that he shall “not endure” (1.5.75) Romeo’s presence in the Capulet house despite Capulet’s insistence that “he shall be endured” (*ibid.*). Though Tybalt eventually succumbs to Capulet’s authority, this acceptance is only temporary as he swears that Romeo’s intrusion will later “convert to bitt’rest gall” (1.5.91). The feud thus becomes a way in which the younger generation can invert the established hierarchy by undermining the authority of the patriarch. In order to assert his dominance, Capulet refuses to allow Tybalt to cause trouble in his house but he is clearly disturbed by the challenge and this may contribute to the vehemence with which he demands that Juliet obey him and marry Paris. The power Capulet attempts to exercise over his daughter Juliet may partly be a reaction against his lack of control over Tybalt and the other Capulets.

The relationship between father and daughter provides the clearest example of the consequences of disobedience within the family structure. Capulet is initially wary of marrying Juliet to Paris when she is too young, suggesting that Juliet is “yet a stranger in the world” (1.2.8). He asks that they “let two more summers wither in their pride / Ere we may think her ripe to be a bride” (1.2.10–11) because “too soon marred are those so early made” (1.2.13). There is fatherly tenderness and concern for Juliet in these remarks, yet they also highlight the way in which Capulet believes he is qualified to act on his daughter’s behalf without her participation or consultation. Despite his concerns that Juliet is too young to marry, Capulet encourages Paris to woo Juliet so that she will reciprocate his love and does not doubt that Juliet will act according to his wishes. This assurance is highlighted when, following the death of Tybalt, Capulet agrees to Paris’s suit and assures Paris that Juliet will accept him. The veracity of his belief is captured in his assurance to Paris: “I think she will be ruled / in all respects by me. Nay, more, I doubt it not” (3.4.13–14). The reasons for Capulet’s decision to agree to Paris’s suit earlier than he had previously suggested are open to speculation. He may

hope to comfort Juliet in her sorrow, attempting to remind his family that everyday life must continue in spite of tragedy or – and this seems particularly likely when considering Capulet’s anger that Juliet will not accept “[a] gentleman of noble parentage, / [o]f fair demesnes, youthful, and nobly lined” (3.5.180)” – attempting to cement a political alliance with the ruling family in order to have power over the Montagues. If the last reason is in any way a consideration, and Cristina Alfar suggests that it is (28), then it is clear that Juliet is a means towards political gain. Lisa Jardine also highlights that though Juliet “may carry a handsome fortune as her father’s sole heir, she is powerless to oppose his choice of a partner to optimise the financial effectiveness of that fortune” (Jardine, *Still Harping* 89). So, in being his daughter, and therefore his possession, Juliet is restricted to act in the ways dictated by Capulet.

There is a clear dichotomy within *Romeo and Juliet* between Juliet’s wishes, to marry Romeo (a wish that Capulet is unaware of), and Capulet’s wishes – for Juliet to marry Paris. The reason Capulet favours Paris’s suit (as a means to further his political power) is the same reason he would reject Romeo, who is a member of the rival family. The complications created by this dichotomy form the plot of the play and it is thus crucial to consider the division between Capulet’s conceptions of a fitting suitor (one with political benefits) and Juliet’s (one who truly loves her). Juliet’s first disobedience is not her love for Romeo (of which her father is unaware), but her refusal to marry Paris. By refusing to accept Capulet’s authority over her, in her father’s eyes Juliet becomes a disobedient daughter, synonymous with all that is unnatural and monstrous. Capulet describes Juliet as a “disobedient wretch” (3.5.160), and by suggesting that Juliet is “green sickness carrion” (3.5.156) he implies that she is like a disease which can pollute his other subjects. The comparison to rotting meat is particularly poignant as it captures the dissolution of their relationship – as Capulet’s daughter, Juliet is of his flesh but in disobeying him she is severing this connection and is rotting. The emphasis is thus placed on the unnaturalness of the disobedient daughter – it is not only upsetting to Capulet and his household but also to the whole natural order. In order to reassert his dominance, Capulet provides Juliet with an ultimatum which, considering that she has not indicated her desire to marry anyone against her father’s wishes (to him at least), is severe. She is only offered two options: either to get “to church o’ Thursday, / Or never after look [her father] in the face” (3.5.161–162). Her options are limited to acceptance of her father’s wishes or banishment, both of which would lead to tragedy.

Juliet dies tragically at the end of *Romeo and Juliet*, at least partly because she has tried to deceive rather than consult her father concerning Paris’s suit. The suit of Paris is evident to the audience from the second scene of the play but Capulet is initially protective of Juliet and

it is Lady Capulet who encourages the match (1.3.65–98). In the climactic confrontation between Juliet and Capulet, the underlying tragedy, which is also present in Juliet's death, is that Capulet is unaware of Juliet's relationship with Romeo. Juliet's manipulative obedience, which is necessitated and contradicted by her actual disobedience, is to pretend acceptance of Paris's proposal. In this brief act of obedience, Juliet is restored to her father's favour as he reflects: "My heart is wondrous light, / Since this same wayward girl is so reclaimed" (4.2.46–47). The insincerity of her obedience is unknown to Capulet and he believes that he has regained control over her. Juliet, however, uses her apparent obedience as a pretext for meeting with Friar Lawrence. Juliet's death is ultimately the result of her father's choice of suitor (through which he hopes to exercise control over her) and the pressure to accept his decision. This pressure necessitates the haste which results in her tragic death and it could be argued that the absence of a happy ending in Juliet's case can be attributed to the interaction between her obedience (in saying she will marry Paris) and disobedience (in initially refusing to marry Paris and actually marrying Romeo).

In *Romeo and Juliet* the reader is therefore called to question the distinction between obedience and disobedience and to conceptualise the mutability of both. In marrying Romeo, Juliet is clearly disobedient but, as Capulet does not learn of this act until the play's conclusion, her disobedience (in his eyes) is in her refusal to marry Paris. The deception between father and daughter, which is necessitated by the authority assumed by the father, results in a lack of reconciliation in *Romeo and Juliet* except perhaps in Capulet's sorrow at her death and his realisation that "with my child my joys are buried (4.4.89–91). The way in which Capulet treats Juliet, as the one person in his household over whom he has complete authority, results in the destruction of their relationship and Juliet's death. Peter Herman suggests that "Old Capulet fails in his obligations to his daughter by first deciding in favour of the match with County Paris, even though he knows Juliet is too young, and then demanding that she marry against her will" (Herman 101) – both actions which do not take Juliet's desires into account. In order to represent a benign and just father, Capulet would have to accept his daughter's decision as Herman suggests:

An early modern audience would have recognised that Old Capulet had options, and that social convention mandated that he swallow his daughter's decision, however difficult it may have been. That would have been the expected fatherly duty, so his raging does not represent patriarchy per se, but the *abuse* of patriarchy. (Herman 102)

His interest in controlling Juliet contrasts the lack of interest shown by Lady Capulet.

The relationship between Lady Capulet and Juliet, much like that between Juliet and her father, is primarily superficial and Lady Capulet is often “claimed to represent a failure in motherhood” (Roberts 24). The first indicator of the relationship between mother and daughter is not any interaction between them but rather the discussion between Juliet’s Nurse and her mother in which her Nurse is able to calculate Juliet’s age, her mother is not and instead defers to the Nurse for this information. According to Lawrence Stone, the relationship between Juliet and her mother is not uncommon as he relates:

Sometimes the relation to the wet-nurse was the closest affinity in the child’s life, especially when she was taken into the household and continued to live there after weaning. Shakespeare’s Juliet was deeply attached to her Nurse, but had only stiff and formal relations with her mother, who could not even remember her exact age. (Stone 106)

These “stiff and formal relations” are evident in the conversation concerning Paris’s suit in which Lady Capulet presents his suit in brief and direct questions asking Juliet if she “can [...] love the gentleman” (1.3.81). Her request that Juliet “speak briefly [as to whether she] can like of Paris’ love” is met with Juliet’s cryptic, and somewhat reply:

I'll look to like, if looking liking move;
But no more deep will I endart mine eye
Than your consent gives strength to make it fly. (1.3.98–101)

It thus seems that Juliet is willing to comply with her mother’s wishes but “in a way that stresses obedience, not intimacy” (Herman 102). Juliet, at this point in the play does not avoid a definite engagement because of her love for Romeo, which is her later motivation, but because her love “cannot be charged up simply by parental consent” (Cobb 22). Their relationship is not only formal but also one of misunderstandings. Following Tybalt’s death and Romeo’s exile, Lady Capulet may correctly acknowledge that Juliet is “mew’d up to her heaviness” (3.4.8–11) but she mistakenly attributes this pain to Tybalt’s death, going so far as to offer Juliet assistance in seeking vengeance on Romeo (3.5.103). Even this formal and misplaced concern is removed, however, when Juliet indicates that she will actively defy her father’s wishes.

Once Juliet has informed Lady Capulet that she will not accept Paris’s suit, Lady Capulet refuses to support her daughter, either in her decision or in informing her father and insists that she “tell him so [herself] / And see how he will take it at [her] hands” (3.5.124–125). Juliet’s decision places Lady Capulet in a difficult position as she struggles to fulfil her role as wife and mother. Her first reaction is to respond as a wife and so she informs Capulet

that though he deserves thanks for arranging the match with Paris, “[Juliet] will none” and so Lady Capulet “would the fool were married to her grave” (3.5.139–140). Her adopted discourse – referring to her disobedient daughter as a “fool” – is in agreement with the views of the majority of parents in similar situations in Shakespeare’s works,⁸ nevertheless, she also responds negatively to Capulet’s violent reaction to Juliet. His banishment of their daughter elicits Lady Capulet’s incredulity as she asks him “fie, fie! what, are you mad?” (3.5.158) and tells him that he is “too hot” (3.5.175). Unfortunately for Juliet this response is not one which completely restores their relationship and so when she asks that her mother defy her father’s wishes begging that she “cast [her] not away!” but rather “delay this marriage for a month, a week [or] make the bridal bed / In that dim monument where Tybalt lies,” Lady Capulet returns to her role as the submissive wife and tells Juliet “talk not to me, for I’ll not speak a word / Do as thou wilt, for I have done with thee” (3.5.198–203). This refusal to commit her support for Juliet is not a lack of care, especially considering her distraught response to Juliet’s (feigned) death. Lady Capulet’s reaction to Juliet’s death is her most maternal moment in the play and her cry of “O me, O me! My child, my only life / Revive, look up, or I will die with thee!” (4.4.46–47) equals King Lear’s anguished cries in response to Cordelia’s death. The last words uttered by Lady Capulet – that “this sight of death is as a bell / That warns my old age to a sepulchre” (5.3.205–206) – echo the last word we are given on Lady Montague: that she has died. Despite the distance created between Juliet and her mother by the hierarchy within the family structure, Lady Capulet does mourn the loss of her daughter and, considering that the play is unique in Shakespeare’s oeuvre in “develop[ing] a relationship between a female protagonist and her mother” (Basile 128), the anguish she shows at her daughter’s death outweighs the lack of concern she otherwise presents.

While the motherly concern Juliet receives from her own mother may be limited, she does receive some maternal care from her Nurse. The Nurse fulfils a role as “a surrogate mother” (Roberts 27) and “having lost her own daughter (Susan), the Nurse seems to transfer her affection to Juliet, and Juliet reciprocates” (*ibid.*) Juliet’s willingness to reciprocate can be attributed to the formal relationship she has with her mother and the amount of time she spends with the Nurse. While Juliet and Lady Capulet only share two scenes (1.3 and 3.5), Juliet and the Nurse share five (1.3, 1.5, 2.5, 3.2 and 3.5), and the Nurse acts on behalf of Juliet in a further two by arranging her marriage with Romeo (2.4) and preventing Romeo from killing

⁸ Shylock disowns Jessica for her disobedience in marrying a Christian in *The Merchant of Venice*, Brabantio disowns Desdemona for her disobedience in eloping with Othello in *Othello*, and King Lear rejects Cordelia for disobeying his demand for declarations of love in *King Lear*, to name but a few.

himself in Act 3 Scene 3. The Nurse thus shows a greater concern for Juliet's well-being and provides the audience with more insight into Juliet than either of her parents. She does this because "from the beginning what the Nurse has is more than personality: it is function; and by function she is a 'natural'" (Everett, "Romeo" 155). (A natural is someone who "will provide insight even – or most – where it appears to be failing to provide information" (*ibid.*)). Juliet relies on the Nurse to arrange the practical aspects of her life, discovering the identity of Romeo, arranging for Romeo to meet her for their marriage, arranging for the consummation of their marriage, and it is in this role that the Nurse ultimately fails her. Once the Nurse encourages Juliet to marry Paris (suggesting that this is the only practical option available), Juliet no longer trusts her to fulfil the motherly role she has performed. Though Act 3 Scene 5 ends with all of Juliet's parental figures satisfied with her apparent resolve to marry Paris, she has deceived them all and is now taking matters into her own hands declaring that "[the Nurse] and [her] bosom henceforth shall be twain" (3.5.240). Juliet's final decision regarding those who have parental authority over her is to reject them and the identity they have created for her. She must now accept a single identity, that of Romeo's wife, and sever herself from the filial bonds placed on her parent figures and her role within the Capulet household.

The Capulet family is thus a complex unit in which each family member has a pre-assigned role. These roles all serve to enforce the dominance of the oldest male over the subservient younger men (including Tybalt) and women (Lady Capulet, Juliet, and the Nurse). The challenge to authority, posed first by Tybalt and then Juliet, suggests that Capulet does not have as much control over his household as he would like. This combined with his inability to control the members of his household in the public arena indicates that the external chaos in the community mirrors the chaos within the individual households.

The Montague Family: Parental Distancing

The Montague household is, for the most part, absent from the main action of the play – a by-product of Romeo's distant relationship with them (Voss 132; Low 71). Montague, like Capulet, arrives during the first brawl and, like Capulet, is prevented from fighting by his wife. His character is briefly reintroduced following the fight in which Mercutio and Tybalt are slain but he is allowed only one sentence which is used to suggest that Romeo's murder of Tybalt was a just punishment for Tybalt's murder of Mercutio. In the last scene, Montague mourns the death of his wife and son – the father figure who has been absent for most of the play is left completely alone. The relationship between Romeo and his parents is described rather than performed, with the majority of the reader's knowledge being obtained from the discussion

between Benvolio and the Montagues. It is important to note, from the beginning, the distance created between Romeo and his parents. *Romeo and Juliet* provides a complete family for Romeo and goes to some lengths to suggest that there is at least some level of affection between the family members. It is also important to consider that the family relationships are portrayed vocally by other characters, in contrast to the relationship between Juliet and her parents which is portrayed in discussions between the relevant characters. The reader never sees Romeo with his parents and the only way in which their relationship can be approached is from this outside perspective.

Our first encounter with Romeo's parents is immediately after the first violence witnessed between the Montagues and the Capulets. Lady Montague is "[r]ight glad [...] he was not at th[e] fray" (1.1.110) and Montague is concerned by Romeo's behaviour in which he "makes himself an artificial night" (1.1.133). Despite their clear interest in Romeo's well-being and concern for him, both with regard to the feud and his apparent melancholy, Romeo does not confide in his parents even though he has been "importuned / [...] both by [Montague] and many other friends" (1.1.139–140). His lack of disclosure does not isolate him from his parents, however, and Montague's last words on the matter are that "could [they] but learn from whence [Romeo's] sorrows grow / [they] would as willingly give cure as know" (1.1.147–148). Their respect for their son's independence, a concept not present in the relationship between Juliet and her parents, is visible in their decision to leave Benvolio to try discover the cause of his sudden sadness. Benvolio discovers the cause with relative ease and Romeo, though cryptic, provides a full explanation for his sorrow. Despite the distance created between Romeo and his parents, the last acts by both of them stem out of love for him: Lady Montague dies from "grief of [their] son's exile" (5.3.210) and Montague plans to raise "a statue in pure gold" (5.3.299) to the woman Romeo loved. Lady Montague thus reacts to the loss of her child in much the same way as Lady Capulet and, like Lady Capulet, she loses her child because of the actions of her husband. The tragedy suffered by both mothers in *Romeo and Juliet* is thus not only the loss of their children, but a lack of agency throughout the play which ensures that only in a moment of absolute grief are they able to act in a way that is not governed by the patriarchal society in which they live. Similarly, Montague can only see the disastrous effects of the feud he has failed to end when he has personally suffered a loss. It is therefore clear that "*Romeo and Juliet* not only examines but is critical of the abuse of a husband's and father's power: the play portrays a crisis in patriarchal authority" (Roberts 32) and one that can only be solved by the rejection of an unjust authority through the assumption of identities outside the confines dictated by that authority.

What's in a Name? The Need for New Identities

Coppelia Kahn suggests that “Romeo and Juliet is about a pair of adolescents trying to grow up” and that “growing up requires that they separate themselves from their parents by forming an intimate bond with one of the opposite sex which supersedes filial bonds” (“Coming of Age” 5). Her summation of the play may ignore the external chaos of the community but it does stress the importance of the shift that Romeo and Juliet make in their identities. The titular characters are so important because they choose to change their identities in order to separate themselves from the feud so as to be together. Prior to meeting Juliet, Romeo is already challenging his identity as son to the Montagues.

Romeo is not involved in the first fight (defending the honour of his family) but is instead pining for Rosaline (a friend to the Capulets) by separating himself from the community. The pretence that it is night separates Romeo from the daylight during which the violence of the feud is enacted. He further separates himself by locking himself away and avoiding the public spaces, which have become the established arenas for violence. These decisions are temporary, much like his love for Rosaline, and though Romeo may imagine an identity removed from the feud in which he is simply a lover, he is ultimately forced to return to the realities that Mercutio and Benvolio present; it is only when he meets Juliet that he begins to separate himself fully from the feud. Though it could be suggested that “the ghost of Romeo’s love for Rosaline haunts how we view his love for Juliet” (Roberts 18), this love is always placed in the past tense once he embarks on a relationship with Juliet. In fact, his love for Rosaline seems to be more an instance of Romeo being “in love with the idea of love or, even more acutely, with the idea of himself as a lover” (Garber 192) than an actual representation of love.

Juliet also seems to be separate from the feud but her separation is dictated by her identity as woman and daughter. She is often considered a more vibrant character than Romeo who “seems unpromising material for a tragedy” (Low 71) until he meets Juliet and has “a moment of awakening – a decision to choose reality over fantasy” (Low 71). From the beginning of the play, Juliet is clearly able to challenge the expectations placed on her (as is seen in her cryptic answers to her mother’s question concerning Paris’s suit). She only fully begins to conceptualise an identity outside of the familial one prescribed for her, however, after meeting Romeo. Whereas she enters the Capulet ball as the daughter of Capulet, she leaves it as the lover of Romeo. Once she discovers Romeo’s Montague affinity, she does not swear loyalty to her family but instead embarks on a consideration of identity and familial

obligation, as does Romeo and they both “first disregard and then reject their family ties, seeking instead a world in each other” (Low 72).

While Juliet may seem more willing to challenge the identity created for her, Romeo is more able physically to reject the constrictions placed on him by the feud than Juliet. He is “like a falcon in that he figuratively flies above the concerns of the feud and is oblivious to the dangers that might ensue from his appearance at his enemy’s house: ‘With love’s light wings did I o’erperch these walls / For stony limits cannot hold love out’ [2.2.66–7]” (C. Brown 338). This freedom is his because “as a man, Romeo can go wherever he wants, unlike Juliet, and the flight imagery becomes symbolic of this freedom” (C. Brown 338–339). His rejection of his identity as son is thus an easier transition than Juliet’s rejection of her given identity as daughter because he has more freedom of movement. Thus while Juliet’s “physical mobility is constrained by her parents” Romeo is “free to wander alone before dawn [and] then to return home and shut himself away in his chambers” (Zender 140–141). Juliet’s restriction is not only negative, however, and her physical confinement forces her to consider the extent to which she is confined by her identity and thus “links to her inward development” (Zender 141).

In the play Juliet provides the fullest consideration of the function of family, names and identity. Her speech following the initial meeting with Romeo at the ball considers the arbitrariness of familial identity and names:

Juliet: O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name!
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I’ll no longer be a Capulet.
[...]
‘Tis but thy name that is my enemy.
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What’s Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo called,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name;
And for that name, which is no part of thee,
Take all myself. (2.2.33–49)

Her ruminations are interrupted by Romeo but not before she has reached the conclusion that familial obligations and ties are not necessarily restrictive and that a name does not automatically determine identity. By both offering to rescind their identities, Romeo and Juliet essentially begin to remove themselves from the community in which they live and the values it espouses. Their desire to assume a new identity stems from their desire to be together rather than a desire to end the feud. Ivo Kamps notes that “nowhere in the play do Romeo and Juliet view their love as a means of bringing the families together [and] even in death [their] love remains profoundly unintelligible to their parents” (Kamps 46). This fact is vital to understanding their love as something which occurs outside of the confines of the community and entirely in private. Their love stems from interactions with one another and there is no hidden motive of reconciliation between the families until it is suggested by Friar Lawrence – Romeo and Juliet’s love is neither connected to the feud nor a result of it.

In Verona the streets are filled with people connected to the two families but, despite the resulting street brawls, the lovers are able to extract themselves from the feud and foster a relationship. A distinction develops between “the world of the everyday, associated primarily with Juliet’s parents and with the other adult characters, and the world of romance, associated exclusively with Romeo and Juliet” (Zender 138). The world of the everyday can be clearly distinguished because of the separation of private and public realms: Juliet’s bedroom is an entirely private realm and the streets are public. The first indication of the lovers’ separation from the community is the imagery of the night and darkness which is associated with them. They meet and pledge their love to each other during the “blessed blessed night” (2.2.139). While waiting for Romeo to arrive after their marriage “amidst the intimidating scrutiny of the Capulet mansion, Juliet longs for darkness” (MacKenzie 27) and tries to hasten “love-performing night” (3.2.5). She also describes the night as a “gentle” and “loving black-brow’d night” (3.2.20–21; also 3.2.10–11) because it will bring Romeo to her. Their marriage is consummated at night and “the couple kisses for the last time as they recognise night’s shelter is receding” (Schuyler 67). The connection between night and their love is so strong that Juliet longs for the lark (the morning bird) to be a nightingale (bird of the night) so that their time together can be prolonged. Finally, they are united in death at night and so “in the play, the night qualifies as sublime” and is a “transformative space” (Schuyler 67). The association between their love and darkness is not sinister but rather a means through which the ‘light’ of their love is highlighted. Schuyler discusses this contrast as follows:

In *Romeo and Juliet* the beauty and ardour of young love is seen by Shakespeare as the irradiating glory of sunlight and starlight in a dark world. The dominating image is light, every form a manifestation of it; the sun, moon, stars, fire, lightning, the flash of gunpowder, and the reflected light of beauty and of love; while by contrast we have night, darkness, clouds, rain, mist, and smoke. The two lovers actually emit light to each other. The light Romeo sees shining through the window is from Juliet (2.2.2–3). Juliet is confident that ‘lovers can see to do their amorous rites / By their own beauties’ (3.2.8–9). Perhaps it is more accurate to say that as they construct a new world with their love and their poetry amidst the violence of Verona, they cause each other to shine. (Schuyler 76)

Their love is also separated from the community by its restriction to a private domain. The lovers are never together in public (because of the brevity of their affair and the feud). The last distinction between the identity of the lovers (particularly Romeo) before and after their relationship is in their approach to sex. The Nurse, Mercutio and the retainers from the Capulet and Montague households all view sex as either a means through which dominance can be asserted or as a source of humour. Sampson and Gregory associate it with both the violent (in their discussion of raping the Montague women) and the humorous (by the way in which they discuss it through wordplay). For the Nurse and Mercutio, sex is a way in which to entertain and tease others: Mercutio uses his Queen Mab speech to convince Romeo to stop moping over Rosaline and the Nurse fondly remembers her husband teasing Juliet about “falling backwards.” In contrast to the public view of sex, Romeo and Juliet are “untouched by the bawdiness that surrounds them” (Schuyler 69) and view it as an expression of love – to Juliet the consummation of her marriage marks her change from daughter to wife and of Romeo’s from son to husband.

Once he has embraced his new role as Juliet’s husband, Romeo attempts to filter it into his role as Montague’s son. When he meets Tybalt and Mercutio fighting in the street he attempts to stop them by expressing love for his new family and “his actions are driven by a romantic exchange between himself and Juliet that has brought him to a different view of the world” (MacKenzie 27). As Tybalt refuses to accept that Romeo may have identity outside of the one prescribed for him by society, however, Romeo is forced to choose between his roles of son to a Montague and husband to a Capulet. His initial choice prefers husband but after the death of Mercutio (which highlights the feud and its effect on him) he takes on his role as Montague and kills Tybalt (Zender 143; Schyler 70; MacKenzie 25). This assertion of his role as a Montague unintentionally severs him from Juliet. It is as a result of Tybalt’s death that he is exiled and that Capulet agrees to Juliet’s marriage to Paris. Ultimately, Romeo’s double

identity is necessitated by his love for Juliet but will also destroy their love. The separation created by Tybalt's death does not result in Romeo and Juliet realigning themselves with their families but instead in an intensification of their newly chosen identities as lovers. Juliet considers the best way in which to avoid marrying Paris and be re-united with Romeo. Her decision involves deceiving and rejecting her parents and the Nurse. While she may plan to discard her Capulet identity to be with Romeo, her faked death allows her identity as a Capulet to be reinforced as she is placed in the Capulet tomb. Her actual death could be argued as having the same effect since, despite the fact that she commits suicide in reaction to Romeo's death, she does so in the Capulet tomb and is commemorated as a Capulet. In choosing to die, however, she ultimately takes control of her own life. MacKenzie explains it as follows:

the male values that so compellingly have controlled and ordered her world are not the only arbiters of her actions and destination. Her choices may be limited but she asserts, with repeated vigour, that she has a choice and that its consequences are less uncomfortable than a host of masculine voices would have us believe. With Friar Lawrence's plan in ruins, Juliet's final recourse is, indeed, to unhesitating self-destruction and in this final, resolute act she upturns that very masculine typification of Death as the marital predator, selecting and ravishing his victim. It is she who summons Death, she who willingly breaks the bands of life, and, at the last, she who wrests her destiny from the Veronese patriarchy that has for so long sought to interpret the world for her. (MacKenzie 34)

Far from having the "lack of control" suggested by Friar Lawrence (Roberts 19), Juliet acts in a way which indicates the extent to which she has claimed autonomy over her life, and death. Romeo's final act is also one which finally severs him from his social ties. He chooses to go to the Capulet tomb and kill himself, thus fully aligning himself with Juliet and her Capulet identity whilst separating himself from his Montague identity. Romeo's decision to kill himself in the Capulet tomb is the only action taken by a single character after careful consideration without consulting anyone. (Juliet's suicide also occurs without consultation but is a spontaneous act.) In his final act, Romeo denies his father and the feud by choosing to die as Juliet's husband in a private space at night. Both Romeo and Juliet are responsible for the terms of their own deaths. Arthur F. Kinney suggests that the authority in *Romeo and Juliet* belongs not to "the elder Montagues, for all their concern for their son, or the Capulets, for all their disregard for the opinions and desires of their daughter [because] the two families are limited – the Montagues by hoping for a rosier world in the future, the Capulets by using force to achieve their way" but rather with the lovers themselves. Their deaths are the result of their own decisions and actions and "if they take on themselves the sins of their fathers (their *births*

were ‘star-crossed’), they also take on themselves responsibility for their choice to marry secretly” (Kinney, “Authority” 34–35).

Alfar suggests that “Juliet challenges patrilineal pre-eminence in her desire to reject the names of Montague and Capulet” (Alfar 68) which denies that family names are an inherent part of identity but also denies any bond, other than a name, to her father. At the play’s conclusion, despite the tragic deaths of Romeo, Juliet and Paris, the only possible resolution is reached – Romeo, Juliet and Paris, who are all innocent victims of the family feud, are removed from the love triangle unwittingly created by Capulet and the feud is ended. The deaths of Romeo and Juliet serve to illustrate the consequences of a dual identity and a rejection of familial bonds. Though it may be argued that the death of the lovers “suggests that such resistance cannot survive patrilineal control” (Alfar 74) this conclusion ignores the suggestion of reconciliation between the Montagues and the Capulets in the final scene. The play’s conclusion offers two alternate readings. The desire to create gold statues in honour of a foe’s child is often interpreted as an indication that the feud has ended. This interpretation is supported by the chorus’s declaration that the only thing that could end Romeo and Juliet’s “parent’s rage” was “their children’s end” (1.1.10–11). Recent scholarship, however, suggests that the solution may not be as simple as the chorus suggests. Cobb highlights that it is gold which purchases the poison from the apothecary and that “the nobles’ ‘gold’ makes commoners do bad things” (Cobb 23). As the purpose of the poison purchased with gold is death, “gold plays a prominent role in the denouement to this play” (Cobb 24). The final gesture in the play then, far from being conciliatory, suggests a new rivalry in which Capulet and Montague attempt to outdo each other in erecting memorials of their children. Ultimately, “the gold statues become a parody of sorts for the lives of these two vibrant youths [...] gold is what is left in the wake of the havoc that these noblemen have wreaked on the lives of nobles and commoners alike” (Cobb 24). If the only lasting reminder of the love of Romeo and Juliet are gold statues, their love has become something tangible and representative of the feud which they sought to escape. Regardless of the intent of the statues, as a sign of reconciliation or a new focus for the feud, they confine the identities of Romeo and Juliet within Veronese society. The lovers may transcend the restrictions of identity in their deaths but in Verona they will remain a Capulet and a Montague.

Friar Lawrence: Ghostly Father

A character who plays a central role in the final results of the play is Friar Lawrence. He is part of the feud not through a familial connection but as a concerned (and substitute) father

figure. The Nurse may act as a surrogate mother for Juliet, but Friar Lawrence has a fatherly relationship with both Romeo and Juliet so that “in the absence of trusted parents, both Romeo and Juliet run to the friar with problems” (Voss 132) and “in addition to performing his priestly duties for the community, the Friar befriends, advises, confesses, and marries Romeo and Juliet” (*ibid.*) His role in the play is complex: his occupation, as friar, places him on the periphery of the feud (much in the way Escalus is removed from the feud by his princely office) but also requires a religious, paternal relationship with anyone who should seek it. It is clear in the initial scenes that Romeo, despite having caring (albeit distant) parents and concerned friends, chooses Friar Lawrence as his confidant (Low 71) and “ghostly [i.e. spiritual] father” (2.3.45) – and it is his relationship with the Friar that results in his marriage to Juliet. Juliet also turns to Friar Lawrence “to know his remedy” (3.5.241) when her family fails her; her “trust in Lawrence stands in stark contrast to her relationship with her own father [who] threatens her with bodily harm” (Voss 132, also Clark 296). Friar Lawrence provides her with an alternative to marrying Paris and tries to prevent her from an unnecessary death when she wakes in the tomb. He may ultimately fail, but the concern Friar Lawrence shows to Juliet goes beyond the requirements of his religious role and he treats her as his own child. His last act in the play is to provide a thorough account of the deaths of the lovers, implicating himself in the process (and thereby taking a measure of parental responsibility – which the lovers’ parents have failed to do).

Friar Lawrence is not a ‘perfect’ surrogate father, however. While it is clear that he has been sympathetic to Romeo’s romantic troubles in the past, the Friar “may be no more able to comprehend the magnitude of the lovers’ feelings than are the lovers’ parents” and primarily sees “the potential benefit of the lovers’ match for the feuding families (2.3.91–92)” (Low 71–72). Cobb also suggests that “Friar Lawrence agrees to help Romeo, not out of concern for Romeo’s romantic success, but rather as a means to promote an end to the Montague/Capulet feud” (Cobb 23). The focus on the effects of the lovers’ union as a possible solution to social discontent (Weinberger 361; Clark 296) suggests that Friar Lawrence’s primary concern is for the wellbeing of society as a whole. Jerry Weinberger furthers this argument by suggesting that

the obvious solution for the two now married lovers would have been for Juliet to go with Romeo to some other city and for the two simply to take up residence there, with Friar Lawrence’s blessing. But the friar does not suggest this solution, much less bless it. In the first place, he has to be aware of danger from the two warring houses. Even more important is that his primary interest, as we have seen, is not the two young lovers’ happiness but the partisan

situation in Verona. Friar Laurence pursues his universal and transpolitical ends by political means. (Weinberger 362)

Consequently, though “the Friar becomes a surrogate father for Romeo, and in so doing effectively rivals the patriarchal authority of Montague” (Roberts 28), he rivals rather than subverts the patriarchy and so the actions of the Montagues still have direct repercussions for Romeo. Similarly, he may adopt a fatherly role in his interactions with Juliet, but his true loyalty remains to the wellbeing of society as a whole. His involvement in the union of Romeo and Juliet draws him into the feud and, by the play’s conclusion, he has become a key player in it, and is ultimately responsible for the deaths of Romeo, Juliet and Paris. The only character to remain unbiased throughout the play is Prince Escalus.

Prince Escalus: the Restoration of Order

The encroachment of the domestic quarrels on the communal space necessitates an overarching authority; in *Romeo and Juliet* Prince Escalus fulfils this role by “com[ing] across as a figure fit for tragedy: his authority and his diction contribute to a sense of his magnitude” (Low 71). It is the Prince who can decide that “some shall be pardoned, and some punished” (5.3.308). His position of authority is not simple, however, and the challenge to authority within the Capulet and Montague family structures mirrors the difficulties the Prince faces in Verona. He is first introduced when attempting to end the quarrel which has broken out in the streets and struggles to make himself heard by the feuding men. This does not suggest that the Prince is simply a “fussing irrelevance in Shakespeare” (Conrad 86).⁹ Once he has the attention of the gathered crowd, he highlights, through the lack of “any kind of rhetorical privilege in his speech” (Clark 291), that the Capulets and the Montagues have no “temporal or ethical priority to the ‘ancient citizens’” (Clark 291). The aristocrats, despite the prominence they hold over their own houses, are still subject to the Prince and he undermines the authority they possess rather than authority as a whole. It can thus be suggested that:

the Prince’s version of restoring order does subvert the convention of an aristocratic authority but rather than being ‘entirely useless’ ... it at the very least suggests a redirection of that authority toward the ‘common’ and away from the aristocracy who cannot earn our respect. (Cobb 19)

⁹ Conrad sees the Prince as irrelevant to Shakespeare’s version of the Romeo and Juliet story and observes that Soviet ballets place a larger emphasis on him “since Soviet ideology does not recognise the religious authority of the Friar” and so in the ballets “he is the absolutist embodiment of power” (Conrad 86).

Essentially, “the Prince implies that since the aristocrats have degraded themselves, the citizens now have rightful control of their city” (Clark 292) and as the ruler of the citizens, he will not relinquish his authority. It is only after three acts of public violence that the edict against public brawls is passed, however, and even then it has little effect on the younger men of the households. Despite the ban, Tybalt deliberately provokes Mercutio into fighting and though Romeo may caution his friends (and new family) to abide by the Prince’s instructions, “the Prince’s authority and threatened punishments are not sufficiently respected to keep the peace” (Herman 97). Peter Herman also suggests that the Prince knows that he lacks the support of his subjects and this is his inspiration in exiling rather than executing Romeo (Herman 98). While such an interpretation may be acceptable, it denies the Prince any real authority and diminishes his importance into simply representing a failing authority. The Prince, rather than representing a weak patriarch, “ordains and enforces a law that is inflexible and will lead, potentially, to tragedy” (Garber 191). The delay in the public banning of violence is a result of his desire to allow the patriarchs of each household to exert their own authority over their families and servants. In banishing rather than executing Romeo, he is acknowledging that Romeo’s actions are a result of a chaotic community rather than an inherent trait – Romeo must be removed from that which caused his fault, the community in which he lives. Though Weinberger conjectures as to the possible outcome of the Prince enforcing the death penalty on Romeo (Weinberger 365), to do so alters the character of the Prince who is a benign, just, and neutral authority to whom the familial authority figures must hand over their power.

In *Romeo and Juliet* the power of the family structure creates the environment in which a resolution to the feud is only reached by the patriarchs relinquishing power to the Prince and “ultimately the feudal father figures, Capulet and Montague, have to submit to the authority of Prince Escalus, and the aggressive protection of family identity and honor gives way to the preservation of civic identity and preservation” (Roberts 32). The Prince, Montague and Capulet are thus all ‘fathers’ in the same way – they are the authority within a specific community. The manner of exerting their power differs, however, as do their motivations. Here it is important to remember that

the Prince is interested in peace, not aristocratic honour or partisan interests. It is the Prince who has outlawed duelling and wishes for an end to the aristocratic quarrels. Ultimately, the Prince is allied to and serves the interest of the people, called the “citizens” in the play, who also are nonpartisan and seem desirous only of civil peace. (Weinberger 358)

The Prince's motivations are thus for the good of those over whom he rules. The power exerted by Capulet and Montague is detrimental to their subjects and, once they realise this and rescind their power, they become true patriarchs.

The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet

Romeo and Juliet presents interesting insights into the effects the microcosms of society can have on the macrocosm. The chaos in each of the leading families spills over into their interactions in society and affects all of the Veronese citizens. Ultimately, the chaos is a result of the failure of the familial head to control his family and take their desires into account. Only once the patriarch of each family accepts this and, literally, allows the Prince – who has the interests of society as a whole at heart – the last say, can the chaos which has governed society, and resulted in the deaths of Romeo and Juliet, end. The effects of the feud are present at two levels: the effects it has on society as a whole and the effects it has on Romeo and Juliet. The social effects are not explored in detail in the play except in showing how each family (including the Prince's) suffers loss. Instead, the focus is on the effects the feud has on Romeo and Juliet, two young lovers who choose to ignore their familial bonds in order to be together. Their deaths are a direct result of those bonds and, within society, they can never escape the identities imposed on them by authority figures who fail to understand their love. This understanding undermines Lawrence Stone's suggestion that:

to an Elizabethan audience the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*, like that of *Othello*, lay not so much in their ill-starred romance as in the way they brought destruction upon themselves by violating the norms of the society in which they lived, which in the former case meant a strict filial obedience and loyalty to the traditional friendships and enmities of the lineage. (Stone 87)

Stone's analysis may place the disobedience of the young lovers in context but it ignores the function of the society in which they are placed and the reaction of the reader or audience to the tragedy. Our sympathy lies with the lovers because of the concern for the individual, which was already becoming prominent in the early modern period. As Herman puts it:

The tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* does not lie, as Lawrence Stone once commented in how 'they brought destruction upon themselves by violating the norms of the society in which they lived'. Nor is it exclusively that 'the norms themselves bring about the tragedy', as Snyder argues. Assuming that Verona mirrors England and that we are meant to use English, not Veronese, cultural expectations to interpret the play, it becomes evident that the problem lies as much in how society violates its own norms (e.g. the proper age for marriage) as in the norms themselves. As W. H. Auden noted, in *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare depicts a society that

consistently make [sic] wrong choices. Shakespeare demonstrates, almost seriatim, how each authority figure fails in his or her duty toward Romeo and Juliet, both individually and as a couple, in ways that strikingly echo the failures of established authority in the 1590s. (Herman 90–91)

The tragedy suffered is thus not one only comprehensible to an early modern audience with specific understandings of filial obedience but rather a more universal one – that of the impact of a chaotic society on the lives of its citizens. During the 1590s Elizabeth I's popularity declined as the continued war with Spain and Ireland began to take its toll on taxes. This combined with poor harvests meant that the standard of living fell (Haigh 155). It was also during this time that repression of Catholics intensified and Elizabeth relied on internal spies and propaganda to maintain the illusion of peace and prosperity (*ibid.*). Perhaps the largest reason for the dissatisfaction with Elizabeth during this period, often referred to as her “second reign” was the formation of an almost entirely new privy council in the 1590s (Collinson 89). It also illustrates the ways in which authority figures, particularly parents, fail to accept the autonomy of their children within a chaotic society.

The Failure of Autonomy in the Tragic Love Genre

The chaotic society presented in *Romeo and Juliet* is not one limited to a fictional Verona created for an early modern audience. The largest and most obvious difference between Peteni's *Hill of Fools* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is setting. *Hill of Fools* addresses the same concerns as *Romeo and Juliet* – social conflict, the impact of social conflict on the individual, the formation of identity during conflict and the effect of social conflict on the domestic realm – but it does so in a rural village during apartheid in South Africa. Also, crucially, in *Hill of Fools* the community exerts its influence over the internal structure of the family and so, in *Hill of Fools*, it is the community which prevents the lovers being together in their own villages and not the lovers' parents. Ultimately, however, both texts illustrate the individual tragedies which result from conflict between factions in societies and are thus both part of a genre which addresses the universal concern of restricted love. The love of Zuziwe and Bhuqa which exists outside of the community feud, at least temporarily, can be related to Romeo and Juliet's love which, though often understood as “something opposed to, stolen from, and a casualty of the patriarchal, masculine violence metonymized by the Capulet's and Montague's feud”, is actually, together with the feud, a “phenomenon that, like death, [is] impervious to patriarchal control” (Moison 49). The love between Bhuqa and Zuziwe and between Romeo and Juliet attempts to withstand external pressures and in both cases its tragic

end is a result of its destruction by the feud, not a surrendering to it. Zuziwe and Bhuqa, in their desire to escape to Port Elizabeth seek to transcend the faction fights between their villages and, rather than accept the limitations placed on them, Zuziwe chooses death and Bhuqa exile. Similarly, rather than relinquish their love, Romeo and Juliet choose to transcend the feud through death. This desire to escape the confines of society is present in both the early modern period (with the rise of individualism) and in 1970s South Africa (in which people sought to escape tribalism by asserting individualism and moving away from the Homelands). Both sets of lovers are thus denied escape and the ability to begin a new family elsewhere because they are subsumed and therefore destroyed by their societies. In *Romeo and Juliet* it is an individual, Friar Lawrence, representing and acting for the society, who prevents the escape of the lovers because of the good he believes their marriage can bring to the society as a whole. For Zuziwe and Bhuqa in *Hill of Fools* it is the state itself, with its Homeland policies and laws concerning migrant labour, which prevents an escape from the community which separates them.

There are numerous other similarities between the texts, and, as my discussion has attempted to illustrate, just as “issues of power and control, obedience and disobedience, are central to *Romeo and Juliet*” (Roberts 21) they are also vital to understanding *Hill of Fools*. In *Hill of Fools* and in *Romeo and Juliet* the feud is not something which is limited to the community; each household has suffered division and death because of it. The similarities that arise, however, do so because of the universality of the experiences they explore. Peteni’s novel, then, is not a rewriting or adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* (which is itself just one of many examples of a separation romance, a category into which *Hill of Fools* can also be placed) but rather another example of “the fighting instinct and [...] its dominance of human affairs, in private life as well as public life” (Peteni, “My Novel” 33) – a description also suitable to *Romeo and Juliet*. In *Hill of Fools*, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, the source of conflict originates in a feud between two communities and a comparison of the two indicates the importance of the Prince in resolving the conflict. *Hill of Fools* is thus not a retelling of *Romeo and Juliet* but a South African story which can be considered to engage with the ‘Romeo and Juliet’ story in similar ways to Shakespeare’s engagement with the story. Considering the two texts together, however, reveals something of the periods during which they were written, the audience for whom they were written, and, most importantly, the universality of love and the restriction of autonomy in societies during conflict.

Fathers, Sons and Legacy in *My Son's Story*

The questions any reader faces when presented with Nadine Gordimer's *My Son's Story* raise concerns which are central to the novel. Who is the titular son? Who is the titular parent? Does the story suggest a fictional and personal account? Each of these questions are only answered with further ambiguity and a large part of the reader's confusion is necessary in understanding the concerns regarding identity, authority, patriarchy and literature that the novel seeks to address. Written during the late 1980s when South Africa was in a state of emergency, Gordimer's tenth novel is one which both embraces and rejects the political atmosphere in which it is placed. Sonny's activism very obviously reflects the political activism of the 70s and 80s but the novel goes beyond an exploration of the politics in South Africa to also consider the role that literature plays in the formation of character. This interplay of political and universal experience is present in a number of Gordimer's novels and is a key aspect to her identity as author.

Nadine Gordimer

Born in 1923 to Jewish immigrant parents living in Springs on the East Rand of Johannesburg, Nadine Gordimer has been a published writer since her mid-teens. Though her parents were not politically active, Gordimer's one year at Wits University introduced her to the atrocities of apartheid and spurred her on to write novels addressing the effects that the socio-political world has on the individual and the domestic within South Africa. Of fundamental importance is "the question of her national identity, a subject which has been a consistent preoccupation and which has direct implications from her own literary tradition and, consequently, her identity as a writer" (Head 3). Throughout her career she has indicated that "her European literary heritage is *predominant* as a formative influence, even though she has continually problematized this heritage and tried to find ways of 'voicing' African experience more directly" (Head 6). All of her novels however, fall prey to generalisations of experience which "arises from the particular form of modernity created in South Africa, from policies which limited her to a racially defined area of experience" (Daymond 206). These generalisations contribute to Gordimer's specific style of writing and assist in separating her novels from other authors. As Dominic Head suggests:

the most remarkable fact about her oeuvre is its massive historical and political significance as a developing and shifting response to events in modern South Africa, spanning over forty years and reaching into six decades, from the 1940s to the 1990s. Her responses to political

events in South Africa are manifest in a continuous development and innovation in literary form rather than through detailed historical reference. (Head 2)

More recently, however, Gordimer's novels have moved away from the strong political engagement of her apartheid writing and the end of the struggle for racial freedom has marked a move away from novels addressing injustice. Her recent work:

represents a pronounced move away from the political sphere that has dominated her oeuvre, and this suggests that the normalization of South Africa's political and social life has allowed her to move back to an exploration of the private lives of her protagonists – an aspect of her early writing that became overlaid with the urgent political themes and messages of the day. (Cornwell, Kloppe, and Mackenzie 98)

Gordimer's novels thus incorporate the political events which occur around her into her novels in order to explore the effects they have on ordinary people, rather than simply to write a factual account. Her concern is always with the effect the external social world has on individuals and relationships. This is clearly evident in *My Son's Story* which explores the consequences of a father's (Sonny) affair with a white activist (Hannah) during the state of emergency in South Africa from the perspective of his son (Will). The novel "describes not only the radicalisation and growth of particular people, but also the way that the most intimate relations are affected by political affairs" (Boyers 129).

South Africa in a State of Emergency

My Son's Story was written during and set in a very turbulent period of South African history. The novel, while focusing on the relationship between Sonny and Will, also considers the role of the apartheid government, and especially the state of the country during the late 1970s and 1980s within the domestic sphere. A detailed analysis of the events which led up to and resulted from the state of emergency declared in July 1985 by P. W. Botha "which gave the security forces even more formidable powers" (Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* 260) is a task which exceeds the parameters of this thesis but certain key events which are directly relevant to the narrative warrant some discussion.

The first key event referred to in the novel is the Soweto Uprising of 1976 during which "Will was a keen Scout Cub" while "another small boy, running with a crowd of older school-children towards the police, was shot dead" (Gordimer 25). Though this event does not result in Sonny's involvement in the struggle for freedom, it does result in the beginnings of the "protest culture [which] pervaded the black population of South Africa" (L. Thompson 228). With the increased protest action came the involvement of more school-children as

“young Indians and Coloureds as well as Africans regarded the regime as illegitimate” and in their youth “they were not deferential towards Whites; they were defiant” (L. Thompson 222). The “1981 strikes on the East Rand” provided the “context for stronger linkages between worker and community organisations” (Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* 250). It is through the involvement of his own pupils that Sonny is recruited into a political role within the struggle.

The 1980s brought further complications to the apartheid system not least of which was the independence of the majority of African states which meant that “instead of being at the southern end of a continent controlled by Europeans, in a world dominated by Europeans and North Americans, South Africa had become an isolated anomaly” (L. Thompson 222). This isolation also resulted in the formation of exiled communities in other parts of Africa, particularly in Lusaka (where Baby finds her political identity). While relations between exiles and those within South Africa had been complicated, “by the early 1980s domestic opposition was beginning to link more effectively to the banned political movements, whose survival, largely in exile, proved to be of great importance” (Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* 228). Within South Africa, black South Africans were also revolting more openly against the unjust system of apartheid and during the 1980s “imminent political change intensified divisions in black politics” (Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* 254). The increase of political awareness amongst black South Africans proved to be both positive and negative: greater political awareness helped to strengthen the numbers of those actively opposing the government but led to in-fighting within numerous political groups. This in-fighting led to suspicions within political groups and “popular politics in the townships aimed not least at preventing the government from finding allies to work ‘the system’” which meant that “intense and sometimes violent pressure was put on those Africans viewed as sell-outs” (Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* 256). It was not only within political groups that secrecy led to in-fighting. Within the family the fear of imprisonment resulted in a breakdown of communication. This intangible interpersonal breakdown was only worsened by the physical divide created by imprisonment and exile which often followed involvement in the struggle. The focus of the struggle now became the future of the country and “activists developed their own ‘street sociology and pavement politics’ – working hard to define what the national democratic struggle and people’s power meant for those on the ground” (Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* 259). A large part of this involved spreading political viewpoints at any forum and, with the increased number of deaths “frequent [political] funerals became the site for emotive speeches, expressions of solidarity, and political

coordination” (Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* 260). This is illustrated in the novel with the speech Sonny gives at “the ‘cleansing of the graves’ of the nine youngsters who were shot by the police” (Gordimer 99). The increased violence, particularly in the townships outside main metropolitan areas, resulted in the declaration of a State of Emergency in July 1985.

The declaration of a state of emergency is not clearly marked in the progression of the narrative, although Sonny’s detention could be linked to the increase in the number of people being detained by the armed forces. The state of emergency was declared as a preventative measure against further violence within township areas where “popular struggle reached a nationwide crescendo in 1985 and did begin to achieve its aim of rendering the country ungovernable.” The struggle included “militant youths [who] were on the move, toyi-toying, or jog-trotting in large crowds through the streets, lending urgency to their cause” (Beinart, *Twentieth-Century South Africa* 259) and the sheer number of people gathered became a cause for concern to the Government. Once the state of emergency was declared all measures to maintain socio-political control were put in place and “the army as well as the police was being used to control the townships” while “thousands of people were being detained in solitary confinement, without being brought to trial and without the knowledge of their families, friends, or lawyers” (L. Thompson 228). The measures introduced to maintain control by quelling further violence within township areas did not solve the problem and the National Party was forced to make adaptations to its governance. Primarily, these changes were minor but they began to address issues of segregation and “by June 1986, the government had also eliminated some segregation laws [and] it had repealed the bans on multiracial political parties and inter-racial sex and marriage” (L. Thompson 227). This change in legislation is clearly referred to in the novel, by Will, who notes that there is no longer a law against the relationship between Sonny and Hannah. It is also around this time that the Government was “turning a blind eye to black occupation of apartments and houses in parts of Johannesburg and Cape Town that were zoned under the Group Areas Act for exclusive white occupation” (L. Thompson 227). *My Son’s Story* is thus situated during a very turbulent period of South African history which, in itself, would provide multi-levels of engagement. Why, then, does Gordimer also incorporate quotations and themes from Shakespeare’s plays and sonnets?

‘Shakespeare’ in *My Son’s Story*

Of the three South African texts considered in this thesis, *My Son’s Story* presents the most complex intertextual relationship with Shakespearean texts. ‘Shakespeare’ is introduced in the epigraph (which is taken from sonnet 13), presented as a crucial aspect of Sonny’s identity as an English teacher, and quoted from at various times during the narrative. Outside of literal references to Shakespeare there are also textual echoes from *Hamlet* and *King Lear*: Will as a Hamlet figure, the role of female silence in the narrative, and the focus on parents challenging the autonomy of their children. It is in these textual echoes that it is possible to bring together an analysis of the family structure in Shakespeare’s plays with one of the family in *My Son’s Story* as the latter offers a contemporary presentation of the damages of favouring a socio-political identity over a domestic one. Separating these different aspects, as I have done, is not simple: there are areas of overlap, particularly as it is through a number of quotations that the themes adapted from the plays are explored. As a starting point, therefore, I shall consider Thomas Cartelli’s discussion on the novel in *Repositioning Shakespeare*. His argument is not complete as it isolates only one use of Shakespeare in the novel, the relationship between Sonny and Hannah, in order to serve his larger argument on the contemporary use of Shakespeare in post-colonial literature. As such, it ignores Will’s engagement with Shakespeare both as a character within the novel and as the retrospective narrator.

Thomas Cartelli’s ‘Private’ Shakespeare

In *Repositioning Shakespeare*, Cartelli is primarily concerned with analysing the ways in which countries influenced by British colonial dominance engage with Shakespeare as an entity. His research focuses on commonwealth countries, former commonwealth countries, and America, and makes a distinction between post-colonial work from “invaded” countries (such as India and Nigeria) where writers write against Britain as the mother country and from “settler” countries (such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand) where there is a “responsive relationship with the mother country” (Cartelli 7). Interestingly, he does not indicate into which group he would insert South Africa which is possibly because South Africa falls, in many senses, into both: with white South Africans with settler origins responsive to Shakespeare and black South Africans opposed to the colonial oppression his work came to represent (*ibid.*). Another crucial distinction Cartelli makes is between appropriation and adaptation:

One is a primarily *critical*, and the other a primarily *emulative* act. Appropriation as I understand it here both serves, and works in, the interests of the writer or group doing the appropriating, but usually works *against* the avowed or assigned interest of the writer whose work is appropriated. (Cartelli 15)

Appropriation as a means of asserting dominance over a text is not an idea unique to Cartelli and Jean Marsden also notes that “appropriation is neither dispassionate nor disinterested; it has connotations of usurpation, of seizure for one’s own uses” (Marsden 1). The last distinction Cartelli makes in his work is between different types of appropriation. He classifies *My Son’s Story* as a dialogic appropriation, that is, one that “involves the careful integration into a work of allusions, identifications, and quotations that complicate, ‘thicken’ and qualify that work’s primary narrative line to the extent that each partner may be said to enter into the other’s frame of reference” (Cartelli 18). In *My Son’s Story*, Cartelli argues, Shakespeare is “productively repositioned to reflect his comparatively diminished status in, and relevance to, a changing social order” (Cartelli 170). Furthermore, he suggests, Sonny’s “self-promoting embrace of Shakespeare becomes increasingly irrelevant the more involved he becomes in the struggle against apartheid” and “the destruction of this character’s collection of Shakespeare in the same conflagration that destroys his home in an integrated suburb” illustrates the final decolonisation of Shakespeare in the novel (*ibid.*). For Cartelli, then, Shakespeare in South Africa represents the coloniser and when Sonny breaks free from his oppression, through embracing a political function, he also leaves behind his love for Shakespeare. Sonny does not, however, completely abandon Shakespeare. Instead, according to Cartelli, Shakespeare’s function is shifted from social to private as Sonny no longer makes use of his literary knowledge, particularly of Shakespeare, socially but rather incorporates it into his relationship with Hannah.

Sonny’s Transformation from Lover of Shakespeare to Political Activist

Sonny’s movement away from Shakespeare as an essential part of his social identity is most evident when considering the chronology of events in the novel, rather than the narrative structure. As the descendant of “bricklayers and carpenters” (Gordimer 5), Sonny’s love for literature and his occupation as a schoolteacher “was the pride of the old people” (Gordimer 5). His love for Shakespeare involves not only a love for teaching the texts but also an all encompassing awe of them, most evident in the choice of “Will, diminutive of William” as his son’s name (Gordimer 6). Sonny’s familiarity with the texts is such that he had “read and reread them with devotion; although the gilt lettering had been eaten away by fishmoths, and

the volume he wanted had to be selected blindly, his hand always went straight to it” (Gordimer 6). Each text has thus become an integral part of his life and he is sensitive to the tactile sensation of each. The relationship Sonny has with Shakespeare extends beyond a love for the texts (both as a teacher and as a scholar) and forms a central part of his social standing. Not only is he elevated within society because of his occupation and desire to learn but also because he incorporates his knowledge into his everyday life. On Saturdays, though the family shops with other coloured families and are “not set apart in any outward way from the crowd” (Gordimer 11), they do not fall prey to the marketing gimmicks used by salesmen as do so many other families (such as overpriced furniture labelled ‘Versailles’ and ‘Granada’ suggestive of regal furniture within their small houses). The reason, Sonny believes, is that “with an understanding of Shakespeare comes a release from the gullibility that makes you prey to the great shopkeeper who runs the world, and would sell you to cheap illusion” (Gordimer 11) – understanding Shakespeare is, for Sonny, the equivalent of having a superior knowledge of the ways of the world. His assertion is almost immediately undermined, however, as the limited nature of his knowledge is highlighted by his inability to enter the library because of segregation:

The lover of Shakespeare never had the right to enter the municipal library and so did not so much as think about it while white people came out before him with books under their arms; he did not recognize what the building represented for him, with its municipal coat of arms and motto above the pillared entrance: CARPE DIEM. (Gordimer 12)

Sonny does not realise that the library represents the literature and knowledge denied him by an unjust society. Its motto, which translates to ‘Seize the day’ is both a mockery of Sonny’s inaction thus far, but also suggests the possibilities of action open to Sonny. The enlightenment Sonny believes a familiarity with Shakespeare provides is superficial and so, though he never denounces the literature as a colonial tool of oppression, he cannot incorporate it into his emerging political persona and it remains a part of his identity within the coloured community.

Sonny enjoys a privileged and respected position within his community and Will notes that “it wasn’t only self-respect [his] father had; people respected him, not even a drunk would curse him” (Gordimer 18). Sonny’s transition into a political activist is directly as a result of his position as a teacher but no specific event leads to his decision to join the struggle:

When did the distinction between black and real black, between himself and them, fade, for the schoolteacher? That ringing in the air, ‘equality’ beginning to be heard as ‘freedom’ – it

happened without specific awareness, a recognition of what really had been there to understand, all the time. (Gordimer 25)

Sonny has always been aware of the similarities between the struggle of black and coloured communities and it is the affinity he feels with the struggle for freedom that leads him to correct spelling errors on the placards of schoolchildren protesting against apartheid. As a result of this, and a realisation of the fervour the schoolchildren have for their cause, Sonny becomes first an escort and later an organiser of similar protests. When he loses his teaching position as a result of his actions, he becomes involved in the struggle as a means of vindicating himself and putting his abilities to good use. Sonny's involvement in activism has a number of implications. On a personal level it marks a movement away from literature, and Shakespeare, which is also a rejection of that which made him stand out in his community, as well as a physical movement away from the Coloured community and into a house in a 'White' area. His activism also leads to imprisonment where he first meets Hannah with whom he has an affair. Just as Sonny does not reject his coloured heritage – he maintains some contact with the Coloured community through Saturday tea parties – I would hesitate to argue that Sonny rejects Shakespeare because, though he may use the political discourse required at public meetings, he still values the richness and subtleties of Shakespeare's language:

As he loved the magnificent choices of Shakespearean language, the crudely reductive terms of political concepts were an embarrassment to him, but he had to use them, like everybody else. (Gordimer 47–48)

Once he embraces his role as spokesperson for an anti-apartheid movement, however, he can no longer use Shakespearean language in a social format and, until meeting with Hannah, his love of Shakespeare is neglected.

Sonny and Hannah's Affair

Sonny and Hannah's meeting is a result of their mutual activism. When Sonny is detained for the first time, Hannah is "the representative of an international human rights organisation sent to monitor political detentions and trials, and to assist people like [Sonny] and their families" (Gordimer 14). Once he is released they maintain contact, both socially and politically, and eventually form a friendship based on their shared political concerns. The progression from friends to lovers is unexpected but not unwelcome to Sonny who feels at ease discussing politics with Hannah but not with his wife Aila. His betrayal of Aila is thus motivated by his

increased political awareness – Hannah’s attraction is in their political affinity – and Sonny’s relationship with Aila is the first casualty of the breakdown of communication caused by the secrecy activism necessitates. Thomas Cartelli suggests that, following Hannah and Sonny’s affair, Shakespeare moves into the private realm and is “compartmentalized as the private language Sonny shares with Hannah” (Cartelli 176). Their relationship has at its core a quotation from *As You Like It*: “sermons in stones and good in everything” (2.1.17). The quotation, first used by Hannah while Sonny is detained – “I suppose you find sermons in stones” (Gordimer 49) – becomes a secret code for their relationship and its use, together with Sonny’s dependence on it, provides insight into Sonny’s understanding of the affair. In *As You Like It*, the Duke Senior, though exiled from his court, enjoys the tranquillity and simplicity of pastoral life. Through his forced engagement with the natural world he comes to realise that it is “more free from peril than the envious court” (2.1.4) and that “the seasons’ difference [...] are counsellors / That feelingly persuade me what I am” (2.1.6–11). For Duke Senior, the natural world reveals his true nature and enables the sense which “Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything” (2.1.16–17). Similarly, Sonny comes to feel that his relationship with Hannah is a pastoral retreat where he comes to understand the true nature of himself and politics. The trip they take to the Orange orchard suggests an affinity with the pastoral world the play depicts but, as the play’s conclusion suggests, a pastoral escape is only temporary and the realities of the world left behind always encroach upon the privacy of the pastoral. A large part of the temporality of the relationship is dictated by Hannah.

Hannah is politically active from the outset of the narrative structure and presents the simplest illustration of political activism. Already active politically when the novel begins, she hopes to assist Sonny’s family while he is detained. Her assistance, however, is not needed as the household has continued to function and it seems, to Will, that Aila is the one to “supply support and encouragement” to Hannah (Gordimer 15). Within the family structure, therefore, Hannah does not have a role to fulfil. She remains an outsider to the family throughout, despite comforting Baby during Sonny’s trial (Gordimer 53) and attending functions celebrating Sonny’s release. It is only with Sonny that Hannah has a relationship and though she becomes Sonny’s lover, her first loyalty is always to her role in the struggle. Her dedication to the struggle is most evident during her time away in Lesotho following the death of her grandfather. Sonny and Hannah arrange for telephonic communication while she is away and during one conversation she reveals that she has been “declared a prohibited immigrant” and “must apply for a visa” (Gordimer 156). Ignoring Sonny’s emotional needs,

she insists that he do nothing to assist her. Sonny is unable to sit and wait idly and speaks to his lawyer about Hannah's situation. His problem seems to become general knowledge as it is shortly after this that he is approached by a group of men from his political organisation who are looking to form a group to oust the current leaders. Hannah's insensitivity to Sonny's need of her (Sonny regularly speaks of their relationship in terms of need) could be attributed, as Sonny eventually does, to the loss of her grandfather who "had been also a father – and mother – to her" (Gordimer 159) but while still in Lesotho she betrays his trust by forcing him to assist a complete stranger. One afternoon as Sonny arrives for his phone call from Hannah there is a bundle on the doormat which, after a brief inspection, is revealed to be a young man. Sonny's justified fear is not abated by the man's insistence that he will explain everything and so the young man provides a "fancy credential: 'Sermons in stones, and good in everything'" (Gordimer 162). The betrayal Sonny feels is twofold: Hannah has made their private mantra part of the political struggle which blurs the careful divide Sonny has created between his public and private persona, and she has jeopardised his safety by involving him in further political action which challenges the trust he has within his political circle. Sonny is well aware of the second betrayal from the moment he realises that the young man, Nick, is there for political reasons. Neither the reader nor Sonny is ever provided insight into Nick's function but the dangers he poses to Sonny are very clear:

Did she [Hannah] understand it was dangerous for her lover to be in the cottage with this guest for even the duration of the phone call? If the man were discovered to be in the country, were followed and picked up, Sonny would be picked up with him and detained for interrogation about his association with him, charged with aiding and abetting whatever it was he was doing – and what that was Sonny could not ask. (Gordimer 162)

It seems that the political struggle takes precedence over individual danger for Hannah but Sonny clearly does not feel the same way and worries about the implications of his association with Hannah. Not only does Nick pose dangers to Sonny politically but he also causes Sonny to question the nature of his affair with Hannah. What had been a private and intimate relationship characterised by a quotation from Shakespeare is tainted by the use of that quotation by a stranger. Sonny finds the whole experience of Nick's arrival and usage of the quotation to be "distasteful and distorted, a means he did not want for his ends. Sermons in stones, and good in everything; that was not to be used as a password, in the mouth of a third person" (Gordimer 164).

In the society in which they find themselves, however, and especially when considering that it is only through politics that Sonny and Hannah meet, Hannah's conflation of their private affair and their mutual social end goals is understandable. Hannah never denies her investment in the struggle for freedom, though Sonny chooses to ignore the full implications of this, and when she is offered the post of "High Commission's Regional Representative for Africa" Sonny is not surprised (Gordimer 202). Her decision to take the post, though she will be stationed in Addis Ababa and all over Africa, is difficult not because of Sonny but because of her work in South Africa (Gordimer 203). Ultimately, however, she must decide what will best serve the focus in her life, which is the struggle for freedom, wherever that may be. During one last weekend away together, during which they discuss Sonny's future role in politics and the ways in which politics has "changed so much" (Gordimer 211), Sonny tries to change the dynamics of their relationship into one of Hannah "needing Sonny" (Gordimer 216) but is unable to do so because her primary loyalty has always been to a cause outside of him. The affair between Hannah and Sonny is a literal embodiment of Sonny's 'affair' with politics and as his political identity becomes more complicated, his need of Hannah increases. The destruction of their relationship is thus a result of Hannah's dedication to her political career and, interestingly for a novel set during apartheid, the question of race is not a serious factor in the eventual dissolution of the relationship.

My Son's Story is not unique in addressing an inter-racial relationship, even within Gordimer's own oeuvre. In *Occasion for Loving*, Gordimer's third novel published in 1963, a married white woman, Ann Davis, falls in love with a black artist, Gideon Shibalo, and they begin an affair. The novel is written and set during the time of the Immorality Act and the consequences of the affair are explored throughout the text. A situation very similar to that found in *My Son's Story* is also found in Athol Fugard's *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* (1974). In Fugard's play, a white woman, Frieda Joubert, and a coloured man, Errol Philander, are discovered by the police to be having an affair. There are numerous parallels to be drawn between the relationships in *My Son's Story* and *Statements*. In both, the man is coloured and lives with constant reminders of the suffering due to skin colour all around him. He is married to a loving wife and is a father. Most importantly, he is trying to better himself and has a deep love of learning – Errol is studying through correspondence and Sonny's love for Shakespeare remains constant throughout the novel. The women are both single and are drawn to the men because of the passion they show in their respective interests: Sonny and Hannah are drawn to each other because of similar political and literary interests

and Errol and Frieda meet because he is studying to further his education and longs to have access to the literature that is in the 'white' library. For both, then, the restrictions placed on the education of coloured men leads to, and sustains, the relationships they embark on with white women. Sonny has never heard of John Donne until Hannah quotes "The Sun Rising" to him and Frieda allows Errol access to the literature in the library because she "could see it was very important to him" (Fugard 100). Two key differences, however, are the legality of the relationships and the social functions of the two individuals involved. *Statements* provides a very intimate account of the discovery of two individuals involved in an illegal relationship. The consequence is criminal charges but the affair has little effect on the society within which it transpires. In *My Son's Story*, the relationship is not illegal but is far more damaging because it involves two very active political agents. Sonny's affair with Hannah not only affects his role within the political organisation to which he is affiliated but also leads to emotional and physical distancing within his family.

The eventual dissolution of the affair in *My Son's Story* is a result of the political nature of the people involved. Hannah is called to work in another country and her willingness to accept the new position, together with Sonny's insistence that she cannot allow the opportunity to pass, suggests that their affair has been a pastoral retreat and the demands of the real world have finally overcome the safety of pastoralism. Ultimately, Sonny allows the Shakespearean quotation to become the mantra for his affair with Hannah as a means to retain his love of Shakespeare within the private realm and so, for Sonny, Shakespeare "continues to play a prominent role in the 'privatized' domain of Sonny's adulterous relationship with Hannah" (Cartelli 175). The necessity Sonny feels to limit Shakespeare to his pastoral world, even in one aspect of his life is also an acknowledgement that: "however effective Shakespeare might be in helping him distinguish illusion from reality, Sonny comes to consider Shakespeare largely irrelevant to the needs of the political struggle to which he commits himself" (Cartelli 170). For Sonny, then, Shakespeare belongs to the private realm and serves no function in his public political realm.

It is not true, however, to claim that "it is only within the span of such relationships and of their extramarital extensions that Shakespeare appears to sustain his relevance" (Cartelli 175). Cartelli's argument ignores Will's use of quotations from Shakespeare's works at crucial points in the novel, particularly during Sonny's political downfall, which Will believes to be connected to his relationship with Hannah. While Sonny may move further from the tragedies he has loved, his neglect of them allows Will to take up the literary inheritance his father has left for him. The use of quotations from Shakespeare as ways in

which to understand key events in the text is evidence that Shakespeare exists outside of the affair and to accept Cartelli's limitation of Shakespeare to the affair in *My Son's Story* ignores the legacy Sonny leaves for Will. Cartelli does, briefly, discuss Will but he limits Will's function to be "merely a character put to work in a fiction" (Cartelli 180) – a suggestion which ignores Will's vital function, revealed at the novel's conclusion, as retrospective narrator.

The Complexities of Will

Will is, of course, "a character put to work in a fiction", as all characters within the novel are, but his textual identity exceeds the limitations Cartelli places on him. As a character, his relationship with Sonny seems almost a "transposition of father-child conflicts (*Hamlet* and *King Lear*) onto a contemporary scene" (Moller 162). The relationship between father and son are by no means unique and "the characters, the predicaments they find themselves in, and the choices they face are indeed easily identifiable as commonplace and, in some degree, also prototypical because the novel involves Oedipal/Hamletian conflicts" (Moller 161). There thus seems to be an affinity between Hamlet and Will. Susan Greenstein has suggested that *Hamlet* "is the paradigmatic pre-text for a study of the link between family secrets and the political dimension of life" (Greenstein 199) and a consideration of the play in these terms may clarify its intertextual relationship with *My Son's Story*. More than the political dimension, however, I wish to explore the ways in which Hamlet and Will, as sons to fathers with fixed ideas of what their children should become, both face the same dilemma of identity because of the socio-political events surrounding them. In order to explore these similarities it is first necessary to consider the father and son relationship in *Hamlet*.

Father and Son in *Hamlet*

At the centre of *Hamlet* is the relationship between a father and his son. This relationship is complicated by the interruption of the development of the son's identity because of an identity already created for him by his deceased father. Throughout the play Hamlet is mourning the loss of his father and lamenting the way in which his mother, Queen Gertrude, has tainted his late father's memory by remarrying mere months after old Hamlet's death. A further complication is introduced in the form of the Ghost. The existence of the Ghost, at least in its first appearance, cannot be questioned as it is seen by the watchmen but its nature remains uncertain. It is never completely clear whether the Ghost is the devil who "hath power / T'assume a pleasing shape" (2.2.588–589) or Hamlet's "father's spirit, / Doomed for

a certain time to walk the night” (1.4.9–10). Despite the questions the presence of the Ghost brings to mind, it is its effect on Hamlet which is paramount and, as Harold Bloom has argued, “everything in the play depends upon Hamlet’s response to the Ghost” (Bloom 387).

Prior to the Ghost’s appearance, Hamlet establishes his own focus for his anger: Gertrude, who has married Claudius too hastily for his liking. After the Ghost reveals that Claudius is responsible for his death and gives Hamlet his task of revenge, Hamlet is no longer able to approach Gertrude and Claudius in the way he has decided – his actions towards them are now dictated by the task he has been given by his dead father. He is called to deny himself, both his identity as a scholar rather than a soldier, and his anger towards Gertrude rather than Claudius. He is, essentially, asked to fulfil a role created for him by the Ghost. It is not only that the task asks that he deny his own beliefs, but it is also a task which is both impossible and likely to lead to Hamlet’s own death as “the father asks the son to take the father’s place” (Cavell 188). Hamlet’s acceptance of the Ghost’s task is a rejection of his own identity but in replacing his own mortal identity with one created in the realm of the supernatural, Hamlet also severs himself from reality.

Hamlet’s belief that the Ghost is his father does not only affect his own identity but also his interactions with other characters in the play. Most important of these is Gertrude, whose crime – marrying Claudius mere months after her husband has died – although of less importance than Claudius’s, disturbs Hamlet more than old Hamlet’s murder. Hamlet’s relationship with the Ghost, as father, also influences his treatment of Laertes and Fortinbras. Both of these characters are also sons called upon to avenge their father’s deaths and so it seems that the play, and Denmark, is plagued by problematic relationships between fathers and sons. Whether it is the socio-political realm acting upon the domestic which results in familial tragedies or, whether socio-political turmoil is a result of the dissolution of the family is unclear but it is certain that the tragedy of one mirrors and is affected by the tragedy of the other. It would seem that the tragedy that befalls the sons in the play is a result of assuming the identities created for them by their fathers – a task the fathers perform as a result of the socio-political situation in which they are placed.

The play opens with an indication that the realm of the socio-political is in a period of trouble and fear but this is almost immediately contrasted with the presentation of the court as a place of order and stability. Claudius’s presentation of the court as stable is only rhetoric but the only member of the court who challenges his rhetoric is Hamlet. The only indication within the court that there are sinister elements at work within Denmark is the appearance of Hamlet who distances himself from the rest of the court. Not only does Hamlet enter dressed

in black (an indication that the mourning of his father takes precedence over the remarriage of his mother) but he also remains aloof from the other courtiers and maintains a mournful disposition.

Hamlet before the Ghost

Bloom's suggestion that everything in the play depends on Hamlet's response to the Ghost raises a very important question. If Hamlet's response to the Ghost determines the rest of the play, what is the role of the first four scenes of the play? The simple answer is that it sets the tone for what is to come. Denmark is a country living in fear with even the sentries mistrusting their own senses and each other. Much has been said concerning the play's opening line being a question, and one posed by the wrong sentry, but here it is sufficient to say that after the first scene an audience is left in no doubt that something is rotten in the state of Denmark.¹⁰ The second scene, while not furthering the overarching fear of invasion, provides an audience with two very important insights. Firstly, Claudius, now king, is an able monarch who deals swiftly with marriage, death, invasion and the requests of his subjects. He seems (though Hamlet "knows not seems") a stable ruler and provides a jovial contrast to the fear created by the opening scene. Secondly, Hamlet, son of the queen and the deceased king, resents his mother's hasty remarriage which taints his father's memory. It is important to pause here and remember that Hamlet, at this stage, is not aware that his father has been murdered by Claudius. His antagonism to both Gertrude and Claudius stems from his disgust and resentment towards their marriage which he believes to be not only incestuous but also a mockery of his father. Thus, even before he gains any awareness of Claudius's guilt in the death of old Hamlet he has already established himself as opposed to the new court and its ruler. Not only is Hamlet shown as opposed to the marriage but he is also presented as a scholar. He wishes to return to Wittenberg (a university imprinted in an early modern audience's minds as the university of Marlowe's Faustus) rather than to Paris, which Polonius describes as being a place of pleasure. It seems almost too easy to say that Hamlet is Shakespeare's great thinker, but that does not make it any less true. Rather than physically challenge Claudius or openly criticise Gertrude he stays in the shadows, dressed in black, the colours of both mourning and the scholar (Everett, *Young Hamlet* 147) and observes everything. The Hamlet of Act 1 Scene 2 is one who has already found an area of discontent and has dealt with it in silence (with the occasional snide remark or snubbing of Claudius). His first soliloquy "is designed to show his state of mind before his interview with the Ghost"

¹⁰ See Hibbard 33 for a discussion of the opening exchange in *Hamlet*.

(Muir 21) and provides the clearest indication of Hamlet's feelings towards the new court and his area of discontent. The first lines of the soliloquy focus on the state of the world, as he sees it, and indicates a longing for escape:

O that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! O fie! tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this! (1.2.131-139)

This is followed by a brief comparison of old Hamlet (Hyperion) and Claudius (satyr):

But two months dead! — nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother,
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth! (1.2.140–144)

But the bulk of the speech focuses on Gertrude and the crime that Hamlet believes she has committed. Gertrude has not mourned her late husband sufficiently; she has replaced him with someone unworthy of his memory and has committed incest by marrying her late husband's brother.¹¹ There is little anger towards Claudius (he seems as unworthy of Hamlet's anger as he is of Gertrude's love) and, though Hamlet's emotions and actions may be a result of mourning, little direct mention of his father. This Hamlet is one who focuses on knowledge and scholarly work, he can speculate on the immorality, as he sees it, of Gertrude's remarriage but he is not Hercules (1.2.153) and is thus "not of Heroic physical proportions" (Hibbard 164) – his frustrations can be voiced but not acted on. Prior to the arrival of the Ghost, Hamlet has already formed his own identity and has asserted this identity through his approach to the new court and Gertrude's remarriage.

Hamlet and the Ghost

It is evident from the first mention of the Ghost that Hamlet is sceptical but hopeful that he will be able to communicate with it. He is also determined that, "if it assume my noble

¹¹ Hamlet's reactions to Gertrude's remarriage will be dealt with when discussing their relationship.

father's person, / I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape / and bid me hold my peace" (1.2.243–245). Hamlet, though his father has died, still maintains his respect for and obedience to him and believes that if it is his "father's spirit in arms" then "all is not well" (1.2.254). The assumption Hamlet makes is in the inherent virtue of his father, and his spirit, which will, according to Hamlet, remain even after death. This assumption, however, is held only by Hamlet and Horatio warns him that to follow the Ghost "might deprive your sovereignty of reason / And draw you into madness" (1.4.54–55). The warning is entrenched in superstition and theological debate but, ultimately, the only thing that matters is Hamlet's response – his decision to follow the Ghost. This decision does not provide him with any new insights. The Ghost may declare itself to be his father's spirit (1.5.9) and may indicate that "if thou [Hamlet] didst ever thy dear father love / [...] / Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.23–25) but Hamlet remains uncertain as to whether or not he should accept the Ghost's account.

Peter Alexander, in *Hamlet, Father and Son*, explores the dilemma created by the different ages to which old and young Hamlet belong: "Hamlet's father belongs to a heroic age" (P. Alexander 168) but Hamlet is a scholar who is, according to Bloom, "a university intellectual, representative of a new age" (Bloom 387). The great tragedy for the relationship between father and son is that "the Ghost expects Hamlet to be a version of himself, even as young Fortinbras is a reprint of old Fortinbras" (Bloom 387). The son required by the Ghost is completely different to the son of old Hamlet. The Ghost appears on the battlements complete in his military dress and calls to mind his victories on the battlefield rather than his death as a civilian at home. As king he focused on war and the attainment of further lands and a large part of the danger Denmark now faces is as a result of his actions during his reign. In his first appearances there is no speech but his mere presence suggests action – 'travelling' from purgatory to see the living. He can thus be immediately contrasted with young Hamlet who speaks rather than acts concerning his mother's immodesty. The Ghost, identified by the sentry, is old Hamlet the king of action and he comes to speak to his son. It is important to note that it is only to Hamlet that the Ghost speaks, though the sentries hear him when he demands they swear secrecy of the events of the night – it is to Hamlet, his son, that he can ask one final request, that his death be avenged.

Hamlet's Task

Seeking revenge for the wrongful death of one's father is not an original task and it seems almost fitting, and in the heroic tradition, that Hamlet should willingly agree to do so. The

request that old Hamlet makes of his son, however, is more complex. He requests that Hamlet avenge his death but that he “taint not his mind” a request which “could refer to Hamlet’s attitude to his mother, or they may have a more general application” (Muir 22), and that he “leave her to heaven, / and to those thorns that in her bosom lodge / to prick and sting her” (1.5.86–88). This task is “almost impossible” (Muir 22) particularly for Hamlet. Old Hamlet is aware that his son is a scholar and cannot simply act without tainting his mind and, more importantly, should be aware that his ravings on Gertrude’s adultery are likely to affect Hamlet’s approach to her. Not only is the request impossible but it is also one which is likely to result in Hamlet’s own death. Killing a king is a crime against the country and against the divine right of kings. If Claudius is to be killed for killing King Hamlet then surely Hamlet must be killed for killing King Claudius? Furthermore, should Claudius become aware that Hamlet knows of his crime, he has already shown himself capable of murder and there is no reason why he should not act in a similar way. The request that the Ghost makes of Hamlet is thus both impossible and suicidal but it is also, most importantly, one which denies Hamlet autonomy. Hamlet has already been established as the scholar who cannot accept his mother’s actions but the Ghost now requests that he become a man of action who accepts that his mother’s crimes, whatever they may be, will be judged by heaven but that, despite the political and moral complexity of the task, he willingly kill Claudius. Old Hamlet expects Hamlet to act as he would, and clearly did, but in doing so he is forcing an identity onto Hamlet which does not suit the son he has and “it is the bequest of a beloved father that deprives the son of his identity” (Cavell 188). Hamlet’s ultimate tragedy is that in the relationship he has with his father, a relationship he foregrounds at the expense of all others, he is expected to act contrary to his nature.

Had Hamlet challenged the Ghost entirely, he may have escaped his tragedy but despite occasional musings as to the nature of the Ghost, Hamlet immediately accepts that the Ghost speaks the truth. This is particularly evident in two respects – in requiring that Marcellus and Horatio swear to secrecy “Hamlet is *already* acceding to one of the Ghost’s demands” (Davison 42) and he assumes the antic disposition that the Ghost recommends. Stanley Cavell also indicates that:

The urgency for Hamlet in proving the Ghost’s veracity is not alone to convince himself (at least) of Claudius’s guilt but to avoid the only other conclusion – that his ‘imagination is as foul / as Vulcan’s smithy’ (3.2.76–77). (Cavell 183)

Hamlet thus hopes to convince himself that the Ghost speaks the truth because if it does not then he has been having thoughts as dark and tainted as Vulcan's (the Roman god of blacksmiths) workshop. It is interesting that Hamlet chooses this allusion as Vulcan caught his own wife, Venus (goddess of love), having an affair with his brother Mars (god of war).

The Ghost makes just one speech (when he reappears in 3.4, he speaks very little and briefly) but Hamlet, so much in awe of his father, immediately resubmits to his will. He does not revisit the suggestion that the Ghost may be an evil sprite or demon but accepts his control and submits to his instructions. Hamlet is governed completely by the Ghost, whom he believes to be his father's spirit, and it is this suppression of his own intentions and will which leads to his ultimate demise. The loyalty Hamlet has to his father is clear not only in his actions but also in his thoughts. He may question whether or not the Ghost is his father but he does not question the task he has been given. Hamlet has also clearly idealised his father. The King that Hamlet describes when comparing him to Claudius cannot be the same King who "speaks of 'foul crimes'" (Muir 22). This admiration, combined with the threat to Denmark, leads Hamlet to accept the task. The punishment old Hamlet has been given in Purgatory suggests that young Hamlet's assessment of his character has been exaggerated and "the terrible torments he implies and describes sound severe for a man who, we are told over and over again, was perfection itself" (French, "Chaste Constancy" 96). Hamlet thus errs in three ways: he accepts a task which is both impossible and likely to result in his own death; he denies his own identity and embraces one created for him by his deceased father; and he idealises his father to such an extent that he is unable to consider his task objectively. Despite accepting the task, however, some trace of Hamlet's former self is still present and "it is apparent from the speech Hamlet utters immediately after the Ghost's disappearance that he is more concerned with his mother's guilt than with his uncle's blacker crime: he speaks first of her" (Muir 22). This does not undermine his loyalty to his father, as "the Ghost's major priorities are identical to Hamlet's" as both claim that Claudius's is the greater crime but focus more on Gertrude's (French, "Chaste Constancy" 98).

Throughout the scenes following the Ghost's appearance, Hamlet is caught between his desire to avenge his father's death and the confusion created by its appearance. The staging of the mouse-trap is simultaneously a result of both of these desires – if Claudius reacts negatively, Hamlet will be certain that the Ghost speaks the truth; if he does not, then the Ghost is a demon attempting to lead Hamlet astray. The play also serves to delay the action, however, and so Hamlet, having witnessed the emotion in the player's response to his Hecuba speech reprimands himself with:

Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing! No, not for a king,
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damn'd defeat was made. (2.2.543–548)

The reason for Hamlet's distress is that he seems unable to act despite the close connection between himself and the king whose death he has been asked to avenge while the player is able to embrace fully the emotion felt by a fictional character. He attributes his inaction to a lack of bravery – he is “the son of a dear father murder'd” who has been “prompted to [his] revenge by heaven and hell” (2.2.561–562) and yet he refrains from action. As Belsey points out, when considering Hamlet, Fortinbras, Laertes and Pyrrhus, “among so many avenging sons only Hamlet hangs back” (Belsey 110). In the final interaction between Hamlet and the Ghost, filial subservience and obedience is clear. Hamlet pleads with his ‘father’ for forgiveness for having disobeyed him (in his demand that Gertrude not be judged) and for his delay in acting.

The final indication that Hamlet has successfully transformed from “a scholar from Wittenberg” into “an avenger of blood” (N. Alexander 54) is his death. Hamlet, like all those who die in the final scene of the play, dies from poisoning but he is poisoned while duelling. He is no longer the scholar but the man of action and his death, during a duel, is one which would be approved of by his warrior father. At the play's end, therefore, Hamlet has accepted the identity created for him by his father because of the socio-political event (the murder of King Hamlet) which transpired. Another indication of the extent to which Hamlet is loyal to his father, and the task he has been given, is evident in his relationship with his mother.

Hamlet and Gertrude

The largest determining factor in Hamlet's relationship with his mother is his relationship with his (now deceased) father. In accepting both that the Ghost is in fact his father's spirit and that it has spoken the truth, about Claudius's act of murder and Gertrude's adultery, Hamlet's “filial duty towards his mother is now at odds with his obligations towards his father and himself” (Jardine, *Still Harping* 268). In order to fulfil the task set for him by his father, Hamlet must question his relationship with his mother and she becomes, to him, a representation of all that is wrong with Denmark. Rebecca Smith explores the ways in which Gertrude, despite being painted as “lusty, lustful, lascivious Gertrude” by the other characters in the play is actually, when analysing her own words and actions a “compliant,

loving, unimaginative woman whose only concern is pleasing others” (Smith 91). Smith’s conclusion, that it is the language of the male characters that results in Gertrude’s negative portrayal, can be expanded on by suggesting that the motive behind the language they use is a justification of their own flaws. Both Hamlets are more obsessed with Gertrude’s sins because she is so intricately a part of their lives and can thus act as a scapegoat for their shortcomings.

The first interaction between Hamlet and Gertrude occurs in a public space which is, as Lear’s division of his kingdom, a theatrical performance staged to reassure the rest of the court that, despite the potential, perhaps inevitable tragedy, the state is in safe hands. Hamlet is not directly involved in the political aspects of the performance but is vital in the family dynamics which Claudius introduces into the political realm by marrying Gertrude. The focus is on ensuring that the family, which is a microcosm of the state, is presented as united and, more importantly, under the control of the patriarch. Claudius, as king and father, must appear to control Denmark and Hamlet in order to sustain his control. In order to do so he encourages Hamlet to stay in Denmark and even though it is Gertrude’s request to Hamlet: “let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet. I pray thee stay with us, go not to Wittenberg” which elicits an obedient response from Hamlet: “I shall in all my best obey you, madam”, Claudius has the last say, remarking that “’tis a loving and a fair reply” (1.2.118–121). While Hamlet may feign obedience before the court, in private the angst created by his mother’s hasty remarriage causes him to challenge the virtues of femininity. His anger is twofold – he believes his mother has not adequately mourned the death of his father and that his mother has committed incest by marrying his uncle (whom he also considers unworthy). Janet Adelman explores the relationship between Hamlet and Gertrude and concludes that the presence of the mother complicates the son’s natural acting out of the role of the father. This is of particular importance as a son creates his identity based on conceptions he has of his father. The presence of the mother, however, highlights an aspect the son does not wish to mimic exactly, the father’s sexuality:

[Gertrude’s] failure of memory – registered in her indiscriminating sexuality, in effect defines Hamlet’s task in relation to his father as a task of memory: as she forgets, he inherits the burden of differentiating, of idealizing and making static the past. (Adelman 13)

Gertrude’s hasty remarriage has called into question Hamlet’s identity as son, by highlighting her sexuality, and suggests that Hamlet alone is charged with the task of remembering his

father and her husband. The focus is on Gertrude's crimes rather than Claudius's and his diatribe is directed at her and women:

Frailty, thy name is woman!-
A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body
Like Niobe, all tears – why she, even she
(O God! a beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer) married with my uncle;
My father's brother, but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules. (1.2.146–153)

The fault, both here before the Ghost's appearance and later on, is Gertrude's and her actions determine Hamlet's responses to all women. Throughout the play Hamlet links his late father's death to his mother's remarriage, though initially the connection is the speed with which her marriage followed his funeral. Horatio, Hamlet's confidante, is the first person to whom Hamlet reveals his displeasure with the state of affairs, replying to Horatio's "I came to see your father's funeral" by stressing that, the proximity to Gertrude's remarriage may mean that "it was to see [his] mother's wedding" (1.2.175–177). After the meeting with the Ghost, Hamlet's already poisoned mind is encouraged to discover the reason for Gertrude's remarriage and to determine if she, a "most seeming-virtuous queen" (1.5.46), played any part in his father's murder.

Hamlet may begin dissolving the ties to his mother because of the Ghost's revelations but she appears to be truly concerned with his well-being and seeks assistance in discovering the reason for the behaviour of her "too much changed son" (2.2.36). Gertrude suspects that the reason for Hamlet's distemper is "his father's death and [her] o'erhasty marriage" (2.2.57) but is also willing to explore other possibilities, especially if they are suggested by her new husband. She is wary of Polonius and, when he testifies that "[her] noble son is mad" and proceeds to ramble on the definition of madness, she requests that he present his case with "more matter [and] less art" (2.2.93–96). Her desire to know the cause of Hamlet's becoming a "poor wretch" (2.2.169), combined with a desire to free herself from guilt, results in her acceptance of Polonius's suggestion that Hamlet is suffering from unrequited love. Her motives in agreeing to meet Hamlet are thus both honourable, hoping to discover the true cause for his unhappiness, and selfish, hoping to rid herself of any guilt. While Gertrude is seeking ways in which to uncover the cause of Hamlet's distress, he is grappling with the task

given him by the Ghost and the uncertainty it inspires in him which leads to the production of “The mouse-trap.”

The play-within-a-play may spur Hamlet on in his task and frighten Claudius but Gertrude remains oblivious to the problems it has revealed and continues to wish that:

[Ophelia’s] good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet’s wildness. So shall I hope your virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours. (3.1.40–44)

She does not place all of her hope on this, or on Polonius’s plan to have Hamlet confide in her, but also arranges for Guildenstern and Rosencrantz to try discover the cause of his sorrow. They both attest that she is concerned for Hamlet and has sent for them “in most great affliction of spirit” (3.2.285) because his “behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.” Instead of accepting her distress as earnest, Hamlet, wary of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, as he is wary of everyone in court, rather responds thus:

Hamlet: O wonderful son, that can so stonish a mother! But is there no
sequel at the heels of this mother’s admiration? Impart.
Rosencrantz: She desires to speak with you in her closet ere you go to bed.
Hamlet: We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. (3.2.298–305)

Hamlet may feign obedience in his response to her but he does meet with her to discover her part in his father’s death. In the most important scene, when considering the relationship between Hamlet and his parents (Act 3, Scene 4), Hamlet confronts both his mother and the Ghost. His meeting with his mother is used to determine where her loyalties are most strongly placed. He accuses her of offending his father (3.4.10), of killing King Hamlet to marry Claudius (3.4.28), and of having lost her modesty by marrying Claudius. Gertrude’s reaction is difficult to read: she seems genuinely concerned by his actions and horrified at his accusations but whether she truly believes him or believes that he is mad remains unclear (Adelman 15). She reports to Claudius that Hamlet is “mad as the sea and wind when both contend” (4.1.5) and informs him that Hamlet has killed Polonius. Her true loyalty is only revealed on Hamlet’s return when she requests that Laertes “forbear him” (5.1.258) as he mourns for Ophelia. During the duel she supports her son and in her death she redeems herself by revealing to Hamlet that she has been poisoned (Smith 91) as “in her last moment, her thoughts seem to be all for Hamlet” (Adelman 16). Their relationship is thus one which is only clarified, and rectified, in death. There is no way to know the nature of the relationship

between Hamlet and Gertrude prior to old Hamlet's death but Gertrude's concern for her son suggests that their relationship breaks down as a result of the death. The relationship between mother and son is thus also a victim of the socio-political turmoil and Gertrude, who wants Hamlet to accept her marriage, is also to some extent guilty of limiting his autonomy.

Hamlet, Laertes, and Fortinbras

Laertes is another child called upon to act in a certain way because of his relationship with his father. A comparison of Hamlet and Laertes highlights some differences, such as Hamlet's desire for study at Wittenberg and Laertes's desire for "sport" in Paris. Both return to Denmark on the death of their fathers, however, and both seek to avenge the murder of their fathers. Laertes, like Hamlet, is well-loved and some even declare him king on his return. Both, also, ultimately die trying to avenge their fathers. They are both successful in their vengeance first and then die of poisoning, from the same blade. What function does Laertes thus actually perform? He is not solely a foil to Hamlet. In fact, his character lacks Hamlet's scholarly element but that is all. He is also not simply an extension of Hamlet, another son who obeys his father and dies while seeking vengeance for his death. Laertes, I would suggest, indicates that the tragedy that befalls Hamlet is not one solely of his own making. In the society in which they live, 'Rotten Denmark', the domestic realm is so entrenched within the socio-political realm that the threat to peace filters into the family life.

Fortinbras, though he occupies a very limited space in the play, provides a foil for Hamlet and like Laertes illustrates the effects of the socio-political on the family. Like his father he is a warrior, and seeks to regain the land his father once lost to old Hamlet. His identity, though it is the same as his father's, and may well be the identity created for him by his father, is one of his own choosing. There is no conflict between scholar or soldier, thought or action, son or nephew for Fortinbras to overcome. His position, both within his court and as his father's son (biologically but also in personality and temperament) means that when "he sets out to avenge his father's death, he succeeds, not merely in recovering the lost lands, but in annexing a part of Poland [...] and in obtaining the throne of his father's old enemy" (Muir 45). In contrast to Hamlet, who is in a state of emotional turmoil until his death, Fortinbras remains focused on his task and is ultimately successful in it. The contrast between Fortinbras's success and Hamlet's failure can be explained as follows:

There can be no question about the extent of Hamlet's failure. Quite apart from his responsibility for the deaths of Polonius, Ophelia and his schoolfellows, there is the simple, inescapable fact that the attempts to rid Denmark of its villain-king has left the country in a

worse state than it was at the outset. The foreigner Fortinbras, whose threat to the kingdom opens the play, takes it over without firing a single shot. Fortinbras is success as Hamlet is failure. (Edwards 27)

The failure that Philip Edwards refers to is, however, rather limiting. Fortinbras succeeds in becoming a mirror-image of his late father and avenging his death. Hamlet's failure is that he is never fully his father's mirror-image and, though he does avenge his death, he loses his own life and leaves the throne to his father's enemy. Both Fortinbras and Hamlet, and even Laertes, fail to create their own identity or to exercise autonomy. The importance and impossibility of Hamlet's task is not found elsewhere in the play as neither Fortinbras nor Laertes are ever given exact orders to avenge the deaths of their respective fathers. The deaths of their fathers, however, indicate that they cannot escape the turmoil that abounds in the socio-political realm. Both Fortinbras senior and Polonius are killed by a Hamlet because of the political environment in which they live and so "the desire for vengeance is seen as part of a continuing pattern of human conduct" (N. Alexander 49).

A Dysfunctional Father and Son Relationship

The clearest indication that the relationship between Hamlet and his father is a negative one is seen at the play's conclusion when there is no one left to avenge Hamlet's death.

Throughout the play, his focus has been, or at least Hamlet believes it should have been, on avenging an unlawful death and yet, when he himself suffers that same fate there is no possibility for avenging his death. Part of this is because everyone involved in his murder, and in the court of Claudius, is also dead but there is a larger, and more disturbing, reason. Once Hamlet turns away from his identity as scholar, son of Gertrude, man of thought rather than action and accepts the role of warrior, son of Hamlet and man of action, he effectively inserts himself into the role of old Hamlet, his fate, from that point, is sealed because he will either fail in his task, and thus fail his new identity, or he will succeed and, as the identity of his father dictates, die the death of a warrior. Hamlet's acceptance of the Ghost as his father and of the task he is given can only result in death, as does Ophelia's acceptance of the identity created for her by her father. The importance of an identity separate from one's parent is thus central to *Hamlet*. It is also central in *My Son's Story* where Will must break free from both his literal father, Sonny, and his literary father, Shakespeare.

The importance of Shakespeare in Will's development is clear from his birth: "The boy was Will, diminutive of William. He was named for Shakespeare" (Gordimer 6). The diminutive suggests a fondness and familiarity with Shakespeare, but it also provides a clear

outline of the path chosen for the son: he is to be a diminutive of Shakespeare, a writer. The name also suggests determination and so Will is not only named for Shakespeare but also “for that amoral trait that urges any writer onward” (Ettin 139). Will’s literary future is thus established through the process of naming him. Sonny’s determination that Will become a writer is not a passing whim and from a very young age Sonny seems to take it for granted that Will will become a writer. It is also always clear that the occupation is one that Sonny has chosen for his son, without consultation, and though Baby is free to choose her own path, Will’s has been predetermined for him:

When grownups asked the usual silly question put to children, Baby answered (depending on whether she was out to impress the visitor or be saucy) she would be a ‘doctor’, ‘a beauty queen’, and I said nothing. But he – my father – would say, ‘My son’s going to be a writer’. (Gordimer 36)

Will has little opportunity for individual pursuits: his identity is stunted by his father’s plans for him – in the same way that Hamlet’s identity is defined by his father, so much so that old Hamlet gives his very name to young Hamlet, thus imposing a pre-formed identity on his son. Similarly, Will’s father imposes a literary identity on his son by naming after ‘Will’ Shakespeare.

For Hamlet, the tragedy of identity coincides with the tragedy resulting from the destruction of his family at a time of political threat to the state. The same observation can be made of Will in *My Son’s Story*: the coinciding of his knowledge of Sonny’s affair with the awakening of a political consciousness within the family increases what would have been an already difficult situation for an adolescent male. Michiel Heyns suggests that the male-dominated and war focused state of South Africa in the 1980s left traces in most literature of the period and *My Son’s Story*, with its emphasis on the relationship between a father and son during the time of political awareness, is no exception (Heyns 84). The intrusion of the socio-political on the domestic is thus crucial to the development of both Hamlet and Will. A further consideration is Will’s awakening sexuality which coincides with the discovery of his father’s affair. Will finds himself repulsed by his father’s actions but also chooses to follow the example set by him. Moller notes how:

Will prepares *his* entrance on the sexual scene by naively adopting mimic strategies in a more conventional sense, aptly resonant in his case, with Hamletian echoes. He imitates adult sexual behaviour of a kind that appears parodically exploitative and no less duplicitous than that in which he considers his father and Hannah to be engaged. (Moller 165)

In adopting an approach to sexuality which mimics his father's, Will is also associating himself, as a Hamlet figure, with Hannah. He makes this association almost as soon as he learns of the affair by couching his own sexuality within the same terms he uses when considering his father's relationship with Hannah. Will believes that his father wants him to be aware of the affair in order to provide Will with "proof of his virility" (Gordimer 94) and Will's response is to highlight his own virility. The clearest way in which he does this is during his matric holiday when he claims to have "lived with a woman for six days, fucked her and slept in the same bed with her, and don't ever want to see her again" (Gordimer 136) and later, when he has a girlfriend, to claim that he is "just like Dad. [His] sex-life has no home" (Gordimer 185). Hannah and Sonny's relationship, and particularly what it suggests about Sonny's sexuality and sexual preferences, affects Will's sexual development negatively. Despite structuring his own sexual identity on the affair, Will's final verdict of Hannah and Sonny's relationship is a negative one and he suggests that it is more destructive than the "filthy law" (Gordimer 263) of apartheid. Similarly, Hamlet's repulsion for women coincides with his mother's remarriage and all of the questions concerning sexuality that it raises.

The similarities extend further than this. Not only is Will's relationship with his parents affected by social turmoil and sexual awakening but it is also, as Hamlet's is, affected by the identity that his father has created for him. Just as Old Hamlet has named his son for himself and sets a task for his son which is impossible, life threatening and which denies him any autonomy, Sonny also limits his son by imposing his own expectations on him. Will, named "for Shakespeare, whose works, in a cheap complete edition bound in fake leather, stood in the glass-fronted bookcase" (Gordimer 6), is from birth placed into an identity that is not entirely his own and is expected to complete the task his father has set him – to become a writer. This task has a longer duration than the one old Hamlet sets for Hamlet but meets the same requirements. It is an impossible task because of Shakespeare's status as global icon. It is life-threatening not in as literal a sense as Hamlet's task but in Will's own development within his society. As a writer and literary scholar, Will is denied any formal and active role in the struggle which influences the rest of his family. The task threatens his future by stifling his political development and restricting his contributions. Despite his mother's suggestion that the struggle is "going to need qualified people" (Gordimer 187), a sentiment which his father shares, Will understands her to be restricting his participation and remarks: "She won't let me fight. For my people. For my freedom" (*ibid.*). Aila's attempt to exclude Will from political activism is most evident in her refusal to allow him to testify on her behalf. Will and

Sonny each adopt a selfish understanding of Aila's determination that Will not testify. Will believes that she is denying him the right to be involved in the struggle for freedom and Sonny believes that Aila is protecting her favourite child, Will. They are both partially correct, but only partially. Aila is protecting Will from the dangers of involvement in political activism but she is doing so because she wants him to find his own function within the struggle. After she has refused Will's testimony at her trial, Will confronts her and asks:

Why must I be the one excepted, the one left behind, left out, why is it assumed – by you, by him, by Baby, everyone – I haven't any part in the struggle. Why is it just accepted I'm the one who loves the sham normal life you've all rejected. (Gordimer 254)

Aila's reply suggests both that she is trying to protect him and that she does not object to him being part of the struggle but cannot bear to be the reason he becomes involved: "I can't do it. Then you must do it some other way. Not through me. I can't part with you, Will" (Gordimer 253). Her instinct as a mother, to protect her son, is clear but, when her declaration here is combined with her response to Will's disinterest in performing well – "we're going to need qualified people. Bush fighters won't win the economic war" (Gordimer 187) – it is clear that she is willing for him to be involved in the struggle but wants his involvement to be peaceful and intellectual. Aila is thus not exempt from the parental desire to dictate the identity of their children. She wants Will to be part of the intellectual struggle and, when freedom for all has been won, to be able to enjoy the hard-won benefits. Her intentions are admirable, but they create an identity which limits Will's autonomy – her plan for him does not allow him to select his own level and form of political engagement.

The last aspect of Hamlet's task, the denial of autonomy, is the most influential in his character's ultimate development and the same can be said for Will's task of becoming a writer. In formulating a future for his son, Sonny has ignored Will's own opinions on the matter. Though there is little indication that Will has a different identity he wishes to develop, unlike Hamlet who is a scholar prior to the Ghost's request, this is largely because he has never been allowed to deviate from the path laid out for him. Sonny has also chosen a path for Will which mirrors his own development, though he has higher aspirations for his son and there is a clear correlation between Will's slow acceptance of his task and Sonny's movement away from literature into the political arena. Once Sonny has relinquished the role of literary scholar, his son can assume the role that he has been preened for, however unwilling he may be. As Hamlet accepts his task at the end of *Hamlet*, Will accepts his and, as Dominic Head argues:

When at the end of the novel, Will effectively announces himself as the ‘author’ of the novel, we realize – as the title has indicated all along – that he has accepted his father’s legacy, despite the resentment he has continually felt towards his father’s cultural elitism. (Head 158)

Once Will has revealed himself as author of the book, and essentially the third-person narrator, it is clear that he is not only a writer but also a Shakespearean scholar because of the direct references to Shakespeare’s plays and sonnets which occur throughout the text. These quotations are all indications of Will’s acceptance of his literary inheritance, which is dominated by Shakespeare. Like Hamlet, Will is finally revealed to have embraced the identities created for him and where Hamlet dies a literal death Will dies a metaphorical one – at the end of the novel he is revealed to have neglected his own desires and autonomy by embracing the identity created for him by his father. He has become a writer.

The knowledge that Will is both writer and narrator of the novel also raises questions concerning the novel’s title. Is Will the parent or the son? A simple answer is that the novel has been written by Will and published by one of his parents and so, the title should read “My son, Will’s, story.” Even this interpretation has its limitations, however, as it does not clarify which parent has published the story or whether the story is by Will or about him. Rather than embrace one single understanding, I would suggest that the ambiguity inherent in the title is deliberate and encourages all of the various meanings. Many critics argue that the story being told is Sonny’s story, though from the perspective of Will. Ileana Dimitriu considers the process of Will’s retelling of Sonny’s story and suggests that the novel is Sonny’s story “filtered through the son’s eyes” (Dimitriu 72). Linda Weinhouse, however, sees in the novel an act of “ventriloquism” and suggests that the narrative is “composed by the father in the voice he imagines for his son” (Weinhouse 69). Where Dimitriu’s interpretation suggests that Will alters the story, albeit slightly, Weinhouse’s denies Will any autonomy at all in suggesting that it is a story about and by Sonny who uses Will’s identity as the narrative voice to indicate his own success at having “made [Will] a writer” (Gordimer 277). While I find Weinhouse’s suggestion to be somewhat extreme, she does highlight the importance of legacy: Sonny tells his story through Will so that it can be immortalised. J. Jacobs also sees the importance of legacy, and the ability of a father to tell his own story through his son. He argues that “since Will is the first-person narrator in the novel, as his words the title must indicate the as yet untold story of his own as yet unborn son” (Jacobs 30). That Will is able to tell the story of his own son by telling the story of his (Will’s) family’s political involvement (particularly his father’s) suggests that the ‘story’ of a son is intricately connected to the ‘story’ of his father. If the stories of father and son are bound together through the legacy

inherited then the only factor through which identity can be asserted is the perspective from which the story is told. John Cooke explores the importance of Will as the dominant figure within the novel, despite the suggestion by the title and the epigraph that it is also Sonny's story, and concludes that Will, as a writer, selects his own story (Cooke 30–31). Andrew Ettin contributes to this suggestion by arguing that:

if the title of this book implies that it has been published by one of the parents (presumably the father, a teacher proud of his own rhetorical skills who names his son Will after Shakespeare), then we must add yet another layer of duplicity and ambiguity in the recognition that it indeed is a “story” and a story of, as well as by, the son with whatever level of presumptive truth we want to assign to that status. (Ettin 120)

The fiction, or otherwise of Will's account, is what marks him as the writer and narrator of the story and is what transforms it from being a story solely about his family into the story of the birth of a writer. This is most evident in the last paragraph of the novel which looks at the final identity of Will rather than providing one last account of the family:

What he did – my father – made me a writer. Do I have to thank him for that? Why couldn't I have been something else?

I am a writer and this is my first book – that I can never publish. (Gordimer 277)

In his concluding lines, Will is acknowledging the influence of his father on his writing career but he is also acknowledging his mother's influence. The desire to write, a desire inherited from his father, which connects him to Shakespeare as a literary forefather, is contrasted with the desire to maintain the silence and privacy which his mother held so dear. The final line of the novel can thus be interpreted as a tribute to Aila. Julie Newman explains this tribute as follows: though the title may indicate that this is a story “owned and appropriated by the father, and by literary forefathers, Will is also the son of a mother who keeps her story to herself for excellent reasons” (Newman 194). Will's concluding line thus opens interpretation of the title to include Aila and the title is therefore transformed into a statement of lineage – it encapsulates the story of parents and children, and the intertwined nature of parents and children. As such, it is important to also consider the political involvement of Aila and Baby whose actions are a reaction to Sonny's political activism.

Female strength through silence

Sonny's involvement in the struggle may begin the dissolution of the family structure but his activities are miniscule when compared with those of Baby and Aila. Once Aila has been

arrested, Hannah, who discovers her location for Sonny, disappears from the text. It is as if the political function that Hannah has played is replaced by Aila's secretive involvement – what need is there for Sonny to think about the activist who is moving on when there is one who has been secretly active within his own neglected household? Aila's identity is not limited to her role of wife and mother and both her relationship with Sonny and her involvement in the political struggle suggest that her strength lies in her silence and her tragedy in the inability of those around her to correctly interpret that silence. At the beginning of the chronology of events Aila is very different to Hannah. From her very first introduction in the text she is set apart by her quiet nature. As a young woman, prior to her marriage to Sonny, she is courted by many men but rejects them all “in the only way possible for someone like her: by silence” (Gordimer 7). Sonny is the only one to understand her silence and after a brief courtship they are married. Will, however, reflects that perhaps even Sonny was mistaken in his understanding of Aila's silence and wonders if other men who “mistook her gentleness for disdain” were not alone as “perhaps he [Sonny] mistook it too, in another way, taking the gentleness for what it appeared to be instead of the strength of will it safely gloved” (Gordimer 7). During the early years of the marriage Aila, who “wanted to become what he [Sonny] wanted” (Gordimer 10), studies through correspondence and later, once the children are at school, becomes secretary to a doctor. Throughout their marriage, Aila and Sonny appear, at least to Will, to be in mutual agreement about everything:

It was always as if he knew what she wanted, for him and us, and that she knew he would find the way to articulate the components of daily life accordingly. For what she wanted was, in essence, always what he wanted; and that is not as simple or purely submissive as it sounds. (Gordimer 21)

What could easily be interpreted as submission from Aila is instead seen by Will as evidence of compatibility – Aila is not submissive to Sonny: she is of the same mind naturally. Even in making “the biggest decision of their lives so far”, moving to a house in a designated white area, Sonny is well aware of the questions Aila asks, even if she does not voice her concerns:

To leave the place where they had courted, where the children had been born, where everybody knew them, knew she was Sonny's wife, Baby and Will were Sonny's children. Aila's silences said things like this. (Gordimer 39)

Despite her reservations, Aila's questions “were never objections; they were the practical consequence of acceptance” (Gordimer 40). Aila's strength within the marriage is in her silence which expresses both her concerns and her certainty that Sonny will always act in the

best way for the family. Even when Sonny is detained she maintains her quiet confidence and assures Hannah that the family has no need of her assistance. Aila's determination to maintain the stability of her family is carried through in her refusal to take too much leave to attend Sonny's trial because "it was an article of faith between Sonny and her, part of her loyalty and support for him, that they would not let the State destroy the discipline of their daily life" (Gordimer 51). It is also this determination which isolates her from her husband as within prison "the silences between Aila and [Sonny] that were so comfortable, natural in their closeness, at home, were now a real silence without communication of any kind" (Gordimer 48). What Will is highlighting is the different types of silence between a couple. Initially, Aila and Sonny's silence is a result of contentment – there is no need for verbal communication because they communicate in other ways. Once Sonny has become politically involved, however, he adopts silence for a different reason. The silence between them now forms part of his political identity and is a direct result of that identity: Sonny's activism necessitates secrecy as a way in which to protect his family. Unfortunately, the secrecy of political involvement leads to a breakdown in communication and the destruction of the relationship between Aila and Sonny, a relationship which had been mutually beneficial. The silence which isolates Aila from her husband and, in some way, leads to his affair with Hannah, is transformed into a part of her political awareness.

Aila's sudden involvement in politics is a result of her visit to Baby who, unbeknownst to her parents, has become involved with the struggle and is living in Lusaka where she forms an integral part of the exiled community. Baby's departure is sudden and there is little indication that she has become involved in politics until her announcement to Aila that she has "joined the military wing of the movement" (Gordimer 124). Her political transition mirrors her father's in interesting ways. She also becomes gradually more important within political circles without the rest of her family being aware and, because of her involvement with politics, becomes romantically involved. These similarities are not lost on Sonny who is forced to acknowledge that "she went away with a man, she had been living with a man while he was with his woman in the cottage" and was "as discreet, not only politically, as the father himself" (Gordimer 168). Her involvement in the political struggles without any encouragement from her family sets her apart from the rest of her family and also highlights her strength as a female character within a male-dominated society. In this regard, she is comparable to Cordelia (in *King Lear*) as she also rejects the socio-political role created for her by her father (in Baby's case a life outside of politics). Baby's strength may be a reaction against the role designated her by her parents but it is not unique. Aila too begins

to reject the complacent role she has adopted towards politics and, because of Baby, illustrates the strength her silence can mask.

Prior to her trip to visit Baby there are indications that Aila is no longer willing to accept her complacent role in the family structure. The most evident betrayal of Sonny's trust is her attainment of a passport. It is only by accident that Will stumbles upon the "envelope printed with the logo of a passport-photograph vending machine" (Gordimer 145) and begins to speculate that she might leave the country with Sonny. Will is not the only one surprised by her sudden attainment of a passport and, though Sonny "had the curious impression that she must have mentioned, indicated, her intention" (Gordimer 146), she only informs him "after it had been granted and issued" (*ibid.*). The decision not to tell Sonny of her intentions until receiving her passport and visa is a strategic one – Sonny's political alignment would jeopardise her chances of receiving a passport – but it also suggests a breakdown in trust and communication between them. Aila feels she cannot trust Sonny to leave the matter of her passport to their lawyers and so does not speak to him about it at all. The passport and the opportunities it provides, visiting Baby in Lusaka, both project Aila into politics and, as she has excluded Will and Sonny from her planned trip to Lusaka, they are also excluded from the political involvement which follows.

When Aila returns from her trip to Lusaka, Will notices the physical change she has undergone (cutting her hair) but fails to understand the deeper symbolism. Aila, who has always been the trustworthy and perfect housewife has now stripped herself of those responsibilities and has embraced a new approach to life, one which focuses on herself rather than on her role within the family unit. Will never questions where the money for Aila's airfare comes from, remarking only that she is "used to managing with little money" and is "able to save enough for the airfares" (Gordimer 177). He does, however, notice a change in the way she carries herself and the increase in the number of friends she has:

I suppose that's why she doesn't look like she used to – it's not only that hair, now – she doesn't dress with the care she did, goes off on these trips to my sister in pants and flat shoes, the clothes and toys for the little boy stuffed into my duffel bag. When she comes back she doesn't ask how we – I've managed. And she seems to have made more friends here; friends of her own, not my father's with whom she was always on the fringe. She's quite often out when I arrive home and her day's work at the surgery is over. (Gordimer 177–178)

When Aila returns from Lusaka she is no longer the mother in the family structure, her identity shifts and she becomes a woman with an identity external to the family. Will may not know the cause of her sudden changes but, as the older, narrating Will reflects, he did notice

that “She was not there. Not for him [Sonny], not for me [Will]” (Gordimer 178). It is perhaps not surprising that Will notices the changes in Aila, they had always shared a special bond, but Sonny also notices that the compliant wife he married has undergone some changes.

The first indication, for Sonny, that Aila has undergone some sort of change is when, on her return, she asserts dominance and instructs him not to speak of Baby’s marriage as it could jeopardize Baby’s safety. Aila’s request makes sense to Sonny but he cannot help but wonder: “Since when did Aila decide what was socially expedient?” (Gordimer 169). He does not make any connection with Baby’s integral political role within the exiled community in Lusaka and Aila’s newfound vigour in life. Instead, on hearing that Baby is pregnant, he assumes that: “Aila has been brought to life – that’s how he sees it – by the idea of a birth, a new life coming out of the old one he left her buried in” (Gordimer 170). Together with the belief that Aila has a new lease on life comes the realisation that he is “rid of Aila. Free” (Gordimer 170). Sonny’s refusal to remove Aila from the domestic realm and see her new lease on life as something external to her domestic role as mother (and soon to be grandmother) is a reflection on his own limited understanding of the political struggle. His relationships with his daughter, wife and lover are all affected by his refusal to acknowledge the role women can play in the fight for freedom. Sonny’s approach to the struggle can be contrasted with Aila’s which is “pure in intensity, motivation, and conviction, her political activism is not to be experienced but to be admired [...] it becomes that which her life is about” (Etlin 77). The inability to experience Aila’s activism is not limited to Sonny but can also be seen in Will who maintains that Aila was framed by the police for Sonny’s crimes. Aila’s political activism does have similarities with Sonny’s, and Baby’s, in her determination to shield Will from the consequences of her political involvement. Her political involvement is, however, free from the complications of Sonny’s (who taints his political career through his affair with Hannah) and “Aila’s late discovery of political commitment, driven by family connections and apparently devoid of sexual involvement almost trivialises her husband’s” (Etlin 77).

Aila and Baby are both revealed to be strong and secretive woman. In their determination to establish themselves within the political struggle without Sonny’s assistance, or even his knowledge, they indicate their strength and illustrate the ability of woman to participate within the fight against apartheid. Their political success is largely dependent on their secrecy, in contrast to Sonny’s very open political engagement, and in their silent participation they show that female silence can be “more powerful than the

patriarchal word” (Newman 194, see also Dimitriu 80). Both women also “move out of traditional gender roles into radical political action” (Knox 66) – Aila does not remain the subservient wife and mother, nor is Baby always the obedient daughter. This is not to suggest that the transition into political activism, and the secrecy used in that transition, occurs without sacrifice and, at the novel’s conclusion, both are social exiles. It is not only within a silent role that women can fulfil a political role but Aila’s secretive involvement acts as an indication of the various ways in which socio-political freedom can be striven for and Aila’s silent and private transition into political activism can be contrasted with Hannah’s outspoken defence of political freedom for all. Regardless of the method by which political engagement is enacted, there is always a sacrifice and even Hannah eventually abandons Sonny, having been promoted, and her departure is the final indication that women also have a role to play in society, and not necessarily a role created or sanctioned by men. Ettin discusses the strength of the female characters as follows:

The sexual and intellectual lover, Hannah, the domestic and quietly maternal wife, Aila, and the sociable and high-spirited daughter, Baby, all prove to be committed anti-apartheid activists, the last two emerging surprisingly involved with underground activity more dangerously and violently subversive than anything undertaken by the well-known political activist who is husband and father to them. (Ettin 17)

His analysis argues that the novel is primarily concerned with the success of female characters and Barbara Temple-Thurston agrees with this focus, suggesting that with the political success of women, “the novel becomes one about women who find their voices through the course of political action” (Temple-Thurston 121). The strength of women is also made evident through the intertextual relationship between *King Lear* and *My Son’s Story*.

***King Lear* and Family.**

King Lear, like *Hamlet*, addresses the destruction of the family because of political events. Where Will is clearly a Hamlet-like figure, however, the intertextual relationship between *King Lear* and *My Son’s Story* is not primarily premised on similarities between specific characters but rather on the implications of the socio-political infringing on the domestic. In *King Lear*, the family structure, which begins with a father and three daughters, is dissolved and eventually destroyed as every family member dies. Similarly, *My Son’s Story* begins with a family unit and ends with that unit having disintegrated as each member has chosen an identity outside of the family. In both texts, the catalyst for the destruction of the family is the decision, taken initially by the father, to favour a social identity over a domestic one. In

transforming his relationships with his daughters into a social performance in which a division of his kingdom is a prize, Lear ignores his role as father in favour of his role as king and treats his daughters as successors (which is their socio-political identity) rather than as daughters (which is their domestic identity).

The analysis of family relationships in *King Lear* is complicated because the play “sees the problem of fathers and daughters from both sides” (Bevington 195). It is not as easily examined as Lawrence Stone suggests when he argues that:

Shakespeare’s interpretation of *King Lear* merely underscores the moral that a father who gives up real power, in the expectation of obtaining the love and attention of his children instead, is merely exhibiting a form of insanity. His inevitable disappointment would have come as no surprise to an Elizabethan audience. (Stone 97)

The opening scene, in which Lear distributes his kingdom among his daughters according to a love-test, immediately alerts a reader to the artificiality of the court. Lear, in rewarding his daughters for public declarations of love, is suggesting that a courtly performance is more valuable than an actual relationship. He is asking, in effect, that his daughters participate in a spectacle which demonstrates the loyalty of his subjects rather than the love of his children. This is not to suggest that Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia are not being tested as daughters, however, in asking them for public declarations of love Lear is also testing their obedience and loyalty to him. The ‘love’ test is thus not concerned with love but rather with obedience to monarch and father. Both Goneril and Regan are willing to meet Lear’s demands, out of greed rather than true obedience, but Cordelia refuses to participate and replies to Lear’s demand that she ‘perform’ with “nothing” and silence. Cordelia’s strength is thus shown, from her first appearance, to be her determination to remain true to her monarch (in refusing to give him false flattery for material gain) and her father (in distancing herself from a courtly performance in which she is asked to merge her identity as daughter with her identity as subject). Lear is unable to understand the danger of blurring the divide between his identity as king and father and so rewards Goneril and Regan but disowns Cordelia – both as king and as father.

In disowning Cordelia, Lear is asserting that he has had ownership over her and, similarly, in later disowning Goneril and Regan he is highlighting that though he may no longer be monarch (having divided his kingdom), as their father he is still entitled to dominate their lives. Lear declares to Goneril:

Thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter –

Or rather a disease that lies within my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine. Thou art a boil,
A plague-sore, an embossed carbuncle
In my corrupted blood. (2.2.386–390)

There is a double bind here for Lear: though he may possess his daughters as his flesh and blood, he also cannot entirely dissociate himself from them when he believes them to be disobedient. That Lear is complicit in Goneril and Regan's existence is central to the progression of the play. Though he may once have ruled over them with authority, they have now become "a disease, but a disease of his own body" (Adelman 108) and as such, he is now governed by them. Lear's reaction to his new role of dependence provides the outline for the rest of the play. Cordelia's return to England "represents both a social contract and an indissoluble tie between kin, between parent and child." (Belsey 62). Her silence is misconstrued by Lear as disobedience and so the rejection of Cordelia is "a moral mistake on Lear's part" (Jardine, *Still Harping* 108). While Lear progresses from thinking Cordelia defiant to believing her to be obedient, his views on Goneril and Regan make the opposite progression. Traditionally viewed as the disobedient and evil daughters, scholarship seems to be moving towards a more humane approach to Goneril and Regan. Their responses to Lear, rather than being viewed as false should rather be considered as correct responses to Lear's staged demand – he has begun a show demanding certain speech acts and they fulfil their functions within that performance. When Lear rages against his daughters for not showing correct filial duty, he is raging against his own previous actions. Alfar highlights how

Family bonds are rejected in favour of what Lear sees to be his primary function and right as king: to be obeyed. Goneril and Regan reproduce Lear's mode of kin(g)ship, in this light, acting as monarchs first and ultimately losing sight of filial bonds. (Alfar 109)

Rather than being viewed as simply defiant, Goneril and Regan can be interpreted as repeating the pattern of stressing monarchy over family which Lear has created. The complexity for Goneril and Regan and their relationship with Lear has its foundation in the transfer of power. By dividing his kingdom between them Lear has transferred the monarchy and yet he still insists that they act as daughters first and rulers second. The division of the kingdom also contradicts primogeniture and suggests that while a first-born son can inherit the whole kingdom a first-born daughter cannot and the kingdom must be shared. The result of this is that Goneril and Regan, in adopting Lear's form of rule, continue the patriarchal monarchy he has created. This is best illustrated when they refuse to allow him his retainers

and in so doing “they do not only resist the role of submission assigned to them, but they also reproduce patrilineal structures of domination” (Alfar 85). Lear, however, continues to conceptualise Goneril and Regan as disobedient and as a result creates a tale of filial abuse for Edgar disguised as Tom in which “Lear in effect rewrites a tale of fraternal and paternal abuse as a tale of abuse by daughters” (Adelman 115). In *King Lear*, Shakespeare is thus challenging not only conceptions of obedience and defiance but also the extent to which a monarch’s relationship with his children, particularly daughters, is affected by his status within the kingdom.

At the end of the play, Cordelia and Lear’s reconciliation seems an inevitability. In distorting the norms of silence as virtue and excessive speech as vice in the beginning of the play, it is vital that reconciliation occurs in order to restore the natural order. Considering the standard construction of femininity during the early modern period, Lisa Jardine highlights how “Lear makes the wrong choice; he chooses ‘not-woman’, disowns the truly womanly Cordelia [and] by preferring voluble speech (anti-womanly) to silence (female virtue incarnate) he creates disorder, [and] gives place to misrule” (Jardine, *Still Harping* 109). In order to restore order, Lear must acknowledge that he had made the wrong decision and so, as Jardine suggests:

in his final enlightenment, the mad Lear, with his dead daughter Cordelia in his arms, recognises her as a truly virtuous woman: ‘What is’t thou sayest? Her voice was ever soft, / Gentle and low – an excellent thing in woman’. The devilish scolds, Goneril and Regan, are extinguished. Womankind is redeemed by Cordelia’s modest silence, now recognised for its true worth. (Jardine, *Still Harping* 110)

The contrast that Jardine is emphasising here is one which is of the utmost importance within the period in which Shakespeare was writing. In asserting Cordelia’s silence as perfection, the play suggests that at least some of the qualities held to be feminine and positive are worthy of being upheld. That Lear only realises this at the end of his play (when Cordelia is dead and he is mad) is both a mockery of Lear and a sad indictment on the audience for which Shakespeare was writing.

The varying love of a father for different children is also at the forefront of *King Lear*, although it is far more complicated and varies not only by degrees but also according to which daughter is the most favoured. Initially Lear says of Cordelia that he “loved her most” (1.1.121) but, as she has publicly humiliated him by not only refusing to declare her love for him publicly but also disobeying him, she is suddenly no longer his favourite. The immediate

distinction between Cordelia and her sisters, Goneril and Regan, is important for the consequences later on in the play and helps the modern reader to sympathise with the two sisters who have been blatantly shown to be less favoured than their younger sister. Having disappointed her father, Cordelia is no longer the favourite and so Lear's affections are divided equally between his two remaining daughters. Both Goneril and Regan are aware of his having favoured Cordelia, however, and in their brief discussion at the end of the first scene, the audience is informed that not only are they aware that "he always loved / [their] sister most" (1.1.285–286) but also that they do not sympathise with Cordelia as a sister. Whether or not the malevolence with which Goneril and Regan treat their father is solely attributable to the favouritism he has always shown Cordelia is of little importance. The fact remains that his estrangement from Cordelia allows them the opportunity to treat him with contempt. Both Goneril and Regan emphasise Cordelia's act as one with selfish motivations and remark that she has "obedience scanted" (1.1.276) in refusing to please Lear as they have done. This scene, though brief, highlights not only the relationship between the sisters, which is shown as difficult when an obvious favourite is present, but also highlights the motivations for Goneril and Regan's subsequent actions. In dismissing Cordelia, his obvious favourite, Lear has indicated that he has a weakness which leads Goneril and Regan to decide that they "must do something, and i'th'heat" (1.1.302). The "something" which they do is to drive Lear away from the comfort he has sought at their homes, which reminds him of the virtue of his favoured Cordelia but also indicates to him the error of his ways. The existence of the sisters is thus a vital part of Lear's realisation that he has wronged his daughter, a realisation which would not have come as easily had Cordelia been an only child. Through the progression which Lear makes in the play, he returns to favouring Cordelia, an act which restores the right order of things and, though ending tragically, does allow for reconciliation. The role of Cordelia, Goneril, and Regan as sisters is thus important as an explication on the actions of the traditionally viewed 'evil' sisters (Goneril and Regan) and as a framing device as the play begins and ends with Lear favouring Cordelia above her sisters. It also, however, demonstrates the extent of the tragedy in the play – what began as a division of inheritance and the creation of a legacy ends with the death of an entire family. In *My Son's Story* the characters are spared a literal death but the family unit no longer exists because of Sonny's initial decision to favour his public persona.

Sonny in placing all of his attention on his relationship with Hannah, a relationship only made possible by his activism, neglects his family and emphasises his role as social activist to the detriment of his role as father. Sonny's activism negatively affects his family in

two ways. The first disruption it causes in his household is the removal of Sonny from his role as father and the insertion of him into the role of lover. It is because of his detention that he meets Hannah and it is his belief in the struggle which strengthens their bond. The second way Sonny's identity as activist affects his family is in the adoption of a socio-political identity by Baby and Aila. It is because Sonny has created a sharp distinction between his domestic and political realms that Baby also chooses to keep her activism secret. The distinction between the safe and complacent domestic and the intriguing and secretive socio-political appeals to Baby because it allows her to step outside of her role as daughter and assume a more powerful one within the exiled community. Aila, similarly, finds the importance and power she is denied within her familial identity in the socio-political identity she creates. Both *King Lear* and *My Son's Story* thus illustrate the danger of over-identifying with the social persona to the detriment of familial bonds. Lear and Sonny both come to regret their actions within the public realm (for Lear this is the love-test and for Sonny his affair with Hannah which, though private, is a result of his public identity as an activist) but react according to private emotions (Lear regrets the loss of his relationship with Cordelia and Sonny the breakdown of relationships within his family). The familial tragedy thus lies not in the destruction of the patriarchal structure of family presented initially in both texts but in the isolation of each individual and the breakdown of personal bonds between the family members. In *My Son's Story*, the problem lies in the way in which the political activism results in the psychological and physical separation of the individual from the family rather than in the political activism itself.

The Importance of Legacy

At the novel's conclusion the family nucleus has been completely destroyed and each member has embraced a new, very different, identity. Aila becomes part of Umkhonto we Sizwe, Sonny continues within an, albeit menial, position within a group of activists in South Africa, and Baby is a key member in a community of exiles in Lusaka. Even Will, though he has always resented not having an active role within the struggle, has adopted a new role: in his novel he has become chronicler of his family's transition into the struggle against apartheid. In his newfound role he pays tribute to both his parents: he has finally become the writer his father so desperately wanted him to be but he also values the silence and privacy embodied by his mother and his concluding lines "that I can never publish" (Gordimer 277) "pays tribute to the strength of female silence" (Newman 194). The relationship between Will and Aila is thus one which cannot be captured by the written word and can be contrasted with

the relationship between Will and Sonny which is dependent on the abilities of legacy which the written word presents.

The importance of a legacy in the relationship between father and son is stressed by the novel's epigraph which is taken from one of Shakespeare's sonnets. The line quoted is the concluding line of sonnet 13: "You had a Father, let your son say so". Even when read alone, the sentiment expressed shows a clear affinity with the novel's concern with the continuation of lineage – in the case of *My Son's Story*, the legacy to be handed down is a love of literature, and specifically Shakespeare. An understanding of the sonnet as a whole can also contribute to the meaning of the quotation within the novel, however. The first seventeen sonnets in Shakespeare's sequence are concerned with immortality and, specifically, with reproduction. Children, particularly the achievement of producing a male heir, are presented as a crucial means of obtaining immortality through the family legacy they continue. As the sequence continues, however, literature, particularly poetry, is presented as the child of the author and thus seen as an equally viable part of the creation of a legacy. Just as children result in the sustainment of a family line and biological immortality, literature results in the immortality of both the author and the subject. This assertion, of the ability of literature to immortalise the subject, is best captured in the concluding lines of Sonnet 18:

When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee. (Shakespeare 1929)

As long as people continue to live (breathe) and can see to read the poem, the beloved will be given life by the eternal lines which describe him. This concern with longevity is also expressed, though differently, in Sonnet 13 in which the desire for the beloved to become immortal through continuing the family line is stressed:

O! that you were yourself! But, love, you are
No longer yours than you yourself here live.
Against this coming end you should prepare,
And your sweet semblance to some other give.
So should that beauty which you hold in lease
Find no determination; then you were
Yourself again after yourself's decease,
When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear.
Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,
Which husbandry in honour might uphold

Against the stormy gusts of winter's day,
And barren rage of death's eternal cold?
O, none but unthrifths, dear my love, you know.
You had a father; let your son say so. (Shakespeare 1927)

As with many of the sonnets, the three quatrains present an argument and the rhyming couplet, in this instance, provides a solution to the problem of mortality that the quatrains raise. The speaker argues that the beloved is not self-possessed because he lives in a world of inevitable death and decay. He should, therefore, pass his "sweet semblance" onto another so that his memory can remain after death through his "sweet issue" which will bear his "sweet form". If, however, the beloved does not reproduce then the family line will be destroyed. The speaker also indicates the ease with which a house may be saved: through "husbandry in honour" as a legitimate heir will continue the legacy begun by his father and forefathers. In the final couplet, the speaker suggests that it is only "unthrifths" (those who are extravagant and wasteful) that allow a family line to be destroyed. The final sentence establishes a chain of inheritance by highlighting that the beloved's father continued the family line by having a son and so the son must reproduce to continue the lineage. The emphasis is on the ability of a son to prevent the destruction of a family. It is not a particularly unique argument within the sonnet sequence but two aspects must be highlighted: the importance of a male line – there is no mention of mothers or daughters – and the importance of identity – the beloved must procreate in order to have a child that is just like him. Garrett Sullivan explains the task set for the young man as follows:

If the poet works to engender obligation and fear in the young man, it is procreation and the immortality it promises that would supposedly grant consolation for "folly, age and cold decay" (11.6). To achieve that consolation however, the young man must take on a particular identity proffered by the poet. (Sullivan 332)

The beloved is being instructed to not only take the speaker's advice but also assume an identity created for him, that of the continuer of a legacy. This sonnet thus demands action of the beloved through which he can ensure the immortality of himself through the continued existence of his family line. But within the sonnets, the striving for immortality is also addressed through the notion of creating a legacy through the written word. In the context of *My Son's Story*, the ability of the written word to immortalise a family is obvious: through Will's novel, the story of his family's transition into politics is immortalised. He continues the legacy by having the literary heir his father had always wished him to have – a novel. It

is, however, his father's wish that he become a writer and, just as the beloved is to act as he is instructed, so too Will must abide by the identity created for him. Will, named for Shakespeare, ironically can enact no will of his own in the matter of begetting a (literary) heir. This interplay of meanings for the word 'will' is also dominant in Shakespeare's sonnet sequence.

In writing his novel, Will accepts responsibility for the story he tells about his family and the impact of the political environment on their lives, implicitly inviting the active participation of the South African reader, remarking that "it's an old story – ours" (Gordimer 275). He also acknowledges the difficulty of the task, admitting that, as narrator he has "made up what [he] wasn't there to experience", occasionally "told something in terms [he] wouldn't have been capable of, aware of, at the period when it was happening" and made his own judgement of the events related (Gordimer 275). All of these narrative elements blur the distinction between Will as narrator and Will as character. According to Will the narrator, however, that is where the truth of his story is revealed. In his ability to capture his experiences and analyse them in hindsight he feels he has succeeded in providing a full account of his family's struggles. The complexity of Will as a character within his own retrospectively narrated novel is attested to by his selection of a quotation from *Hamlet* while he reflects on the act of storytelling. He has, in his words, accounted for:

All of it, all of it.

I have that within that passeth show.

I've imagined, out of their deception, the frustration of my absence, the pain of knowing them too well, what others would be doing, saying and feeling in the gaps between my witness.

(Gordimer 275–276)

The insertion of the quotation cements the relationship already identified between Will and Hamlet and is a retrospective comment on his younger self – though Will the character appeared to be sheltered from the harsh realities of apartheid and the political actions of his family members, his outward ignorance hid his true understanding. Also important to note is Will's acknowledgment that not only has he "imagined [...] what others would be doing" but also that these speculations are the result of "frustration" and "pain". These motivations colour our engagement with the novel because the narrative is implicated as Will's emotional response to the events rather than simply being his chronicling of those events. The meaning of the quotation is not quite the same as in its original form where Hamlet responds to Gertrude's remarks on his mourning attire:

These indeed 'seem',
For they are the actions that a man might play;
But I have that within which passeth show –
These but the trappings and the suits of woe. (1.2.83–86)

Gertrude may remark on the garments which mark his mourning but Hamlet asserts that he does not wear the garments as a matter of course but because he is truly mourning (whereas she is not). He may play the part externally but that does not mean that internally his suffering is not true and so while his demeanour and clothing may suggest “the actions that a man might play” when in mourning, for Hamlet the external indicators are “the trappings and the suits of woe” whereas his true mourning is hidden from view. Though the basic situation may be different, both Will and Hamlet contrast external appearances with internal emotions. This is the last of the quotations incorporated into the text and is the only one to reveal something solely about Will. The other quotations incorporated, while indicating Will the narrator’s preoccupation with Shakespeare and acceptance of the connection Sonny has established between them, are all related to Sonny, the onetime lover of Shakespeare.

Will’s Textual Use of Shakespeare

When, at the novel’s conclusion, Will is revealed to be the narrator of the novel, a number of questions are raised, but one, of particular importance in terms of the novel’s engagement with Shakespeare, is addressed. The disembodied quotations which have been found throughout the narrative must be retrospectively understood as Will’s commentaries on the events in the novel, couched in terms of Shakespeare’s texts. The quotations which Will selects, and the parts of the story in which he chooses to use them, are of equal importance. Each quotation is taken either from one of Shakespeare’s tragedies (*King Lear*, *Othello*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*) or from the sonnets and is inserted into the narrative during a time of social or familial distress. The emphasis on the tragedies is both a commentary on the social environment in which Will is writing and an indication of his primary concerns as a writer. The use of quotations from the sonnets also provides insights into the inspiration behind Will’s writing. In the sonnets there is a preoccupation with immortality through art (specifically literature) questions of identity and, most obviously, various expressions of love; a variety of which are present within the novel.¹² The sonnets from which Will quotes are all

¹²The questions of identity referred to here are questions concerning the nature of identity within the sonnets. For a full discussion on the identity of the addressee, often assumed to be the Mr W. H. referred to in the dedication, see Dymphna Callaghan’s *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*.

drawn from the part of Shakespeare's sonnet sequence which most critics consider to be addressed to the young man (as opposed to the later sonnets which are all addressed to the dark lady).

The novel begins with an explanation of how Will came to discover his father's affair. While pretending to be studying, he attends a movie instead and bumps into his father and Hannah. It is interesting that Will chooses this as the point of departure for his narrative. The narrative itself covers time periods both before and after this event but his discovery is singled out as the foundation for the whole novel. His selection provides the reader with two insights: Will feels that his father's affair is central to the story he wishes to tell concerning the dissolution of his familial structure and he is preoccupied with the nature of his father's affair with a white woman. Both of these aspects are raised at different stages throughout the narrative but Will is clearly disturbed not only by his father's affair but that his affair is with a white woman. He constantly refers to Hannah's blonde hair and pink complexion describing her as Sonny's "pudding-faced blonde" (Gordimer 175). Sonny's preoccupation with Hannah's race is described by Will as an inevitability and he reflects on his own longings for blonde women:

Of course she is blonde. The wet dreams I have, a schoolboy who's never slept with a woman, are blonde. It's an infection brought to us by the laws that have decided what we are and what they are – the blonde ones. (Gordimer 14)

The "us" to which Will refers are coloured men who long for white women (the blonde ones) precisely because the law restricts such relationships. For Will, the laws which have decided that coloured men are lesser citizens and white women belong to a different, and superior, racial group have led to coloured men longing for that which is unattainable. The thoughts that Will has concerning white women are more revealing of his increased awareness of sexuality than of the reasons for Sonny's affair and illustrate how aware he is of the racial differences highlighted by the apartheid government. Will's interest in his father's affair borders on obsession as he tries to imagine Hannah and Sonny together but his repulsion at the deception of his mother far outweighs his interest. It is unclear whether Will is jealous of his father's affair with a white woman or repulsed by it but his loyalty to his mother is never questionable. His anger at his father's betrayal of his mother is partly attributed to the responsibility it shifts onto Will's shoulders. Will is with his mother when Baby attempts suicide, when Baby announces she is leaving for Lusaka, and when Aila herself is arrested.

Will's increased sexual awareness is central to his understanding of his father's affair and it also influences, to some extent, the quotations he chooses. As already indicated, he selects quotations from the earlier sequence of the sonnets but he also selects quotations from plays which address infidelity: *King Lear*, *Othello* and *Hamlet*. Not only are the sources for the quotations important but the points in the narrative in which Will inserts them are also suggestive of his style as a writer. The quotations are most often attributed to Sonny, almost as internal dialogue, although they are always part of Will's narrative rather than Sonny's. They are also always inspired by a personal tragedy with the first reference being to *King Lear* after Will learns of Baby's attempted suicide.

Will's Poor Tom to Sonny's Lear

Baby's attempted suicide occurs relatively late in the chronology of events when Sonny has gone away with Hannah to a "resort among orange blossoms near Rustenburg" (Gordimer 75). There is no warning that Baby is suffering from depression and when she slits her wrists she does so at a friend's house. Once Aila and Will learn of the attempt and Baby has been seen to by the doctor, Will finally realises that he has been unsuccessful in hiding his father's affair from his mother. When she asks "What can *we* do for her" (Gordimer 61, my emphasis), Will is forced to acknowledge that Aila knows she cannot depend on Sonny and must also know about his affair. Will also realises that Baby has known for some time and that her "deep unhappiness" (*ibid.*) stemmed from her knowledge of Sonny's affair. The culmination of all of this newly gained knowledge is the quoting of a single line from *King Lear*:

What could my mother have done for her.
 What could I, her own brother, have done for her.
 What a family he made of us.
Poor Tom's a-cold. (Gordimer 62, my emphasis)

Will likens the situation in which his father has placed his family to the situation in which Edgar finds himself when Gloucester has believed Edmund's deceptions concerning him. Will also suggests that he and Sonny are reminiscent of Poor Tom and Lear (in 3.4) in deceiving, or thinking they are deceiving, Aila about Sonny's affair with Hannah:

For I don't know how long we believed my mother didn't know. He and I. We were so clever; he made us such a good team, a comic team. What a buffoon he made of me, his son, backward stumbling along behind, aping his lies. Poor Tom to his Lear (I should have told

him that, sometime, it's the sort of sign he'd appreciate that my education hasn't been wasted). (Gordimer 57)

Will notes that Sonny never “told direct lies” (Gordimer 57) but relied on his political activism to support the half-truths he told Aila. Sonny keeps his affair private, the trip to the cinema at which Will sees them is a never repeated trip, and he goes to great lengths to hide his affair from Aila and Baby, always using political rallies or meetings as cover stories for visits to Hannah. Will also plays a part in the deception, again by omission. He never speaks of what he has seen at the cinema and, on one occasion, discards “the dried head of a sunflower,” which he assumes was left in his father's car by Hannah, before Aila can see it (Gordimer 58). Will believes himself complicit in the affair because of the silence he maintains about it. It is essential to note, however, that though Will accepts his complicity in deceiving Aila, he ultimately blames Sonny for the lack of communication within the family which resulted in Baby's suicide. Will notes: “What a family *he* made of us” (Gordimer 57, my emphasis). Will's willingness to follow Sonny's lead in deception results in Will's association of himself with Poor Tom and Sonny with King Lear. The comparison is important on two levels. Firstly, it illustrates Will's familiarity with Shakespeare's texts as Will notes “it's the sort of sign he'd appreciate that my education hasn't been wasted”. Secondly, Will's comparison of his own situation to a situation from a Shakespearean play suggests that he has internalised the text and applied it to his own personal experiences. Even in his disenchantment with his father he still meets his expectations by framing his response to a crisis in his own life in terms of a Shakespearean text.

Not only does the reference to Shakespeare illustrate a familiarity with the text but it is also key to the way Will sees himself and his father. In identifying with Tom/Edgar from *King Lear*, Will is removing himself from the central family of the play. He does this because, through Sonny's lies, he feels that he is an outsider in his own family. The isolation he feels is particularly strong in his relationship with his mother and, once he learns of the affair, he “didn't want to be in the room alone with her” (Gordimer 59). Will's separation from his family is highlighted during Baby's suicide as the realisation that both Baby and Aila were aware of the affair also leads him to an awareness that he has been cut off from them in his attempt to hide it. He blames his separation from his mother and sister on Sonny who, since the day at the cinema, had “told [Will] what to see and made clear what [he] was not to have seen” (Gordimer 58). Anyone familiar with *King Lear* will reason that if Will associates himself with Poor Tom/Edgar, he could easily draw parallels between Sonny and

Gloucester. Gloucester's infidelity is paramount in the play as it is because of his bastard son, Edmund, that tragedy befalls him. Edmund deceives Gloucester into believing that Edgar had planned to kill him and Edgar is forced to leave his father's house. The difficulties introduced into the relationship between father and son are a direct result of the father's infidelity, as is the case in *My Son's Story*. Another reason to introduce comparison with Gloucester are this character's thoughts on suicide: that it will "shake patiently [his] great affliction off" (4.5.36) which Will believes to be Baby's motivation as well: "it was just that she managed it [knowledge of the affair] differently" (Gordimer 61). Why, then, does Will compare his father to Lear rather than Gloucester? I would suggest that it is because Will's focus, at this point, is on the relationship between Sonny and Baby: the emphasis is on the relationship between father and daughter and this emphasis excludes Will from his own familial tragedy – he is Poor Tom watching Lear suffer because of his daughters, not Edgar watching Gloucester suffer because of his son. The comparison Will makes places Sonny in the position of a father who believes that he has rejected his only true daughter only to be betrayed by those he chose. It is, of course, vital to remember that it is Will who makes this comparison and not Sonny, which immediately increases the schism Will already feels between himself and his family because it places him in a privileged position – he thinks he knows enough about both Baby and Sonny to understand the full implications of her suicide.

The section of *King Lear* to which Will is referring occurs after Cordelia has been banished from court and after Goneril and Regan have challenged his right to a train of knights and expelled him from their houses. Lear is wandering through the heath lamenting his ill fortune and stumbles across Edgar, disguised as Poor Tom. It is here that the comparison Will makes takes form. Lear deceives himself into thinking that Tom suffers because: "his daughters brought him to this pass" (3.4.59) and Edgar does not correct him. The deception, Lear's deception of himself (that he is not to blame for his fate) and Tom's deception of Lear (in not telling him the true reason for his misfortune) results, for Will, in the image of Poor Tom stumbling along accepting Lear's lies. Will believes that his tacit acceptance of Sonny's affair has resulted in a similar image of two men, both in knowledge of the affair, stumbling along and deceiving themselves into believing that no one else is aware of the truth. This is the first instance of Will's usage of a quotation from a Shakespearean text and it provides valuable insights into Will, as retrospective narrator. Will seems to need to couch his experiences in terms of Shakespeare's texts as a way to distance himself from them. Even when considering his deception of Aila, he considers his actions in terms of Poor Tom and King Lear. Will may illustrate a familiarity with Shakespeare's texts

but his understanding of them seems adapted to suit the situation to which they are applied. In *King Lear*, Edgar maintains the mad disposition of Poor Tom in order to survive (were he to reveal himself Gloucester would have him killed) and as part of his own plans for reconciliation with Gloucester, not because he wishes to encourage Lear's fantasy. In Will's determination to read Edgar/Poor Tom as accepting of Lear's lies, he is, in many ways, misreading the play in order to make it relevant to his own situation and Will's interpretation of this character is one which ignores his motivations. It is not only when discussing his own experiences that he makes use of quotations. He also uses them as part of Sonny's internal dialogue, which is entirely speculative, to come to grips with key events in his father's political downfall.

Sonny's disembodied quotations at times of distress

The next three quotations selected by Will are all italicised and are used in relation to Sonny's sudden removal from a position of power within his political party. The use of italics highlights that these lines are not part of the larger narrative and are instead thoughts on the situation in which Sonny finds himself. Although I will be attributing these quotations to Sonny throughout this section, as they form part of the narrative and are not asides made by Will as narrator, it is necessary to be aware of the complications they present. As writer and narrator, Will has clearly chosen to insert these quotations and in that regard they are Will's selection rather than Sonny's. This is complicated by the knowledge that Sonny, as he exists in the narrative, is entirely Will's creation and so the quotations must be attributed to Sonny as the character created and portrayed by Will. In many instances, however, the quotations selected and the way in which it is used suggests as much about Will as narrator as it does about Sonny.

In the first of these uses of quotations, breakaway members of Sonny's political group approach him one night attempting to persuade him to align himself with them and when the rest of the party hear of this later they ask: "Why was he approached that night" (Gordimer 183). His response is to seek solace from Hannah who, he comes to believe, is the reason he was approached initially. Following a brief discussion of what has transpired, Sonny decides to spend the rest of the night with Hannah at her cottage but he struggles to sleep as he plans his actions for the rest of day:

And then he had to get dressed and go; to put in an appearance for his son, at breakfast, to prepare himself with some rest for the decisions of another day. If he could get to sleep; *But*

then begins a journey in my head, to work my mind. The old consolation of fine words becomes a taunt. (Gordimer 183)

The quotation is taken from Shakespeare's Sonnet 27 and it is the connection with Shakespeare that explains the sentence which follows the quotation. Where the lines from Shakespeare were once a "consolation," reassuring Sonny of his familiarity with Shakespeare's "fine words," those words have now taken a literal form in his situation and though he needs to rest, in order to have clarity for the decisions he must make, he is unable to because his mind keeps on wandering. There is a further reason why these specific words should now become "a taunt" and this is found when considering the sonnet from which they are taken. In its original context, the sonnet is an expression of love:

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired;
But then begins a journey in my head
To work my mind, when body's work's expired:
For then my thoughts – from far where I abide –
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see:
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
Lo! thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee, and for myself, no quiet find. (Shakespeare 1932)

The speaker is reflecting on his inability to rest after a physical journey because thoughts of his beloved keep him awake. The image of the beloved is of a jewel which lights up the darkness and makes the night beautiful. Thus, during the day the speaker is tired by physical activity but by night he cannot rest because his mind is actively thinking of his beloved. The imagery used in this sonnet is similar to imagery used in the others sonnets: the image of a journey is often used, as is the image of the beloved making darkness light. Essentially, within the sonnet sequence, Sonnet 27 is both a declaration of love and a reflection on the way love leads to a sense of disembodiment – body and mind are separate. The focus is thus on love and the experiences of a lover.

In *My Son's Story*, however, the sonnet performs an entirely new function. What Sonny had read as "fine words" expressing love and its constancy are now indicative of his

political dilemma. The journey on which his mind embarks is not one which considers the beauty of his beloved but rather one which highlights that he has now fallen from grace among his comrades and it is fuelled not by desire but by “a state of high tension from talk and exhaustion” (Gordimer 182). A strong indication that the quotation is being used differently (as distinct from its place within the sonnet) is its disembodied nature: reference is not made to the whole sonnet, nor is it quoted in full. Instead, a single line with almost universal application is used. This suggests that Sonny, the once avid reader of Shakespeare, can now only recall quotations from Shakespeare which bear direct relevance to his situation. He does not contextualize the quotations nor does he consider their meaning. Sonny’s ability to only recall disembodied snatches of Shakespearean texts, especially when under stress, is also clear in his use of quotations from a variety of texts. (As it is Will who is narrator, it is possible that he inserts the quotation to reveal this to the reader but its insertion could also reveal that it is Will who does not contextualise the quotation he has used, in much the same way as he misinterprets Poor Tom and Lear. Thus the effect of the use of Shakespearean quotations introduces an unresolvable instability into the experience of reading both characters and their motivations).

The next quotation that Will attributes to his father’s feelings concerning his imminent political downfall is taken from *Macbeth*:

Not all the perfumes of Arabia.

Why him?

The question came back again and again, acid burning in Sonny’s breast. It was not quite the same question. New, different now. Not as if he were to have been the only one [...] But the suspicion, that had had to be dispelled by a show of leadership, had been set in circulation against him alone. Why him? [...] What shadow had been cast, from where? [...]

Hannah. They knew about Hannah. They knew what had been going on a long time, now, since prison – they were men, some of them lovers of women – which means they took their chances when these presented themselves. (Gordimer 188)

This quotation (from 5.1.43) is the only quotation from *Macbeth* in the novel and though the themes of ambition and the destruction of the family are present in both, the solitariness of this quotation suggests that it is this particular section of the play, Lady Macbeth’s sleepwalking mutterings, which captures, for Will, Sonny’s predicament. At this point in the play Lady Macbeth, who has murdered Duncan and whose “heart is sorely charged” (5.1.44), is trying to wash Duncan’s blood from her hands while sleepwalking. In her dream-like state she believes she cannot clean her hands and laments: “Here’s the smell of blood still. All the

perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand” (5.1. 42–43). Her speech reveals her crime to the doctor and the gentlewoman attending her and illustrates her horror and remorse at her actions. The selection of this quotation at the point where Sonny is speculating as to why he was approached by the “disaffected [...] men who came to see him one night when he was alone” (Gordimer 179) who implied strongly that he has erred in some way – “not such clean hands, after all” (Gordimer 184) – indicates that he believes that their visit has now tainted his reputation beyond repair. Again, the use of a single line from the play suggests that Sonny is clutching at the first line he can recall which has relevance to his situation and the thought process which follows, the series of questions he asks as to why he was approached, leads to his realisation that the taint that cannot be washed off his hands is his relationship with Hannah. The reason that the affair is of political importance to the rest of his political group is partly because of Hannah’s role as a member of another political organisation and partly because it suggests that he is not the upstanding citizen, husband and father that he tried to portray himself as being. Hannah may be involved in the political struggle and is “one of themselves, in a way” (Gordimer 189) but it is only in a way as she is “not directly in the movement, certainly not acceptable as party to deliberations, decisions and tactics, and therefore not – most important – subject to discipline” (*ibid.*). In sharing so much of his involvement in the struggle with Hannah, Sonny has allowed her access to information that should have remained private. He has also, without the approval of the party, assisted her in another aspect of the political struggle. While Hannah was in Lesotho, Sonny “fed and guarded” another political activist: “the man she sent with an intimate password he couldn’t refuse to acknowledge” (Gordimer 189). More than providing Hannah with privileged information, the affair also suggests that Sonny “lived in intricate balance an apparently permanent double life” (Gordimer 189) and so the disaffected members felt his deception could also assist them:

So why not a triple life? If a man of his old and proven integrity could withhold information from the movement to which total dedication was due, loyalty was the letter of faith, he also might be vulnerable – open like a wound – to disaffection. (Gordimer 190)

Sonny’s affair with Hannah, particularly its political aspect which leads Sonny to share privileged information with her and act without the approval of his party, has tainted him and, like Lady Macbeth, he will never be free from the taint of his betrayal. Whether or not Sonny believes he has betrayed his comrades is unclear and when his ruminations on why he was approached result in the recollection of another quotation, he quickly dispenses with

the idea that these well known quotations serve a purpose in really articulating his predicament:

Better to be vile than vile esteemed, when not to be receives reproach of being.

He hated to have coming up at him these tags from an old habit of pedantry; useless, useless to him. In a schoolteacher's safe small life, aphorisms summed up so pleasingly dangers that were never going to have to be lived. There is no elegance in the actuality – the distress of calumny and self-betrayal, difficult to disentangle. (Gordimer 190)

For Sonny, the quotations which come to mind as he comes to grips with his situation are a hindrance to his progression because they suggest an “elegance” which his ambiguous and real-life predicament cannot provide. These “tags” are, at this stage of the narrative, a residue from his life prior to political involvement. When he was still reading Shakespeare's works for enjoyment, he could easily relish a sense that Shakespeare's words were applicable to situations, but these were “dangers” he would never have to experience. His life was too small and safe for him to apply the experiences portrayed in literature and so he approached literature with certainty and smugness as something external to himself. Sonny may hate the recurrence of these quotations but it is helpful to consider why this quotation may come to mind at all. The last quotation is the opening line of Sonnet 121:

'Tis better to be vile than vile esteem'd,
When not to be receives reproach of being,
And the just pleasure lost which is so deem'd
Not by our feeling but by others' seeing:
For why should others false adulterate eyes
Give salutation to my sportive blood?
Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,
Which in their wills count bad what I think good?
No, I am that I am, and they that level
At my abuses reckon up their own:
I may be straight, though they themselves be bevel;
By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be shown;
Unless this general evil they maintain,
All men are bad, and in their badness reign. (Shakespeare 1964)

In the sonnet the speaker is suggesting that people will always esteem others to be vile and so it is better to be vile than for others to accuse you of being so, as it is part of human nature. That Sonny is reminded of this sonnet, and particularly the opening line, indicates that he believes himself to be wrongly persecuted within his political community. Despite the ease

with which Sonny reaches for these quotations, they are, on reflection, quotations that remind him of his simpler days. He does not consider how their respective contexts may contribute to their meaning and eventually disregards them altogether as “useless to him”. (It is important to remember here, however, that it is Sonny the character as created by Will who makes this value-judgement and it may be that it is actually Will who believes Shakespeare serves little purpose in Sonny’s political life.) The last quotation Sonny uses does serve him in one respect, as he is only vile esteemed and not truly vile, he can be proven to be innocent after all and, following an investigation into the whole affair, Sonny “was reinstated” into the political group because “leadership held its hand over him” (Gordimer 190). Once Sonny has regained his place within the political community, the quotations which had come to mind, almost as a crutch to remind him of simpler times when such quotations were useful, no longer serve any function. It is only during the next tragedy, Aila’s arrest that he returns to the comfort of the quotations.

Despite Sonny’s fear that his period of political disgrace was a result of his relationship with Hannah, Sonny does not regret his relationship with her until Aila is arrested for possession of illegal firearms following a search of their house. In the course of the chronology of events Aila’s arrest follows sometime after the disaffected men approach Sonny and so his regret is related only to Aila’s arrest and not to his political disgrace. Following Aila’s arrest Sonny is forced to acknowledge that “Baby and that husband he had never seen had somehow recruited a woman like Aila, poor Aila of all people, exposed her to danger, *used* Aila – and all behind his back” (Gordimer 224). Furthermore, they had been able to recruit her because he had been too involved with Hannah to notice that Aila had changed. Sonny’s relationship with Hannah, which enjoyed open and frank discussion, resulted in his obliviousness to Aila’s own political activity and so, ironically, he cannot speak frankly to Hannah about Aila:

He had let it happen, not seen it, not been told (he sometimes didn’t believe the boy hadn’t known, didn’t know) because of the woman in his arms. She knew that and so it could not be talked about. It was something neither could have foreseen could ever happen, she with her romantic respect for his family, he with his confidence that his capacity for living fully, gained through her, never tapped in the shabby insignificance of a small-town ghetto across the veld, made him equal to everything his birth, country and temperament demanded – dedication to liberation, maintenance of family, private passion. She was the only chance. The source of ecstasy and hubris. She still was, when she made love to him. Aila was in prison, this woman was going away because the common good outside the self required this [...] – I’ll be able to come back sometimes. – Oh thou weed.

*Oh thou weed: who art so lovely faire, and smells't so sweet that the sense aches at thee,
Would thou hads't never been born.* (Gordimer 224)

The above extract reveals a number of things about Sonny. Firstly, he blames himself for Aila's predicament as he feels he should have noticed that she was involved in illegal activities. Secondly, he feels he cannot talk to Hannah, who has become confidante as well as lover, about Aila because she is implicit in the breakdown of communication between Sonny and Aila. Lastly, Sonny's love for Hannah is now stained with the knowledge that their affair enabled Aila's political activity and resulted in her arrest. It is this last realisation that leads to Sonny to quote from *Othello*, a play dealing extensively with adultery and the suspicion of adultery. The line he selects is taken from the dialogue between Desdemona and Othello during which he accuses her of adultery:

Desdemona: I hope my noble lord esteems me honest
Othello: O, ay – as summer flies are in the shambles,
That quicken even with blowing. O thou weed,
Who art so lovely fair, and smell'st so sweet,
That the sense aches at thee – would thou hads't ne'er been born!
(4.2.67–71)

Othello, in his rage at Desdemona, compares her to a weed with the qualities of a flower. She is a weed, and therefore harmful, but remains “so lovely faire” and “smells't so sweet” that he still loves her and longs for her. This dual nature – externally beautiful but (apparently) internally tainted, torments Othello so much that he wishes she had never been born. Similarly, Sonny comes to realise that Hannah also has a dual nature – she is “the source of ecstasy” but also takes him away from his family – and that, in Aila's arrest, he suffers the consequences of aligning himself with her when he should have been with his family. The character associations Sonny inadvertently makes in using this quotation, himself as Othello who regrets his affair with Hannah as Desdemona, do not work and so, again, it is clear that Sonny, as portrayed by Will, recalls only a single line of the play which is applicable to his situation. Shortly after Aila is released on bail, Hannah leaves for her new position in Addis Ababa and is removed from the narrative. With Hannah's departure Sonny is no longer able to share the blame for his ignorance concerning Aila's political involvement with Hannah and so he selects another scapegoat: Baby.

Once Aila has returned home on bail and is preparing her defence, Sonny is curious as to her reasons for becoming involved in the struggle, particularly as Sonny tells her: “if you wanted more, there's plenty to do here, we could have ... at least ... we could have discussed

it” (Gordimer 240). He cannot accept Aila’s gentle insistence that she became involved because she “understood” and believes that Baby has used Aila:

–What did you understand that you didn’t understand before, here? How could Baby – blatantly! – use her mother like that? I can’t believe it ... I can’t forgive her. – With alarm he heard his voice hoarse – if the sphincter of tears failed, Aila would know they were not for her but because he was rejecting Baby. *His* daughter. (Gordimer 239)

Though Aila insists that Baby did not use her, that she came to understand the importance of the struggle when Baby explained that she and her husband take their baby everywhere with them because their house has been bombed before, Sonny cannot accept this explanation (Gordimer 240). While they converse about Baby’s complicity in Aila’s predicament, Sonny offers to discard Baby for Aila: “*I’ll cast out my daughter for you*, was passing between them in the pause. *See, I’ll do that for you*” (Gordimer 239). Even in this silent offer, Sonny is asserting his bond with Baby by highlighting the enormity of the sacrifice he is willing to make for Aila. In light of the narrative’s continual reference to Shakespeare, the sacrifice Sonny offers, to cast out his daughter, is reminiscent of King Lear’s banishment of Cordelia in *King Lear*. Like Lear, Sonny is afraid and embarrassed by his depth of emotion; alarmed when he hears his own voice grow “hoarse”. This connection, between the relationship of Lear and Cordelia and that of Sonny and Baby, is strengthened by Sonny’s internal monologue following Aila’s refusal to allow Will to testify.

During Aila’s trial, Will realises that some of the evidence has been fabricated and that “the RPG-7 launcher and rockets were not in the cache he saw unwrapped from the curtain off-cuts in the storeroom” (Gordimer 245). The discovery of false evidence provides a possible break-through in Aila’s case and he agrees to testify on her behalf. Aila, however, refuses to allow Will to testify because she feels that “It’s enough. It’s enough” (Gordimer 251). What Aila fears is that her whole family will be destroyed by anti-apartheid activism but Will and Sonny interpret her meaning differently. Will believes that Aila does not think he has anything to offer the struggle:

My father the famous Sonny, Baby the revolutionary exile, Aila the accomplice of Umkhonto we Sizwe: they are our family’s sacrifice for the people, there’s no need of me, who needs someone like me? (Gordimer 251)

Will’s rather self-pitying understanding is similar to Sonny’s. Sonny understands Aila to be saying that there is “enough for her to bear without having the boy involved in any way”

(*ibid.*) and sees her decision, to refuse Will's testimony, as a way of her protecting Will who was always accepted as her child, just as Baby was his:

Their boy; but it was tacitly accepted, way back, that Will was *her* child, and although Sonny had Lear-like lost his, his Baby – *Best thou had'st not been born, than not t'have pleased me better* – Aila still claimed a tender unspoken priority in matters concerning the boy. (Gordimer 252)

The quotation from *King Lear* is inserted almost as an aside to Sonny's reflection on how the children have always belonged to one parent: Will was Aila's child and Baby was his. In light of current developments, however, Sonny feels that he has lost his daughter in a way similar to King Lear. The quotation he calls to mind is from 1.1.223 of *King Lear* where Lear, enraged with Cordelia's response to his love test, refuses to inform her suitors, France and Burgundy, why she has been disowned. The selection of this quotation excludes Aila and Will (there is no mother and son dynamic in *King Lear*) and so the focus here is on the relationship between father and daughter at the point at which father rejects daughter. Sonny aligns himself with Lear whose favoured daughter, Cordelia, once "our joy, / Although the last, not the least in our dear love" (1.1.74–75) has now acted so abominably that he has banished her "without our grace, our love, our benison" (1.1.253). Sonny's reaction is almost exactly the same: Baby, who he was once "so proud of" (Gordimer 241), is the reason Aila has been arrested and so he rejects Baby because she involved Aila in the political struggle. The comparison is apt in many ways. Lear misunderstands Cordelia's declaration that she loves her father "according to [her] bond, not more or less" (1.1.82) and he only realises later that the "nothing, my lord" (1.1.78) she uses as a response to his love test is a refusal to engage with the domestic farce he is creating – in suggesting that love can be converted into material, and socio-political, inheritance. Sonny, though he never realises it himself, is guilty of the same mistake: it is because of his own involvement that Baby becomes involved in politics and is able to draw Aila into also being involved. He believes that she has betrayed him, in involving Aila, and in that betrayal and disobedience she has rejected the relationship they once had and so now he laments her birth which resulted in the deception.

Immediately after considering the division within the family, Will as Aila's son and Baby as his daughter, Sonny tries to imagine ways in which to close the divide that has developed between himself and Aila. Again, he is forced to acknowledge that he is also implicated in the creation of the division, and destruction of the family, through his

involvement with Hannah which led to his neglect of the family. It is while thinking of ways to bridge the divide that Sonny again recalls a single line from *King Lear*:

Sometimes he thought the way to do it was to tell her everything, to confess Hannah [...] But then that would have meant telling Aila, too, how he kept Will in the know [...] How would Aila forgive him that. What love could convince her after that.

But perhaps Aila could tell him why it all had to happen to him. If he confessed all, exposed all, kept nothing for himself, gave away forever all that belonged to him in his need of Hannah. Oh Hannah. Oh schoolmaster taunted by the tags of passion he didn't understand when he read them in the little son-of-sorrow house. Oh Hannah.

Beat at this gate that let thy folly in. (Gordimer 252)

Sonny does not renounce his role in activism (he never feels that it is his political activism which results in so much tragedy for his family and rightly so) but rather the “need of Hannah” (Gordimer 252) which resulted from his activism and allowed so many things in his home to go unnoticed. It is interesting that Sonny again names the quotations he uses “tags” which alerts the reader to similarities between this approach to them and his earlier assertion that the tags were useless. Here, Sonny is forced to acknowledge that the tags were not useless, he did not understand them adequately. While his life was still small, safe and removed from the sort of tragedies Shakespeare writes about, Sonny could not access the crucial information they contained about the devastation of self-deception. Literature thus provided guidance to Sonny but his context prevented him from adequately understanding the true meaning of what he was reading. A serious point about literature is being made here: literature can only be applied to the understanding of personal experience if the reader is alert to what is being read. Sonny does not, initially, read Shakespeare's works as exploring real possibilities for himself within human experience and so he cannot grasp the ways in which Shakespeare might serve him both politically and personally. It is not, therefore, that literature, particularly Shakespeare, has no place or applicability to lived experience, particularly in South Africa, but rather that applicability can only be created through the correct interpretation of the text.

The quotation in this extract (from 1.4.234) is Lear's response to Goneril's expulsion of him from her house. Lear realises that he has brought his troubles upon himself and that his rational mind (the gate) let in his folly (the division of his kingdom and the belief that his daughters would care for him) as it let his “dear judgment out” (1.4.235).¹³ Though Lear

¹³Many film versions show Lear beating his head as he says these lines.

doesn't fully acknowledge his role in his current predicament, it marks the beginning of self-realisation. Sonny, however, accepts his responsibility and the gate that let folly in, in his case, is his sexual desire. From this point in the narrative Sonny views his relationship with Hannah as the cause for all of the problems within his family and as a hindrance to his political development.

The last quotation Sonny calls to mind is found towards the end of the narrative. Aila has escaped prison and fled the country, without Sonny's knowledge so that "once her disappearance was discovered [...] he could not be proved to have facilitated his wife's escape" (Gordimer 262) and his only contact with his wife and daughter is limited to a birthday card (Gordimer 264) and "occasional phone calls [...] with Aila's voice, deceptively near in his ear; far away in countries she didn't name" (Gordimer 265). He has also lost the once privileged place he held among his comrades who believe that he could not serve them properly because "what had got into his head was obsession with a woman" and "there is no place for a second obsession in the life of a revolutionary" (Gordimer 263). The loss he feels, domestic and political, culminates in depression and the final quotation mentioned by Sonny:

In his depression, the absence of Sonny/Aila, his feelings somersaulted violently; he found himself thinking – insanely – that if the law had still forbidden him Hannah, if that Nazi law for the 'purity' of the white race that disgustingly conceived it had still been in force he would never have risked himself. For Hannah. Could not have. Because needing Hannah, taking the risk of going to prison for that white woman would have put at risk his only freedom, the only freedom of his kind, the freedom to go to prison again and again, if need be, for the struggle. Only for the struggle. Nothing else was worthwhile, recognized, nothing. That filthy law would have saved him

Out of the shot and danger of desire. (Gordimer 264)

During periods of depression Sonny thinks of his relationship with Hannah as a distraction to his greater purpose, the struggle. He feels that the Immorality Act, had it still been in place, would have prevented the affair because he would not have risked his only political freedom as a member of the disenfranchised coloured community – "the freedom to go to prison again and again, if need be, for the struggle". Sonny's thoughts here are extreme: believing that a law restricting his freedom of association, that he himself refers to as "filthy", would have saved him from the disgrace he now faces because of his affair with Hannah. They are also only fleeting as, almost immediately after they come to mind, he dispels them: "And then he feared himself, come to such perverse conjecture" (Gordimer 264). This last quotation used by Sonny is also the clearest indication that Sonny thinks of the quotations as single entities,

separate from their original use. In its original position in *Hamlet* the quotation forms part of Laertes's warning to Ophelia about Hamlet's intentions (in Act 1 Scene 3) in which he suggests that Hamlet's "will is not his own, / for he himself is subject to his birth" (1.3.17–18) and advises that, as Hamlet's intentions may not be pure, she "keep within the rear of [her] affection, / out of the shot and danger of desire" (1.3.34–35). Sonny never questions the sincerity of Hannah's love for him and so the single line he takes from *Hamlet* – out of the shot and danger of desire – functions solely as a quotation with relevance to his situation.

The quotations thus function in different ways within the text. At times they are a crutch and a reminder of simpler times for Sonny but they can also hint at a deeper meaning in the events transpiring. To attempt to encapsulate all of the quotations under a single purpose is impossible and draws attention away from their importance as pieces taken from another text. The use of single line quotations is representative of both Will's acceptance of his literary inheritance and a rejection of the confines of that inheritance – he can distort the meaning of Shakespeare if he desires. This ability to alter the context of a quotation also reveals the way in which Shakespeare can be applied to varied situations: a single line with its origin in a discussion between siblings (Laertes and Ophelia) during the early modern period can also be used by a coloured man referring to his own personal situation during apartheid South Africa. Also of importance is the way in which these quotations are introduced. The complication created by Will's dual nature as narrator and character is most evident in the quotations. The reader can never be certain if these quotations have been selected by Will as narrator or if they were selected by Sonny. Ultimately, however, the quotations were selected by Gordimer as author and her selection of these quotations makes an interesting suggestion about Shakespeare and his presence in South Africa. For Gordimer, Shakespeare seems to exist as these disembodied quotations. He is made relevant through the ease with which single lines from his texts can be incorporated into another narrative. Shakespeare's presence can thus be understood as a textual raw material: his work must be altered and reinterpreted in order to be of use to the South African author. The intertextual relationship these quotations introduce escapes definition and the quotations serve to illustrate that there is a relationship rather than to define or explain it.

Will, Shakespeare and Textual Legacies

How then does *My Son's Story* bring together a consideration of the family in Shakespeare and contemporary South African engagements with Shakespeare? A simple answer to this question is through the use of textual and thematic echoes: Will is, in many ways, a South

African Hamlet; the destruction of a contemporary South African family in *My Son's Story* is caused by the same parental fault as in *King Lear*, and the use of quotations from various of Shakespeare's works are made applicable to a contemporary South African setting. The role of writing and literature is also highlighted through the use of these quotations. Attributable to both Will as narrator and Sonny as portrayed in Will's narrative, the quotations speak to the larger concern of Shakespeare's function within South Africa. The quotations which are used all perform a new function in the context of the novel and, in many instances, one far removed from the original Shakespearean use. The necessity to place these quotations in a new context and to give them new meaning suggests that, according to Gordimer, Shakespeare can only be used in South African literature if his meaning is revised to be applicable to the experiences of South African characters. The South African author must therefore take control of Shakespeare and mould his texts into new entities with direct relevance to South African experiences.

Each of these aspects, however, is part of a larger and more complex intertextual relationship. Will is Hamlet, but he is also Sonny (because he has become what Sonny longed for him to become) and his own novel (because it is the only physical manifestation of his assumed identity as a writer). Will is also, in some ways, a South African Shakespeare. Just as Shakespeare presented fictional accounts of real problems faced in the early modern period, Will has written a fictional (because, by his own admittance, highly subjective) account of events in apartheid South Africa. Will uses not only Shakespeare's words to enrich his own work but also uses Shakespeare's method – using art to make a serious argument about the society in which he lives. That they make the same argument – that parents will attempt to deny their children autonomy during a time of political turmoil, thus allowing the socio-political realm to disrupt the domestic realm – is an indication of the universal themes they both seek to address.

Will may be Hamlet, Shakespeare, Sonny and his own novel but he is also father or son to these things. He is the son of Hamlet, Shakespeare and Sonny because he has been influenced by them. All of these relations involve some level of dominance (as opposed to acceptance), and in all of them, Will accepts the influence. He is also, however, the father to his novel because he has created it. Shakespeare dictates the identity of his literary creations through the manner in which he chooses to alter his source material. Similarly, Will enforces an identity on his novel, and thereby the history of his family's political engagement. The act of writing is thus the establishment of a parental, and dominant, relationship with the text being created. To move one final step further, a text may be the creation of a parent/writer

but, it is also 'parent' to future texts which make reference to it. The intertextual relationship is thus comparable to the relationship between parent and child – influential but not fully determinative. In this sense, *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, but also any other text which comes to mind while reading *My Son's Story*, are parent texts to *My Son's Story* and have assisted in the formulation of the identity of the text. *My Son's Story*, in its concerns with writing, inheritance, legacy and identity, is also an illustration of the similarities between the relationships of parents and children, and writers and their texts. The story it tells, however, is one of the destruction of the family to the detriment of the individual and in this regard it speaks of the same power dynamics between parent and child as those addressed in *Disgrace*.

Reclaiming Agency through the Daughter in *Disgrace* and *The Tempest*

Since its publication in 1999, J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* has elicited numerous and varied responses. The novel received the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1999 and four years later Coetzee was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. The attainment of these awards bears testament to the global appeal of the text and the themes of displacement it addresses. Due to its ongoing success, *Disgrace* still features on numerous 'must read' lists and a 2006 poll of "literary luminaries" by *The Observer* newspaper named it the "greatest novel of the last 25 years" of British, Irish or Commonwealth origin between 1980 and 2005. The early reception of the novel, however, was mixed. While "much of the novel's early reception, particularly in foreign reviews, was extremely positive" (van der Vlies 72) this was not the case within South Africa itself where "many South African reviewers, politicians and writers responded [...] negatively to the novel in the first year after its publication" (van der Vlies 71). Among the most famous of South African responses was Athol Fugard's comment in *The Sunday Independent* on 22 January 2000:

I haven't read it, and I'm sure the writing is excellent, [...] but I could not think of anything that would depress me more than this book by Coetzee – *Disgrace* – where we've got to accept the rape of a white woman as a gesture to all the evil we did in the past [...] That's a load of bloody bullshit. (qtd in Marais, "Very Morbid Phenomena" 32)

Fugard's response is rather scathing but captures the unease which many South African readers feel when reading the text. It also highlights the racial divide created among critics: where "white critics rejected with discomfort what they took as the novel's suggestion about white expectations, black critics objected to the novel's representation of black and coloured characters" (van der Vlies 77). The concerns of black and coloured critics, including Aggrey Klaaste (a veteran journalist with *The Sowetan*) and Jakes Gerwel (anti-apartheid activist and South African academic who served as Director-General of the Presidency when Nelson Mandela was in office), centred on the depiction of black men, particularly in rural South Africa, and the implications of the depiction of black men gang-raping a white woman. These concerns also led to political interest in *Disgrace* and the condemnation of the novel by the African National Congress (ANC). In 2000 the ANC and South Africa's then president, Thabo Mbeki, submitted *Disgrace* to the South African Human Rights Commission as part of an Investigation into Racism in the Media. It was argued that the novel exploited racist stereotypes and, in its portrayal of rural South Africa and particularly rape, presented a biased

view of the country (Jolly 149).¹⁴ The suggestion of racism, which the submission to Investigation into Racism in the Media strengthened, has not decreased the number of scholars who regularly engage with the novel. An enormous amount of literature exists on the text but among the multitude of publications concerning *Disgrace* (both those which engage with the text directly and those which reference it) only one critic has suggested a connection between *Disgrace* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Laurence Wright, *The Tempest*, and *Disgrace*

In his article "*Disgrace* as J. M. Coetzee's *Tempest*" Laurence Wright argues that *Disgrace* is "at once an echo, a revision and an updating" of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* ("Coetzee's *Tempest*" 303). Wright suggests that novel echoes *The Tempest*'s concern with exile, usurpation and making a place for oneself in an unfamiliar environment. In the transposition of these concerns into an environment in which the empowered Prospero is transformed into the disempowered Lurie, Wright argues that the novel revises the power dynamics in the play. Lastly, in its post-apartheid (and post-colonial) setting, the novel, he suggests, updates the coloniser and colonised concerns which *The Tempest* has been found to address in twentieth-century criticism. The way in which all of these engagements take place is, to Wright, subtle and without any of the obvious, deliberate intertextual references. The relationship between the texts is instead that they both address the same concerns in a similar way. Wright's approach is unique in that it suggests that it is possible to find 'sources' for a text even if the text itself makes no specific reference to a source text. While it may be possible to find connections between texts without the one specifically alluding to the other, it is necessary to question the benefits of making such a comparison. These questions are all related to the motivation for reading the texts together and the benefits to be attained from such readings. Does a reading of *Disgrace* as an engagement with *The Tempest* benefit either text? How is the reading experience affected by such an approach? Why should these two

¹⁴ The investigation was a result of a complaint by, primarily, the Black Lawyers Association (BLA), that the media continued to perpetuate racial stereotypes. The BLA laid their complaint with the South African Human Rights Commission which resulted in an investigation into racism in the media. Submissions were accepted from various bodies and were presented to a body, chaired by Barney Pityana. Among these submissions was the ANC's submission of *Disgrace* as proof of the general approach to black Africans: "J. M. Coetzee makes the point that, five years after our liberation, white South African society continues to believe in a particular stereotype of the African, which defines the latter as: immoral and amoral; savage; violent; disrespectful of private property; incapable of refinement through education; and, driven by hereditary dark, satanic impulses" ("ANC Submission"). Coetzee's novel was thus used as proof of racism rather than submitted as a racist text in itself. Ultimately, however, *Disgrace* was not even mentioned in the final report. The hearings found little evidence of racism within the media and the investigation was declared inconclusive (South African Human Rights Commission).

texts in particular be compared instead of other possible texts which also feature exile, displacement, and usurpation? Wright's argument seems to raise more questions (concerning both texts) than it answers. In order to address these questions adequately, however, it is first necessary to come fully to grips with the argument as presented.

Wright begins his argument by exploring the ways in which David Lurie can be compared to Prospero. Lurie as a professor of humanities, particularly English Literature, is, according to Wright, "working at a lineal derivative of those same 'liberal arts' which so engrossed Prospero that he lost control of his dukedom" ("Coetzee's *Tempest*" 303). There is, of course, a key difference: Prospero's studies were directed towards the occult and control over nature whereas Lurie's focus is purely literary. Nevertheless, according to Wright, Lurie's "quest for intellectual transcendence" can be regarded as a "pale descendent of Prospero's" especially when considering the role of western literature in "subduing the colonial populace of South Africa" ("Coetzee's *Tempest*" 303–304). For Wright, then, Prospero and Lurie are both involved in the pursuit of knowledge which can be used to gain control over people and nature. Having argued that Prospero and Lurie pursue similar end-goals, Wright extends the comparison to include the consequences of their intellectual pursuits: exile. Prospero's preoccupation with the liberal arts leads to his usurpation as he has neglected his social duties. Similarly, Lurie's preoccupation with Romantic literature has isolated him from South African society to such an extent that, for Wright, he has "abstracted himself from South Africa's hard-won democratic revolution" ("Coetzee's *Tempest*" 304). Both Lurie and Prospero are thus, in some respects, exiled from their communities because of their personal interests. They both, also, react to their exile in the same way. For Wright, Prospero "escapes to exile on a magical island", an island which alters depending on the perceiver ("Coetzee's *Tempest*" 304). David Lurie also, Wright suggests, escapes from his social exile to his daughter's small-holding in Salem. Having found comparisons between Lurie and Prospero at the start of each text, Wright then delves into similarities which run deeper than simple comparison.

At the heart of both texts, Wright argues, is an archetype from the sack of Troy: "betrayal from within" ("Coetzee's *Tempest*" 305). Wright transposes this archetype into personal tragedy and suggests that both Prospero and Lurie are betrayed by their own natures and actions. In Prospero's case the betrayal from within is a result of his obsession with personal knowledge to the detriment of his social duties. Wright compares Prospero's difficulty to that of "a Faust trapped in political office" ("Coetzee's *Tempest*" 305). Lurie's betrayal is also a flaw of his own character and manifests itself in what Wright refers to as

“his sexual attack on a student and his refusal to make even procedural, axiomatic amends for it” (*ibid.*). Lurie’s betrayal, though it manifests itself in his relations with one person, becomes a very public matter and so, like Prospero, his betrayal is actually a revolt against civilized conduct: his own social identity. Wright acknowledges that this analysis suggests that Lurie’s betrayal is simply a supplement to Prospero’s but argues that, in *Disgrace*, Coetzee is highlighting “the sexual problematic” which is central to *The Tempest* and is “the necessary source of our ‘disgrace’” (“Coetzee’s *Tempest*” 305).

Once Prospero is on the island, his dominion and omniscience seem absolute. He controls the island and its inhabitants and falters only once. Prospero’s crisis, as Wright calls it, is a result of being too heavily involved in the masque-like entertainment he has conjured to celebrate the betrothal of his daughter to Ferdinand. While entranced by the spectacle he has created, Prospero suddenly recalls the plot against his life by Caliban and his confederates. Wright compares this disruption to Dido’s disruption of Aeneas’s reverie in her temple. Both Caliban and Dido thus intrude into a profound moment of reflection: Aeneas is thinking of the tragedies that have befallen him and Prospero, in emphasising chastity, is reflecting on the dangers of sexuality. Caliban and Dido have more in common than simply being disruptive forces Wright argues: both threaten the projects of their respective counterparts. Caliban’s attempt, however, is unsuccessful and though Aeneas may well fall prey to Dido’s charms for some time, Wright suggests that the extent to which Prospero is successful in maintaining Miranda’s chastity is visible in the chaste game of chess she plays with Ferdinand (“Coetzee’s *Tempest*” 306). The Troy story and *The Tempest* may run parallel in this regard, according to Wright, but *Disgrace* illustrates the effect of someone unable to control the intrusion of sexual energies.

Wright lists all of the instances in *Disgrace* in which Lurie shows himself both unable and unwilling to deny himself sexual gratification. This unwillingness is present throughout the novel and even when Lurie has prostrated himself in front of Melanie’s mother and sister, he still reflects on his desire. There is, according to Wright, a contrast here between Lurie and Prospero. Where Prospero’s failure is one of duty, he has neglected his duty as ruler in favour of personal enlightenment, Lurie’s failure is both one of neglected duty (though Wright argues that Lurie is only partly responsible as the political transformation of the university was outside of his control) and one which is an inescapable part of human sexuality: he is losing his sexual powers. Wright suggests that the emphasis on Lurie’s failing sexuality, and his unwillingness to accept this failure, serves to highlight “*Disgrace*’s commitment to the libidinal drive as fundamental, unmanageable and inescapable” (“Coetzee’s *Tempest*” 307).

This emphasis also makes a point about *The Tempest*, according to Wright, *Disgrace* shows that “*contra* Prospero, Venus and Juno cannot be so easily separated”, sexuality is an inherent aspect of humanity and cannot be exiled.

Having fully explored the similarities he finds between the characters of Prospero and Lurie, Wright then turns to consider the women of the texts, Miranda and Lucy. Continuing to incorporate the Troy story into his consideration of *Disgrace* and *The Tempest*, Wright suggests that the Troy story illustrates the necessity for a ruler to protect his subjects. He sees the same concern in *The Tempest* with Miranda being a representation of western civilization. Prospero’s determination to protect Miranda’s chastity is also a determination to protect the civilised world from which he comes. Lucy, Wright argues, is Lurie’s Miranda and he suggests that her homosexuality “looks very much like an authorial device to free her from Miranda’s historical positioning” (“Coetzee’s *Tempest*” 310). The moment of interruption by a sexual force in both the Troy story and *The Tempest* is also present in *Disgrace* and, as in *The Tempest*, is a moment which affects the father though it concerns the daughter. Prospero’s masque is interrupted by the memory of Caliban who wanted to rape Miranda whereas Lurie’s attendance of Petrus’s party is interrupted by the presence of a man who did rape Lucy. The overall situation is similar but Wright acknowledges that the details are very different, particularly as Prospero’s disruption is private whereas Lurie’s, as with his own sexuality, occurs in a public arena and has public consequences, not only for Lurie and Lucy but also for Petrus.

If Lurie is a Prospero-figure and Lucy is a Miranda-figure then the logical assumption to be made is that Petrus is a Caliban-figure. Wright complicates this assumption, however, by suggesting that at the end of *Disgrace*, Petrus “is a taciturn figure who never betrays his intentions to his ‘audience’” (“Coetzee’s *Tempest*” 311). Petrus does begin the novel occupying a Caliban-like position. As a black South African, he has lived in an environment in which he has been subjugated. Like Caliban, Petrus shows Lurie and Lucy the qualities of their natural environment and performs the hard labour on the small-holding. Wright argues, however, that during the course of the novel, Petrus begins to occupy a far more dominant position. Towards the novel’s conclusion, it is Petrus who can offer Lucy Prospero-like protection and Lurie is forced to acknowledge that he must relinquish his control over Lucy and her sexuality. This alteration to the dynamic in *The Tempest*, Wright suggests, also alters the experience of exile. Prospero’s period of exile “serves to fulfil (and to test) his dream of a magical solution to the problem of civilization” (“Coetzee’s *Tempest*” 311) whereas Lurie’s “becomes a prolonged and devastating immersion in the tough realities of life beyond the

confines of colonial order” (“Coetzee’s *Tempest*” 312). Furthermore, where Prospero is successful in protecting Miranda from rape, Lurie is forced to accept that Lucy was raped and her best chance is to accept Petrus’s offer of marriage as protection. To Wright, the implication is that “this is in effect Miranda raped and then protected by Caliban” (“Coetzee’s *Tempest*” 312). Lurie has been completely defeated and must withdraw into the realm of the imagination, which is where his strength lies.

At the end of *The Tempest*, Wright argues, Prospero, having successfully paired Miranda with Ferdinand, can return to Milan having accepted and then relinquished Caliban. Lurie must make a similar decision, though he has not succeeded in protecting Lucy or in regaining his sexual prowess, and Wright suggests that Lurie’s obsession with his opera is a relinquishing of his physical existence in favour of his imaginative one. Finally, Wright suggests that *Disgrace* is a post-colonial updating of *The Tempest* but the relationship runs deeper than that. Both texts provide, to Wright, illustrations of what T. S. Eliot called ‘men without chests’:

the head (imagination and intellect) is intact, their heart’s affections capricious but sound (they are deeply devoted to their daughters), their genitals in working order; but they lack ‘magnanimity’ and the central human emotions of the chest, that passion which impels humans to act with courage and vision in the practical, political world in order to realize the values they profess. (“Coetzee’s *Tempest*” 314)

Wright concludes that *Disgrace* offers a post-colonial, post-apartheid South African perspective on the concerns that *The Tempest* raises. Both texts also have echoes of the Troy story and, most importantly, focus on a specific type of individual. Prospero and Lurie are both men who cannot relate sufficiently to the civilisation in which they belong. Lurie refuses to accept that he has acted unethically and used his position within the academic community to abuse Melanie and Prospero chooses to focus on the occult rather than his social duties as ruler of Milan. Wright’s focus, then, is on the characters themselves and in his assessment of the novel he joins other critics, such as Mike Marais, Gareth Cornwell and Derek Attridge, who examine Lurie’s *bildung* in the novel.

If we take Wright’s suggestion that the two texts address the same issues further, there are aspects concerning the relationship between father and daughter and the importance of reconciliation which can be considered in terms of *Disgrace* and *The Tempest* which may render a comparative reading of the two texts more beneficial. If one considers the relationship between Prospero and Miranda and that between Lurie and Lucy, it appears that in both instances the father requires the daughter to regain entry into society after a period of

exile. Furthermore, the necessity of reconciliation is evident in both texts and is of vital importance when considering *Disgrace* as a novel written during the period when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was active in South Africa. Both of these aspects will be addressed but first it is necessary to consider why Wright is determined to find affinities between *The Tempest* and *Disgrace*. Of the whole of Shakespeare's work, *The Tempest* is the text most often analysed by post-colonial scholars and South Africa, with its colonial history and period of racial dominance during apartheid, places itself within a post-colonial framework. The function of *The Tempest* as the post-colonial poster-child lends it to readings which align it with post-colonial texts and Wright's argument that *Disgrace* is a post-colonial version of *The Tempest* forms part of this tendency.

The Tempest: from early modern play to post-colonial text

The Tempest, possibly the last play written by Shakespeare alone is a "composition of realism and fantasy" (Palmer 15).¹⁵ In it, Shakespeare combines current events in the early modern period and aspects of fairytale. It is thus both "a topical play closely related to the discovery of the New World and to the literature of colonisation" and derived from "the world of folk-tale and make-believe, being a romantic story of a magician and his daughter the princess, with the inevitable happy ending" (Palmer 15). This complex dual nature has made the play difficult to engage with and "the history of *Tempest* criticism chiefly reveals the changes of emphasis upon this or that aspect of the play" (Palmer 16). Early engagements with the play focused on the imaginative aspect of the play and added new comedic elements to appeal to the audience. In the version by John Dryden and William Davenant (1667) new characters are introduced to add to the sexual tension and resulting comedy (Roach 61). Just as Miranda is paired with Ferdinand, their version introduces female equivalents for, among others, both Caliban and Ariel. The potential for comedy through the imaginative and magical aspects of the play remained the focus of engagement until the Romantics who found the imagination of the play to be a comment on human nature. Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Charles Lamb both advocated textual engagements with the play as they thought that stage productions were unsuccessful because they overused stage props and scenery whereas "the principle and only genuine excitement ought to come from within – from the moved and sympathetic imagination" (Coleridge 276). In his lectures on Shakespeare's play, Coleridge argues that *The Tempest* is "a specimen of purely romantic drama" and that the focus is on "a birth of the

¹⁵ Many scholars have suggested that *Henry VIII* was composed after *The Tempest* but it is considered to have been written in collaboration with other playwrights.

imagination” (Coleridge 276). The characters were mostly understood in simplistic terms: Prospero is a benign leader and loving father and “anything that might have been disagreeable to us in the magician, is reconciled and shaded in the humanity and natural feelings of the father” (Coleridge 277); Miranda is “simplicity and tenderness” (Coleridge 277). Caliban is an embodiment of natural man:

All earth, all condensed and gross in feelings and images; he has the dawns of understanding without reason or the moral sense, and in him, as in some brute animals, this advance to the intellectual faculties without the moral sense, is marked by the appearance of vice. (Coleridge 279)

William Hazlitt’s interpretation was similar but, crucially, he argued that Caliban was redeemed by his close affinity with the natural world and the imagination untainted by society. Caliban is:

the wildest and most abstracted of all Shakespeare’s characters, whose deformity whether of body or mind is redeemed by the power and truth of the imagination displayed in it. (Hazlitt 90)

The coarseness evident in Caliban is a “conventional coarseness, learnt from others” (Hazlitt 90) and when he conducts Stephano and Trinculo around the island he is illustrating the “superiority of natural capacity over greater knowledge and greater folly” (Hazlitt 91). Where Hazlitt departs from Romantic interpretations of *The Tempest* is in his understanding of Prospero. He agrees that Ariel contrasts with the other characters being “whatever is ethereal and refined” (Hazlitt 92) and that Miranda and Ferdinand represent the “very purity of love” (Hazlitt 94) but finds Prospero a more sinister character. Prospero, Hazlitt argues, is a dominant character and this is most evident in his involvement in the relationship between Miranda and Ferdinand where:

the pretended interference of Prospero with it heightens its interest, and is in character with the magician, whose sense of preternatural power makes him arbitrary, tetchy, and impatient of opposition. (Hazlitt 94)

For Hazlitt, then, Caliban represented the purity of the imagination in contrast to Prospero’s domineering relationship with the natural world.

Following on from the Romantics, the Victorians also considered the play a celebration of the abilities of the human imagination but they took the critique one step further and considered Prospero to be Shakespeare himself. The consensus was that

Prospero's decision to retire was symbolic of Shakespeare's own retirement (though this ignores the plays which Shakespeare wrote in collaboration with other playwrights after *The Tempest*). At the start of the twentieth century, critics became aware of the "discordant and disturbing elements" (Palmer 20) of the play and were less inclined to seek a unified understanding of the play as a representation of the abilities of humanity. The various ways in which the play has been approached since its creation bears testament to Stephen Orgel's suggestion that: "*The Tempest* is a text that looks different in different contexts, and it has been used to support radically differing claims about Shakespeare's allegiances" (Orgel, "Introduction" 11). Out of twentieth-century criticism arises an emphasis on the relationship between art and nature in the play (suggested by Frank Kermode) and, related to this, questions of colonisation. Engagements focusing on *The Tempest* as a colonial text subject to post-colonial criticism became so predominant in the latter half of the twentieth century that Howard Felperin, writing in 1990, could highlight the preoccupation thus:

What Shakespearean now would be oblivious or audacious enough to discuss *The Tempest* ... from any critical standpoint other than a historicist or feminist, or more specifically, a post-colonial position? Would anyone be so foolhardy as to concentrate on the so-called 'aesthetic dimension' of the play? To dote thus on such luggage would be to risk being demonized as 'idealist' or 'aestheticist' or 'essentialist' by a critical community increasingly determined to regard itself as 'materialist' and 'historicist'. (Felperin 171)

Shakespeare scholars are thus, according to Felperin, compelled to consider the play from a post-colonial standpoint, or at least from a position which analyses the power dynamics in the play. Though many readings of the text also highlight other "concerns of early Stuart England: absolutist rule, white magic, discovery of the New World, colonialism, imperialism, racism" (Kinney, "Revisiting" 280), these aspects are considered within the framework of post-colonial discourse. Two considerations in particular have led to the preoccupation with post-colonial engagements with *The Tempest*: the period of discovery during which it was written and the relationship between Prospero and Caliban in which Caliban is portrayed as the native other. The emphasis on the colonial elements has led to engagements with the play across the globe, particularly in Africa and the Caribbean, where the focus has been primarily on rewriting the colonial aspects. This contemporary emphasis on post-colonial readings has at its centre the premise that *The Tempest* is about a colonial encounter. This premise is not new to *Tempest* scholarship and the presentation of New World in the play has always attracted criticism.

The New World

Though the earliest engagements with the play illustrated an awareness of the close connections to be made between the expansion of England into the New World and Prospero's exile to a previously 'uninhabited' island, this aspect of the play received renewed attention from Geoffrey Bullough in 1975 and again by Kenneth Muir in 1977 who "both emphasised three printed pamphlets of voyages to the New World and one manuscript account not published until 1625, all of them concerned with an expedition shipwrecked in the Bermudas" (Kinney, "Revisiting" 280). As a result of the increased attention to the 'New World' aspect of the play, scholars attempted to establish which texts Shakespeare would have been familiar with. In response to these attempts, and because there will never be any certainty what Shakespeare read (though he certainly was familiar with the genre of travel writing), Charles Frey argues that the texts can indicate, to the contemporary reader, the type of literature concerning the New World that was available. He argues that:

Whether or not Shakespeare had read Eden's narrative of Magellan's voyage, such accounts can inform or illuminate *The Tempest* because they provide models of Renaissance experience in the New World ... We need to read the voyage literature, therefore, not necessarily to find out what Shakespeare read, but what Shakespeare and his audience together would have been likely to know – what they would have gathered from a variety of sources. (Frey 34)

According to Frey, therefore, a connection with New World literature in general can be assumed and so a familiarity with any literature written about the New World during the early modern period will provide a contemporary reader with enough insight into the attitudes towards exploration, and encounters with locals in foreign lands, to understand the exploratory aspect of the play.

In "Men of Inde: Renaissance Ethnography and *The Tempest*" (1994) William Hamlin highlights the instances in the play which encourage discussions centred on post-colonial concerns and the discovery of the new world. The first instances he discusses are remarks made by Stephano and Prospero which "reveal a complete obliviousness to the idea that indigenous non-Europeans might have a legitimate claim to lands upon which Europeans have stumbled" (Hamlin 18–19). Stephano tells Trinculo that "the King and all our company else being drown'd, / we will inherit here" (2.2.166–67) and Prospero narrates to Alonso how he landed upon the shore "to be the lord on't" (5.1.159–62). Other incidents which situate the play within post-colonial criticism, Hamlin argues, include:

the initial reciprocity of the relationship between Prospero and Caliban (1.2.332–38); the disagreement among Gonzalo, Adrian, Antonio, and Sebastian as to the nature of the island (1.2.35–58); Trinculo and Stephano’s talk of transporting Caliban to Europe in a get-rich-quick scheme (2.2.27–33, 2.2.76–78); Stephano’s use of liquor to inspire Caliban’s devotion (2.2.82–188); Ariel’s exclamation “Thou liest” as a veiled suggestion that he, in fact, is the rightful ruler of the island (3.2.45); Gonzalo’s articulation of entrenched European ignorance regarding the wondrousness and variety of the things of this world (3.3.42–49); Prospero’s excessive discomposure upon suddenly remembering Caliban’s feeble plot against his life (4.1.139–42); Sebastian and Antonio’s comments on buying and marketing Caliban (5.1.265–66); and, above all, the various ways in which Caliban is demonized and his status as a human being mystified or otherwise rendered uncertain. (Hamlin 19)

All of these aspects are concerned with ownership. Who owns the island? Who, if anyone but himself, ‘owns’ Caliban? To which landscape (Milan or the island) does Prospero belong? These questions are so pertinent because questions of ownership are of vital importance when colonising already inhabited lands. During colonisation, native peoples were seen as property of the coloniser and put to work in their service, just as Caliban becomes Prospero’s slave. A large part of the question of ownership during colonisation is thus centred on the relationship between coloniser and colonised. In the case of *The Tempest* the dynamic between coloniser and colonised manifests itself in the relationship between Prospero and Caliban.

Prospero and Caliban

Throughout the play, Prospero rules over all of the island and its inhabitants, particularly Ariel and Caliban, despite arriving on the island after both Caliban and Ariel. The reason Prospero has control over Ariel and Caliban, so he argues, is because he has done some service to them: he freed Ariel from a curse placed on him by Sycorax and he taught Caliban to speak. Both of these figures are thus, to Prospero’s mind, equally indebted to him. Only Caliban, however, has been focused on in post-colonial readings. Why should Caliban rather than Ariel have become representative of native residents? Is it the division between Ariel as ethereal and Caliban as earth-bound? Does Prospero’s domination over Caliban seem more reminiscent of colonial domination, especially in Caliban’s desire to overthrow Prospero? All of these aspects seem to contribute to the post-colonial interest in Caliban. He has come to represent all subjugated people rather than a particular ethnic group. In fact, considering the New World literatures out of which *The Tempest* emerged, it would be most likely that if Caliban represents any particular ethnic group it would be American Indians. The universalisation of Caliban is born testament to by the observation that “the first – and

perhaps last – unequivocal identification of Caliban as a portrayal of an American Indian came in Sidney Lee’s biography of Shakespeare in 1898” (Hulme and Sherman 172). As Edward Said has suggested, Caliban is most forceful when he represents all subjugated and oppressed people; all of those who have been portrayed as less human than the coloniser: “It is best when Caliban sees his own history as an aspect of *all* subjugated men and women, and comprehends the complex truth of his own social and historical situation” (Said 258). The depiction of Caliban as less human than Prospero dominates post-colonial discourse and Bernard Sheehan suggests that “by every account in the play, Caliban is something less than a man ... He is an American savage, clearly humanoid though not fully human” (Sheehan 87). Peter Hulme argues that Prospero’s declaration that the island was “not honor’d with / [...] / A human shape” (1.2.283–86) is a “grudging admittance of Caliban’s humanity” (Hulme 114) – his reading interprets the stress to be on “honor’d” and so Prospero is suggesting that the human shape (Caliban) that inhabited the island did not do it any service. Other critics have suggested that Caliban should instead be considered in terms of his relationship with Prospero alone. Among these is Brian Vickers who suggests that Caliban is “another challenge to the humanists’ naive belief that the gift of speech is inherently civilising” because he is “resistant to nurture, impervious to reason, a creature that can only be counted on to follow its own desires, however violent” (Vickers 244). Vickers’s argument is one which encourages a detailed reading of Caliban and insists on “the range and complexity of attributes that Shakespeare has given Caliban.” It also rejects the notion of Caliban as “the oppressed underdog” (Vickers 247). There may be many varied interpretations of Caliban but his character has been the most widely adapted in versions of *The Tempest* in the Caribbean and Africa.

The Colonies Re-interpret

Largely as a result of *The Tempest* being read as an allegory for the discovery of the New World, West Indian scholars seem to have a fascination with the text and with the character of Caliban. While *The Tempest* has been read universally as an “unmistakable embodiment of colonialist presumption” and a “foundational paradigm in the history of European colonialism” (Cartelli 89), within the Caribbean a large number of *Tempest* rewrites have emerged, many of which reverse the roles of Prospero, Caliban and Ariel by placing Prospero in a position of subservience to a dominant Caliban/Ariel figure. Wole Soyinka argues that, within these engagements, “the emendations are predictable; they are of the same political and historically conscious order as, for example, the reversal of the relationships which takes

place when the theme of Caliban and Ariel is handled by anyone from the colonial or slavery experience, most notably in the West Indies” (Soyinka 88). The Caribbean fascination with play began with a proposition by Octave Mannoni, an ethnopsychiatrist, in his work *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* (1956). Mannoni argued that *The Tempest* is about the difference between the “dependent personality of the native and the independent personality of the European” (Mannoni 104). Chantal Zabus explains Mannoni’s position as follows:

[he] construes Caliban’s relationship to Prospero and therefore between colonized and colonizer in Oedipal filial terms ... In this hypocoristic version of the relationship between colonizer and colonized, the Black man becomes a child mimicking the adult. In ethnopsychiatry therefore, the Calibanic figure of the colonized is shrunk to a helpless, dependent suckling child in need of parental authority. (Zabus 20)

Mannoni’s scholarship is now largely disregarded but his teaching at the time reached influential post-colonial writers and as a result “throughout the 1950s, *The Tempest* became a touchstone for anti-colonial struggles, as writers such as George Lamming, Edward Braithwaite and Aime Césaire sought to rewrite Caliban into history” (Desai IX). Mannoni had taught both Fanon and Césaire and their works are largely indebted to his teaching, though in a reactionary rather than complimentary way.

Caribbean interpretations of the play are numerous and varied. In *Tempests after Shakespeare*, Zabus details all of the works to come out of the Caribbean which make reference to *The Tempest* and the vast majority engage with the character of Caliban. Ashwin Desai also notes that “the Caribbean reading is, by definition, post-colonial – alert to the colonial dimensions of the play and suspicious of Prospero’s power over Caliban” (Desai IX) – a clear emphasis is placed on Caliban, his relationship with Prospero and the ways in which he can be empowered. One such text is Aime Césaire’s *A Tempest* (1969). In this French adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Césaire

explored the relationship between Prospero the colonizer and his colonial subjects, Caliban and Ariel. Caliban rebels outright, whereas Ariel attempts to appeal to Prospero’s moral conscience. Caliban is eventually crushed when he attempts to become his own master, but not before figuring out that Prospero’s domination and claims of superiority are based on lies. (Kelley xiv–xv)

Césaire’s play thus deliberately re-engages the subject matter of *The Tempest* but emphasises the relationship between Prospero, Ariel and Caliban as an example of the colonizer with his

subjects. The play problematizes the various forms of the relationship between colonizer and colonized but, in its conclusion, illustrates the difficulty of escaping the confines created by colonization.

A number of African writers have also considered *The Tempest* to be a starting point for literature addressing colonisation. Amongst others, Biodun Jeyifo has suggested that Wole Soyinka's *Dance of the Forest* engages with *The Tempest* (Jeyifo 62). Recently, Nigerian playwright Esiaba Irobi, in his play *Sycorax* (2011), has engaged with *The Tempest* and it is his contention that "far from validating Mannoni's 'myth of dependency' complex, Caliban in his contemporary incarnation would seek to destroy the archives of Western knowledge as the true source of the coloniser's sorcery and aspire to rewrite history" (Diala 32). The reason for all of these engagements, and the continued interest in *The Tempest* as a post-colonial text lies in its conclusion. Shakespeare's play does not provide any indication of the future of Caliban or Ariel: once Prospero is able to return to Milan, they no longer feature, except that Ariel is to be released from service by Prospero. The open-endedness of their conclusion continues to frustrate scholars especially because, as Rob Nixon points out, "the play lacks a sixth act" (Nixon 576). For Nixon, because there is no final indication of the fate of Caliban, it is impossible to fully engage with his character, or to fully appropriate it for post-colonial discourse. The limitation Nixon points to is related to another limitation which haunts all post-colonial readings: the desire to place characters within specially created identities which illustrate the ways in which they challenge or accept colonisation.

The Limitations of Post-Coloniality

The problem with post-colonial interpretations of the play is their determination to ascribe specific roles to certain characters. In its pre-conceived idea of coloniser and colonised, post-colonial engagement often distorts characters and events within texts in order to ensure that the text fits the post-colonial mould. Vickers illustrates the danger of this by highlighting the predicament Prospero actually faces while on the island:

Prospero's stay on the island, then, is enforced, not voluntary, and while he can use its natural resources to stay alive, all the normal features of the hated colonist – murdering the natives, stealing their land, exporting their goods, produce, and wealth for profit back to one's home country – are conspicuously lacking. If modern critics want to denounce colonialism they should do so by all means, but this is the wrong play. (Vickers 246)

Prospero has, as Vickers points out, been exiled to the island and though he manages it while inhabiting it, the ultimate goal is to return to Milan. In order to place Prospero within the

stereotype of usurping settler, however, it is necessary to ignore the circumstance by which he arrived on the island (by chance and as more of an immigrant than a colonist) and his desire to leave (which is always part of his greater plan). Vickers thus rejects a post-colonial reading of *The Tempest*, though not post-colonialism itself, because it calls for a very specific and limiting reading of the play. The problem is also discussed by Cartelli who suggests that:

One of the obvious ironies of the post-colonial fascination with *The Tempest* has been its acceptance of the play's limited cast of characters as representative of enduring colonial(ist) configurations, as if Shakespeare has immutably fixed the only available attitudes of master, servant, and rebel at a comparatively early and ill-defined moment in the imperial enterprise. (Cartelli 94)

Hamlin also acknowledges this difficulty:

colonialist readings tend to fail through narrowness of focus just as they succeed through acuity. And while their grounding in historical process and detail prompts fascinating interpretive speculations, moral and socio-political agendas often predetermine their conclusions. (Hamlin 20)

To read *The Tempest* solely from a post-colonial perspective is thus to limit the author's intentions while forcing a single interpretation on a multi-layered text. Laurence Wright's argument does not entirely fall into this trap but it does demand a very limited reading of *The Tempest*, one which focuses on Prospero's character. In order to encompass more of the play it is necessary, and possible, to also consider the play's conclusion and the relationship between Prospero and Miranda, a relationship which has been neglected in post-colonial engagements. First, however, let us consider the relationship between Lurie and Lucy which, if Wright's suggestion is accepted, is the equivalent of Miranda and Prospero.

Lurie and Lucy

The opening pages of the novel provide an outline of Lurie's sexual *modus operandi*. He has an arrangement with a prostitute, Soraya, which allows him complete control over their meetings. Lurie is thus determined to exercise control, both over his own sex life and Soraya's. Ignoring Soraya's agency, and the existence of a life outside of the one dictated by him, he believes that "they have been lucky, the two of them: he to have found her, *she to have found him*" (Coetzee 2, my emphasis). Once Lurie encounters Soraya with her children, however, he is forced to dispel with the fantasy in which she benefits emotionally from their arrangement. Michael McDunnah also argues that Lurie's actions are dominated by a need

for control but phrases this need in terms of subjectivity and objectivity. To McDunnah, Lurie's arrangement with Soraya is one in which he sees himself in the subjective position and Soraya in the objective position. In McDunnah's words, "it is significant that the first situation in which we encounter David Lurie is one of objectification" (McDunnah 19). If Soraya is the object in their relationship, then Lurie has control over her and her life. Having discovered that Soraya does have a life outside of their arrangement, Lurie is forced to place her in a subjective position which results in imagining himself in an objective position. Lurie cannot, however, accept being objectified by Soraya (even though this position of objectification is created by the binaries within which he functions) and so he is no longer able to maintain the façade he has created about their arrangement (McDunnah 20). It is perhaps already here in the narrative that Lurie begins to realise that just as he objectifies others in his relations with them, they too objectify him in their relations with him. Or, as McDunnah suggests, Lurie must acknowledge that "any hope of redemption will involve a willingness to surrender his subjective status" (McDunnah 21). Ultimately, Lurie must learn to look outside of the binary of subjective or objective positioning within a relationship if he is to have successful interactions with other people. Realising the necessity of redemption does not equate with seeking it, however, and both in his brief fling with Dawn (the department secretary) and his affair with Melanie, he refuses to surrender his subjectivity and objectifies both women in order to assert dominance over them. This is most evident in the affair with Melanie in which Lurie sees Melanie as student, lover and daughter – all positions over which he is dominant as professor, initiating lover and father. The relationship is problematic from the start and Lurie's dominance over Melanie culminates in Lurie raping her.¹⁶ The rape is Lurie's most extreme act of objectification as he views Melanie as nothing other than the woman with whom he wishes to have sex and will not heed her objection: "No, not now!" (Coetzee 25). Lurie may accept that his action was "undesired to the core" (*ibid.*) but, because he occupies the subjective position, he can claim that it was "not rape, not quite that" (*ibid.*). Lurie's relationships while still in Cape Town are thus indicative of his objectification of women. It is only in rural Salem, when he is forced by circumstance, that Lurie comes to consider another person, Lucy, outside of the role he has created for her.

The reason for Lurie's retreat to his daughter's farm, his inability to view himself in another's position, also leads to an initial inability to understand Lucy's way of life. Lurie

¹⁶ I am in agreement here with many critics, most notably Lucy Graham, who view Lurie's second sexual encounter with Melanie as rape.

and Lucy's relationship is one fraught with difficulties, particularly because of Lucy's insistence on independence. The first indication that Lucy values her independence and privacy is in her not telling Lurie that her partner, Helen, has been "back in Johannesburg since April" (Coetzee 60). Lucy's sexuality has not been hidden from her father but in failing to indicate that she is now single, Lucy has subtly suggested that her sexuality and relationships are a private matter to which she allows Lurie limited access. Lucy's determination to sustain the privacy of her sexuality, and thereby maintain control over her own life, is heightened by the rape.

Lucy's decisions following the attack have all raised numerous questions among critics. She decides not to report the rape, to remain on the farm with no additional protection and, as Lurie later discovers, to keep the child conceived during the rape, to tolerate the presence of one of her rapists, Pollux, and to 'marry' Petrus. All of these decisions can be captured by one question: how does Lucy view agency? Lurie feels that in refusing to report the rape Lucy is giving her rapists authority to the detriment of her own. Lurie's dominance of the narrative perspective denies the reader access to Lucy's motivations but it is clear that she believes that the rape is some sort of retribution and in order to keep her land, and her agency, she must allow the rape to remain a private affair. Lucy thus asserts her autonomy and agency by denying others the right to interpret or understand her experiences.

The tensions already existent between Lurie and Lucy (primarily resulting from their very different outlooks on life) are highlighted by the attack on the farm. Lurie's approach is an attempt to regain control over both the situation and Lucy. He repeatedly asks whether Lucy has seen a doctor (Coetzee 101, 102, 105), is horrified by her request that "You [David] tell what happened to you, I tell what happened to me" (Coetzee 99), and offers numerous alternatives to returning to the farm. For Lurie, the only way in which to deal with the attack is to reassert dominance over the only person he could still have some control over, Lucy. Her refusal to allow him access to her ordeal forces him to accept that, though he may try, he cannot deny Lucy agency, even if his intentions seem to be admirable. Perhaps Lurie's difficulty in relating to Lucy's situation is because he "can't imagine, in this life, not being Lucy's father" (Coetzee 162) but, in order to accept her autonomy, he must reject the parental (and therefore dominant) relationship he has with her. Following this episode, Lurie is forced to realise his own limitations and, as Sam Durrant suggests, Lurie must acknowledge that he does not "have it in him to be the woman" and so "he finds himself unable to imagine what his daughter went through at the hands of her rapists" (Durrant 119). In terms of Lurie's relationship with Lucy, the attack acts as a turning point. He is forced to accept his own

limitations in understanding Lucy's suffering and to acknowledge her right to come to grips with her ordeal in whichever manner she sees fit. Lucy's decision to remain silent about her rape does not make Lurie's attempt to allow her autonomy any easier, however.

Lucy's resolution to return to the farm and not report the rape is one of the more difficult aspects of the novel for any reader to understand and come to terms with. (This difficulty is captured by Athol Fugard's remarks quoted at the beginning of this chapter.) There have been numerous attempts to explain why Lucy makes the decisions she does but ultimately, her decision is one which she believes will provide her with the most control over her life. Gareth Cornwell argues that, in her silence, Lucy "seems to be insisting on the uniqueness, on the non-generalizability or transferability of her situation" (Cornwell 317). His argument suggests that Lucy's silence is an attempt to emphasise the uniqueness of her experience but it is helpful to also take this approach a step further. Not only does Lucy's silence stress that the experience is hers alone, it also removes her from the discourse of perpetrator and victim and allows her to see herself as an autonomous person rather than a victim controlled by the actions of her perpetrators. Silence thus becomes Lucy's strength and her assertion of autonomy. In refusing to allow Lurie to speak of what has happened to her, Lucy "refuses his attempts to claim the narrative power immediately insisting on the ownership of her own story" (McDunnah 30). Pamela Cooper also argues that Lucy's silence is her way of asserting control of not only her experience but also, the narrative of events. Cooper suggests that

Lucy's only recourse is to withhold the narrative of her experience of rape from the men, notably her father, who seek to know and to control its interpretation. By refusing to tell her story she preserves, even as she fills, the gap in the text through which the stories of Coetzee's women seem frustratingly to abscond. (Cooper 38)

My interpretation of Lucy's silence is not, however, accepted by all critics. Lucy herself, referring to rape, wonders if "*that* is the price one has to pay for staying on" (Coetzee 158). Using this quotation, Jane Poyner argues that in post-apartheid South Africa, Lucy sees rape as "a leveller of racial justice that can be traced back to land" (Poyner, "Truth" 159) and seems to accept that she has become a mere object to be transferred from one patriarchal society into another. Poyner explains the phenomenon as follows:

The white woman in the Southern African farm novel, overburdened with symbolism, is upheld as the guardian of a white national identity, including the 'purity' of the race. This

explains why Lucy and her father, in a context of black dispossession from the land, come to perceive her as a commodity in the patriarchal system of exchange. (Poyner, "Truth" 158)

This view, in which Lucy accepts her rape as just punishment for the injustices of apartheid and as "history speaking through them [...] a history of wrong" (Coetzee 156), does not account for Lucy's actions after the incident. She does not leave the whole farm to Petrus as a penance for the removal of lands by the apartheid government, nor does she offer to work for Petrus in the way he would have been expected to work for her. Instead, Lucy accepts that there are repercussions for the long history of injustices in South Africa and chooses to accept those repercussions within her own parameters: she can accept her rape as part of the history of violence and dominance within the country but will not report it as to do so would remove her agency. As Lucy reflects to Lurie, "what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business mine alone" (Coetzee 112). Lucy may understand her silence as an act of strength and an assertion of autonomy but Lurie sees it as an acceptance of her abuse.

For Lurie, Lucy's silence means that the rapists have narrative control and it is "not her story to spread but theirs: they are its owners" (Coetzee 115). His understanding of her silence is that it allows her rapists to take control of the narrative. What Lurie fails to understand is that, in remaining silent, Lucy is ensuring that the narrative remains hers and is not tainted by the interpretation of others. While Lurie may believe that Lucy has lost control of her story as the rapists spread it across the countryside, Lucy is actually moving her story into the private sphere. Poyner suggests that Lucy's desire to move her rape into the private sphere mirrors Lurie's desire to keep his affair with Melanie in the private sphere (Poyner, "Truth" 159). Lurie's awareness of this similarity, at this stage of the novel, is doubtful, however, especially as he never accepts that he rapes Melanie. The attack on the farm may lead Lucy to retract into the privacy of her thoughts but for Lurie, the attack has the opposite effect and he finally comes to understand the necessity for good relations between people and the consequences of negative relations.

Following Lucy's rape and insistence on returning to the farm, Lurie begins to conceptualise himself as part of the greater community. This sense of belonging is both positive and negative. A negative side-effect of belonging to a community is that he feels that "we live too close to Petrus" (Coetzee 127) and that "they ought to install bars [...] they ought to turn the farmhouse into a fortress" (Coetzee 113) in order to create some distance

between himself and Lucy and the dangers he associates with Petrus. It is important to note the use of plural pronouns which Michael McDunnah explains as follows:

Though the content of these thoughts reflects a desperate attempt to reclaim power and subjective authority, their expression reflects a move towards an *inclusive* subjectivity – suggesting, in fact, that he has formed a human connection, that the formerly isolated introvert now sees himself as part of a community. (McDunnah 31)

The community to which Lurie believes he belongs consists of Petrus and “his people” which includes at least one of Lucy’s rapists, but it also contains ‘positive’ elements. Through his interactions with the Shaws, and particularly Bev, Lurie is also forced to accept that Lucy is part of a community as an autonomous individual. The farm attack, despite its violence and brutality, forces Lurie to reconsider his role within society and to analyse his own instances of violence and subjugation.

Lurie now begins to understand the function men have played in the subjugation of women and is able to consider himself, as Farodia Rasood suggested at his tribunal earlier in the novel, as part of an historical framework in which men dominate women. This is largely because he has also been placed in a place of subservience, watching Lucy choose to accept that she must start again even if

[‘]it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity’.
‘Like a dog.’
‘Yes’, like a dog.’ (Coetzee 205)

Once Lurie accepts that Lucy has chosen her course and will not waiver from her decision, he is able to see her as a free subject with agency (as opposed to an object within the narrative of his life). When he goes to visit her as an uninvited guest he acknowledges that she is “not the person [he] knows” (Coetzee 160) and attempts constantly to view her as an individual. Once he interacts with her outside of the confines of a paternal relationship, they are able to have “a new footing, a new start” (*ibid.*). The suggestion is not that Lurie’s *bildung*, with regard to Lucy, is complete but rather that it is now able to begin.

The transformative power of the relationship between Lurie and Lucy on Lurie’s personal development is also highlighted in the film version of *Disgrace*, released in 2008 by Screen Australia.¹⁷ The film version is worth considering as it is a version of the text and can

¹⁷ It is interesting to note that this is the only instance of a J. M. Coetzee novel being adapted for film.

thus be considered an intertext. In the film, the storyline is framed by the relationship between David Lurie and his daughter Lucy. The film opens with a close-up of Lurie (John Malkovich) discussing his daughter with Soraya (a prostitute with whom he has a weekly meeting). The initial dialogue reveals that Lucy and Lurie do not have a particularly close relationship and that Lucy is a lesbian living on a farm. This scene is present in the novel which begins instead with an explanation of how Lurie has “solved the problem of sex” through his weekly arrangement with Soraya (Coetzee 1). At the end of the film, the focus is again on Lurie and Lucy as it ends with the penultimate scene of the novel: Lurie’s visit to Lucy (who is lightly pregnant) as a “visitor” with the hope of “a new footing, a new start” (Coetzee 218). In the novel, this episode is followed by Lurie’s sacrifice of the dog of which he has grown fond. Although the film’s director makes many other alterations to the story, this particular decision in fact alters the relationship between Lurie and Lucy. In foregrounding the relationship between father and daughter, the emphasis is placed on the progression of, and challenges to, that specific relationship. The film’s focus is thus more centred on Lurie and Lucy while the novel places emphasis on Lurie and his personal *bildung*.

It would be easy to read the penultimate scene of the novel as a positive reflection on the relationship between father and daughter. Lurie, in returning to the pastoral landscape has discovered his sympathetic imagination and “it appears, at least in the novel’s penultimate scene, that the aesthetic pleasures of the pastoral have not been completely erased” (Barnard 37). As Lurie approaches Lucy he is able to admire the beauty of his environment:

[t]here is a moment of utter stillness which he would wish prolonged for ever: the gentle sun, the stillness of mid-afternoon, bees busy in a field of flowers; and at the centre of the picture a young woman, *das ewig Weibliche*, lightly pregnant, in a straw sunhat. A scene ready-made for a Sargent or a Bonnard. City boys like him; but even city boys can recognize beauty when they see it, can have their breath taken away. (Coetzee 218)

To see Lucy’s pregnancy as a return to the land and the pastoral ideal, however, is “to some degree to accept her deeply troubling notion that the rape is the price that she has to pay in order to continue to live on the land” (Barnard 38). Rather, the penultimate scene suggests that Lurie is now able to understand his daughter’s agency and accept her individuality. It serves as a reflection on Lurie’s development and, when combined with the final scene, is an indication that he has begun to conceptualise the subjectivity of the other. Lurie’s

development is spurred on by his realisation that the society he inhabits has changed. Derek Attridge explains the crisis he undergoes as follows:

The disgrace into which Lurie feels himself to be sunk cannot be equated with the public disgrace his actions and words have produced: he never wholeheartedly regrets his seduction of Melanie, the memory of whom continues to stir flickers of desire, and he has no regrets at all about his behaviour before the committee. What he experiences is a deeper sense of being unfit for the times in which he lives. (Attridge 110)

In *Disgrace*, Lurie is out of place in society and must begin to understand the subjectivity of others in order to understand his own place in post-apartheid South Africa. He is only able to accept the agency of others when he is placed in a position of subservience by Lucy who refuses his attempts to control her narrative. It is essentially through Lucy that Lurie gains access back into the society that rejected him. More specifically, it is her assertion of the privacy of her sexuality, and her determination to maintain agency, that forces him to reflect on his own place, historically and socially, within a society dominated by the denial of others' agency. How, then, is it possible to align *Disgrace* with *The Tempest*? Prospero does not come to value Miranda's subjectivity or agency and though he releases Ariel, he does so because he no longer has a use for him. Wright's argument that Lurie is a Prospero figure can only be strengthened if it can bring into account the questions of autonomy and agency which are dominant in *Disgrace*. It is possible to do so, I suggest, by considering Prospero's relationship with Miranda and his final resolution to return to Milan.

Prospero and Miranda

In *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet* and *King Lear* as well as in *Hill of Fools* and *My Son's Story*, a social or political upheaval results in parents challenging the agency of their children and each of these texts ends tragically for both the parents and their children. *The Tempest*, however, breaks free of this mould and both Prospero and Miranda are provided with 'happy endings.' When considering Prospero as one of the many fathers in Shakespeare's different plays, it is easy to argue, as David Bevington does, that "Prospero in *The Tempest* is given a chance to do right what his predecessors – Polonius, Brabantio, Lear, Pericles, Cymbeline – have done imperfectly or not at all: be a loving father to the daughter he cherishes more than all the world and yet allow and encourage her to marry the young man of her choice" (Bevington 207). This argument, however, fails to take into account the setting of the play, on an island isolated from established society, and Prospero's manipulation of Miranda's affections. When considering the relationship between father and daughter on the island, what

initially appears to be a perfect relationship with mutual consideration and caring is transformed into an interrogation of the conventions of patriarchy which seems to exist even outside of constructed society. It would thus seem that the dominance of a parent over the will and autonomy of a child is inherent in the relationship between father and daughter.

When the play begins, Miranda is entirely dependent on Prospero. He has provided her with her education and has taken care of her welfare. The extent of this dependence is made apparent early on in the text both through Prospero's narration of events (which he has until this point hidden from Miranda) and with his insistence that Miranda "visit Caliban" (1.2.310) even though she objects: "'Tis a villain, sir, / I do not love to look on" (1.2.11–12). Though the relationship between Miranda and Prospero is almost entirely devoid of a discourse of possession or ownership, they are not of equal standing. This is evident when considering the language used when addressing one another. When addressing her father "Miranda uses the formal 'you' [in] contrast with Prospero's more familiar 'thou'" (Greenblatt 3057). The usage of formal address indicates that despite being removed from a patriarchal state, Miranda is still obedient to and reverent toward her father. Miranda's obedience and, in some regards, subservience are not as troubling as Prospero's utilisation of these qualities. He has always acted in a way which he believes to be beneficial to himself and even Miranda's "home schooling will be crucial to Prospero's plan to marry his daughter to Ferdinand and make her queen of Naples" (De Sousa 451). It is through her education that Prospero has moulded Miranda into the perfect companion for Ferdinand: she has been provided with an education suited to life in court rather than one suited to a life of exile on the island. The preference of a courtly as opposed to natural education is evident in Miranda's ability to play chess but dependence on Caliban for labour. With regard to Miranda's marriage Prospero acts in both his own political interests, in pairing Miranda with Ferdinand, and Miranda's emotional interests, by pairing her with a wealthy and kind man who will continue to treat her well as Prospero has done on the island. Prospero cannot be certain of Ferdinand's affections, however, and it is only his status of which Prospero can be certain and which will ultimately serve him.

Despite Prospero's declarations to the contrary before Miranda, it is clear to the audience, and to Ariel, that he is pleased by the match. While Prospero accepts the first man to ask for his daughter's hand, there is an added dimension in the interplay between what Prospero shows the audience and what he reveals to Ferdinand and Miranda concerning his feelings on Ferdinand as suitor. (It is important to remember here that Ferdinand's arrival was contrived by Prospero who created the tempest which forced Ferdinand to shore.) Rather than

making a direct request of Miranda, Prospero steers her in the direction of his choice and so her obedience can be seen as passive rather than active. Miranda's passive obedience is vital to the furthering of Prospero's plans and though her role in the play is minimal, her "sexuality, her chastity and her fertility, are absolutely crucial to Prospero's machinations to reclaim his dukedom and to achieve, through his daughter's marriage, 'a counter-usurpation' of Naples by Milan" (A. Thompson 173). As Geraldo de Sousa highlights: "this alliance will help defeat Antonio's dynastic aspirations" (de Sousa 453). Miranda can be interpreted as a pawn in Prospero's greater plan to restore himself to his dukedom but, crucially, her "importance does not [...] lead to her empowerment" (Barker & Kamps 10). Miranda can thus be seen as an obedient daughter, but not one whose obedience serves to empower because Prospero denies her any tangible agency. Despite this, there is definite progress made on the part of Prospero as a father in a Shakespearean play, as observed by Bevington when he highlights that

The marrying of the daughter to the younger man is not always an easy thing emotionally for the father. Prospero in *The Tempest* achieves this difficult life-transition gracefully, but in a way that suggests the conscious resolution of a problem that the dramatist has been mulling over for some time. (Bevington 192)

Barbara Sebek also suggests that, when compared to the other father in the play, Alonso, Prospero's actions are more easily explained within an aristocratic framework:

Unlike Alonso, who forced his daughter into an undesired match, Prospero instead *produces*, while also overseeing, his daughter's desires. Even as it 'objectifies' Miranda, then, Prospero's project points to the necessity of construing aristocratic daughters as active, desiring subjects. (Sebek 471)

There may be some evidence of Prospero allowing his daughter more autonomy than many of Shakespeare's other father characters but one cannot help but wonder as to the authenticity of Prospero's concern for Miranda. Even Harold Bloom begrudgingly admits that "no audience has ever liked Prospero [...], Miranda loves him, but then he has been both benign mother and stern father to his daughter" (Bloom 669). Prospero may appear to be a more caring and considerate parent but his involvement in magic and his ability, and tendency, to use his powers to his own purposes, leave a reader ill at ease as regards his true intentions. Regardless of Prospero being the only father in Shakespeare's plays to consistently be concerned with his daughter's well-being, future and happiness, his concern for her is

outweighed by his manipulation of her affections and, in withholding knowledge, his refusal to allow her any agency. Ultimately, as Laura Donaldson argues,

Miranda – the Anglo-European daughter – offers us a feminine trope of colonialism for her textual and psychological selflessness in *The Tempest* exposes the particular oppression of women under the rule of their biological and cultural fathers. (Donaldson 68)

At the end of *The Tempest* Prospero has, to some extent ensured that his daughter will have a happy marriage. Though the future of Miranda is a serious concern for Prospero, his usurpation is an even greater one and supersedes his concern for her.

The Tempest concludes not only with a neat resolution to the problem of Prospero's usurpation with which it began and with Miranda's impending nuptials but also with the restitution of Prospero to his position as Duke of Milan. Before he can return, however, Prospero declares to Alonso that he must speak of his troubles since arriving on the island and can only then retire to Milan:

Sir I invite your Highness and your train
To my poor cell, where you shall take your rest
For this one night; which, part of it, I'll waste
With such discourse as, I not doubt, shall make it
Go quick away – the story of my life,
And the particular accidents gone by
Since I came to this isle. And in the morn
I'll bring you to your ship, and so to Naples,
Where I have hope to see the nuptial
Of these our dear-belov'd solemnized,
And thence retire me to my Milan, where
Every third thought shall be my grave. (5.1.300–311)

It is possible to argue that Prospero's desire to speak of his time on the island is a necessary part of his coming to terms with his usurpation and return to Milan. This speech in particular, together with the rest of the play's conclusion, could be used to connect the TRC, *Disgrace*, and *The Tempest* as it suggests that confession (either as victim or perpetrator) is a necessary part of the healing process and can be followed by reconciliation. It is important, however, not to overlook what makes Prospero's return to Milan possible: Miranda's upcoming marriage. It is through Miranda that Prospero is reconciled to his former life and it is their relationship that also strengthens a reading of *Disgrace* which considers the two texts simultaneously.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Before considering the role of reconciliation in *Disgrace*, and particularly the way it enhances a reading of *Disgrace* as an engagement with *The Tempest*, it is necessary to provide a brief analysis of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC was established as a result of the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, No. 34 of 1995 and was primarily based in Cape Town. The commission's mandate included victims and perpetrators and involved hearing and recording accounts of human rights violations. It was also enabled to grant amnesty. In some cases, reparation or rehabilitation was requested of perpetrators and though "the TRC never required those applying for amnesty to make public apologies, its chairperson the Reverend Tutu, at times did" (Poyner, "Truth" 154). Essentially, the TRC was a body created to process some of the physical and emotional abuses which had been so rife during the apartheid era. It was founded on the belief that knowledge of the crimes committed during apartheid would enable healing within the nation. The commission was thought of as a means to reunite a broken nation by many because

Truth itself was also to foster individual and national reconciliation, through the catharsis of confession and forgiveness undergone by the perpetrators of human rights abuses and their victims, and an ensuing national consensus about the need to preserve a culture of human rights in the future. (Posel and Simpson 2)

The vision of the TRC, however, was not one that was easily attainable. In many instances, the required reparations could not be met and though "unveiling the truth was envisaged as a constitutionally defensible alternative to criminal prosecution, by enabling the granting of amnesty to perpetrators who made full disclosure" (Posel and Simpson 2–3), this did not provide comfort for many victims or their loved ones. This can be partly attributed to the Christian approach which dominated the proceedings, particularly through the commission's chairperson Archbishop Desmond Tutu.¹⁸ The dominance of Christianity in what was presented as a secular process has been criticised by many. Benita Parry suggests that an "atmosphere of euphoric Christian revivalism" tainted the hearings (Parry 188) while Jaques Derrida argues that "when Desmond Tutu was named president of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission he Christianized the language uniquely designed to treat 'politically' motivated crimes" (Derrida 42). The incorporation of Christian ideals into a secular process was not the only objection raised against the effectiveness of the TRC. The

¹⁸ Though Tutu suggests in his book *No Future without Forgiveness* (2000) that the commission functioned along guidelines created by a blend of Christianity and Ubuntu this has received little critical attention, most likely because of the difficulty in defining Ubuntu.

notion of public forgiveness was also problematic, especially as public apologies were not a prerequisite, because, as Anthony Holiday points out: “forgiveness, by reason of its conceptual dependence on remorse, must be an intensely personal, even a private matter” (Holiday 42). It is also necessary to indicate here that the hearings held by the TRC were broadcast on South African television but “in the media arena, the truth delivered by the TRC was truncated and carved up into consumable information and drama, from which an aggregated impression was selectively extracted” (Posel and Simpson 8). Thus the ‘truths’ spoken in the hearings were not necessarily the ‘truths’ presented to the masses. I do not have the space here to provide a detailed account of the TRC but this very brief discussion of a complicated process during a very difficult and transitional time in South African history highlights the importance of public repentance as opposed to private repentance. It is this conflict, between the public and the private, that is examined in *Disgrace* and which has led so many critics to connect the novel to the hearings because Lurie’s refusal to offer a public apology is interpreted as a denial of any wrongdoing.

Reconciliation in Disgrace

Echoes of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s proceedings can be found throughout *Disgrace*, both in actual events and in the motif of punishment and redemption. The first reference to the processes of the TRC is textual and is the enquiry into Lurie’s affair with Melanie. The committee is comprised of staff members from the university and, though the race of each is not explicitly stated, it is clear that the diversity of post-apartheid South Africa is adequately represented. The chairman of the committee provides the clearest link to the actual TRC and, more specifically, its chair, Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Professor Manas Mathabane is a black academic and as Professor of Religious Studies is closely associated with religion and the Christian values of redemption and forgiveness. Another aspect connecting the TRC and Lurie’s hearing is the distinction between admitting you are guilty of something and admitting that your actions were wrong. Though Lurie is willing to plead guilty, without even reading Melanie’s statement, he finds the committee’s request that he admit that he was wrong unacceptable (Coetzee 52). In refusing to read Melanie’s statement, he is denying her “the narrative authority of *I*” (McDunnah 24) and in so doing accepts full responsibility for the affair. As such Lurie is emphasising his role in the affair and “far from glossing over his own responsibility, Lurie goes out of his way to *claim* it, denying Melanie’s agency even when it would be in his best interest to acknowledge it” (McDunnah 19). His decision to place Melanie in a passive role and deny her agency is a continuation of the

dominance he has held over her throughout their affair and is characteristic of all of Lurie's interactions with women. Lurie's refusal to agree to counselling or to make any form of public statement or apology is a refusal both to acknowledge what he has done and that he was wrong – he will admit to his actions but not judge them as negative. Together with a refusal to judge his actions is a refusal to demonstrate the sincerity of his explanation:

you want me to demonstrate their sincerity. That is preposterous. That is beyond the scope of the law. I have had enough. Let us go back to playing it by the book. I plead guilty. That is as far as I am prepared to go. (Coetzee 55)

Lurie's response to questioning "might be read as an implied critique of the ambiguities attendant on the TRC's process" (Van der Vlies 67) as his actions highlight the flaw of any committee premised on reconciliation and particularly South Africa's TRC: if truth is the only requirement for reconciliation, what role does remorse, or lack thereof, have to play?

Lurie affirms the truth of his affair and the falsification of academic records but his refusal to show remorse or publically apologise prevents the committee from accepting his plea and continuing the proceedings because for the committee, or at least some of its members, a lack of remorse denies reconciliation. This refusal to accept an admittance of guilt without an expression of remorse is another clear link between the committee in *Disgrace* and the TRC. A member of the committee, Farodia Rasood, is the most vehement in her objection to Lurie's stance and remarks that "he accepts the charges only in name" which is not acceptable "in a case with overtones like this" (Coetzee 50). Even after being given the opportunity to agree to a statement in which, as Manas Mathabane explains, "the criterion is not whether you are sincere. That is a matter [...] for your own conscience. The criterion is whether you are prepared to acknowledge your fault in a public manner and take steps to remedy it" (Coetzee 58), Lurie remains obstinate, rejects this opportunity of making what is essentially a hollow apology, and will "make no confession" (Coetzee 51). He will, he says "put forward a plea, as is my right. Guilty as charged. That is my plea. That is as far as I am prepared to go" (Coetzee 51). The reason he provides for his obstinacy is that "repentance is neither here nor there. Repentance belongs to another world, to another universe of discourse" (Coetzee 58). Throughout the hearing, Lurie, and the majority of members on the panel, restrict the discourse to Lurie's actions concerning Melanie and her academic record. Farodia Rasood, however, places them within a global and historical framework. She refuses to accept a hollow plea of guilt and is insistent that Lurie has abused Melanie as countless

other white men have abused black women in a position of subservience. She rejects his account of the affair and instead focuses on the abstracts to which Lurie appeals:

Yes, he says, he is guilty; but when we try to get specificity, all of a sudden it is not abuse of a young woman he is confessing to, just an impulse he could not resist, with no mention of the pain he has caused, no mention of the long history of exploitation of which this is part.
(Coetzee 53)

Mark Sanders agrees with Farodia Rasood's demand that Lurie view himself as an historical actor in the violation of human rights and places his actions within a larger historical framework of exploitation (Sanders 178). Through Rasood's determination to equate Lurie's actions with abuses of human rights in the past, historical resonances are introduced which raise "questions of accountability, responsibility and dispossession in the post-apartheid state" (Poyner 149). It is because of Rasood's concern with Lurie's behaviour as part of a larger framework of abuse that the reader is called to consider the validity of redemption and forgiveness without remorse. If Lurie will not admit to his actions then he cannot be forgiven or accepted back into the community because he has not atoned for his crime.

The trial scene thus has an immediate narrative function, to provide the reader insight into Lurie's character, and his beliefs concerning remorse, forgiveness and redemption, and the function within the larger project of calling to mind the challenges the TRC discourse faced. Poyner explains the scene as follows:

the trial scene functions, firstly, as a catalyst that sets in motion a process of self-reflection and self-abnegation on Lurie's part, who rejects confession in the public sphere yet nevertheless unconsciously strives for self-forgiveness in the private, and, secondly, by analogy as a vehicle to call into question the politicization by the TRC of the discourses of truth-telling, reparations and reconciliation in the public-national domain. (Poyner, "Truth" 149)

Mark Sanders agrees with this assessment, particularly the concern with repentance, and argues that:

there are clues that the committee is a 'Truth Commission' in miniature: the confusion between the legal requirements of perpetrators seeking amnesty to make a full disclosure, and the unlegislated moral pressure to express remorse, make repentance, and even ask forgiveness of victims. (Sanders 178)

The trial scene is thus an immediate reminder of the TRC hearings being held at the time of the novel's composition both in its physical description and function, and, more importantly,

in the concerns it raises within the novel. How is it possible to confess to a crime that you do not believe was wrong? Is it possible to receive forgiveness without illustrating remorse? These questions, and the prominence of this focus within the novel, pose a number of challenges to Wright's reading of the novel. In order to align his work with that of other critics it is necessary to examine ways in which *The Tempest* also considers these questions or to explore how these questions can be altered to be applicable to both texts. The most plausible solution, I suggest, is to consider Lurie's own ruminations on these questions in the novel and to consider how his preoccupation with agency, both his own and that of his daughter Lucy, can be equated with Prospero's. Lurie's responses within the trial scene are all determined by his desire to maintain agency over his actions and not allow them to be transformed into a simple public confession. He wishes to maintain a clear divide between his personal and public life, as does Lucy, but in doing so he seeks to undermine the agency of the women with whom he interacts. Prospero, similarly, undermines Miranda's agency in order to return to Milan. It is only after the hearing that Lurie begins to consider how repentance and forgiveness affect agency and the questions raised by the hearing are maintained in the sections of the novel set in the Eastern Cape where his primary interactions are with Lucy.

The Benefits of Reading *Disgrace* as *The Tempest*

In his article, Laurence Wright equates Miranda with Lucy but fails to address adequately the relationship between Lucy and Lurie in comparison to that between Prospero and Miranda – and the questions both relationships raise about agency. In *The Tempest*, Miranda's actions are determined entirely by her father. He manipulates her actions and conceals parts of his knowledge in order to ensure that she acts as he would like her to. His feigned disapproval of Ferdinand, pretences of ignorance about the visitors to the island, and his withholding the truth of her identity outside of the island are all part of his larger deception: his plan to re-enter society. Lurie also uses Lucy in order to gain access into a community following his expulsion from Cape Town and the community to which he belonged there. Lucy, however, is a far more active figure than Miranda and, in a sense, places Lurie in the objectified role that Miranda is forced to inhabit in *The Tempest*. In denying her father access into matters pertaining to her sexuality, Lucy essentially removes any control he may have believed he has over her.

Finally, having challenged the subjectivity of their daughters to make sense of the social upheaval around them, both fathers resign themselves to a reduced role in their

daughters' lives. Prospero plans to return to Milan "where every third thought shall be [his] grave" (5.1.310), and Lurie settles in Grahamstown where he spends much of his time at the animal clinic composing his opera. The opera is perhaps a final indication that Lurie has learnt to accept the subjectivity of others. The shifted focus to an aging Teresa (eerily reminiscent of Bev Shaw and Lucy as McDunnah, Van Der Vlies and others have noted) suggests that Lurie has begun to accept the singularity of the individual and can relate to women without the preconceived gender discourse which determines that women must be dominated. It appears that:

he has found it within himself to *love* the woman, to put himself for moments in her place, to imagine and support her narrative without controlling it. After trying to shoehorn Teresa into the role history has bequeathed, after creating false and self-serving stage pieces for Soraya and Melanie, after trying to define and direct Lucy's story Lurie has arrived at finally at [sic] this still uncertain capacity for sympathetic imagining. (McDunnah 45)

Not only does he begin to develop the capacity to imagine himself into the other but he has also lost the impulse to dictate the course of the other. By not completing the opera, he is "not shaping Teresa's story, he is seeking to understand it" (McDunnah 45) rather than illustrating an inability to make complete sense of the "conventional other, the silenced women" (Boehmer, 138). Ultimately, "like David's own story, like Lucy's story, Teresa's story is open-ended" (*ibid.*). Lurie's bildung is thus clear in the final pages of the novel unlike Prospero who has not undergone any process of self-examination to suggest that his removal of Miranda's agency is wrong.

A relationship between *Disgrace* and *The Tempest* is thus only possible when placing specific emphasis on certain aspects of each text, but is an emphasis on the relationship between Lurie and Lucy justifiable? There is no easy answer to this question. Any critical engagement with a text will automatically favour some aspects to the detriment of others. As already discussed, the film version of *Disgrace* makes this relationship paramount. One has to wonder why the focus of Lurie's relationship with Lucy was chosen and a possible answer is that the relationship between father and daughter during difficult social and political times speaks to a universal audience. A comparison of *Disgrace* and *The Tempest*, though it allows for only limited interpretation of each text, does highlight the universality of the father daughter relationship in times of political turmoil and brings to the fore the challenges a father poses to his daughter's agency. As in *Hill of Fools* and *My Son's Story*, Lurie, a South African father, is forced to alter the way he interacts with his daughter because of a social

upheaval. The nature of the socio-political challenges may vary in accordance with the state of the country at the time of writing but Peteni, Gordimer and Coetzee all examine the ways in which parents attempt to limit the autonomy of their children in order to maintain control over at least one aspect of their lives. It is this observation about the power dynamics within the family structure, made by three different South African writers, that connects the South African texts to Shakespeare's early modern plays. Shakespeare also portrays fathers as dominant figures who use times of socio-political upheaval to control their children and deprive them of autonomy. That the South African texts also engage with the Shakespearean plays and have intertextual relationships with them allows the bringing together of two very different strands of scholarship: the focus on the domestic in Shakespeare's plays and the focus on variously situated revisions of the plays.

Conclusion: The Inescapability of Parental Authority

At the end of each text considered in this study, there has been an alteration in the relationship between a parent and a child or between parents and their children. The extent of the alteration varies and in some texts, such as *Disgrace* it is possible that the relationship may have changed for the better, whereas in others, including *Hill of Fools* and *Romeo and Juliet*, there can be no resolution because the children have died. Through the altered power dynamics within the family, it is clear that all of the texts are concerned with authority and the danger it poses to relationships. Every parent considered in this project attempts to alter the bonds of parental love into bondage by limiting the autonomy of their child as a way of protecting them from the external socio-political chaos – regardless of whether that chaos is an unjust government or the threat of one person on an island. These similarities bring a unity to the project which could otherwise be a random selection of texts. This is not to suggest, however, that there are not also important differences. These differences are found in the way in which Shakespeare is utilised within each text.

As studies of appropriations of Shakespeare have highlighted, engagements with Shakespeare are always addressed to a particular version of Shakespeare. Peteni's *Hill of Fools* offers a way in which to illustrate that though Shakespeare arrived in Africa through colonisation, his plays can be transposed into an African context because of the universal presence of the familial power struggles they portray. *Hill of Fools* does not rewrite Shakespeare but instead challenges the notion that Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is parent-text to all *Romeo and Juliet* stories. The tragic love story presented in *Hill of Fools* may share many qualities with *Romeo and Juliet* but these similarities are a result of the presence, at all times and in all places, of conflicts which undermine the ability of individuals to exercise autonomy. In *My Son's Story*, the power struggles of two children trying to escape the restrictions of identity placed on them by their parents provide the clearest indication of the way in which Gordimer makes varied use of Shakespeare. Within the novel, Shakespeare's texts are used thematically (this is particularly the case with *King Lear* and *Hamlet*) as well as textually (with quotations from a variety of texts from the canon being used). Both of these uses form part of the novel's larger concerns, most notably the interactions of literature and politics, the role of Shakespeare in South Africa, and the complications in the relationship between parents and children. All of these concerns are revealed to be premised on power dynamics. In this instance, Shakespeare and his texts act very much like parents to *My Son's Story* which both rebels against the intertextual relationship (in Sonny's attempt to limit

Shakespeare to the private realm) and embraces it (in Will's use of quotations and eventual acceptance of his identity as a writer).

Coetzee's *Disgrace*, when considered alongside *The Tempest* becomes a post-apartheid South African engagement with the concerns of the play. In both texts, there is a period of social isolation for a father which leads to greater interaction with an only daughter. This interaction is tainted by an external threat and, eventually, the father must accept that he can no longer exercise full control of his daughter and must rescind the power he believes he still holds over her – for Prospero, the result is a beneficial marriage for Miranda, for Lurie, the realisation that Lucy will have a child conceived through rape and marry Petrus. The last identity imposed on Shakespeare is one which emphasises the power of the reader. The relationship between *Disgrace* and *The Tempest* suggests that it is possible for a reader to apply their interpretation of Shakespeare to other texts which may not have an overt connection to a Shakespearean text.

Though each textual relationship revises and makes use of Shakespeare in a different way, they also all rely on an observation that is universal in its relevance: the power dynamics inherent in familial relationships may influence but must also adapt to the socio-political climate.

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