CHAPTER-III

Reading J. M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and Nadine Gordimer’s *The House Gun* in the Light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Document

This chapter will examine Coetzee’s *Disgrace* and Nadine Gordimer’s *The House Gun* in the light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission document, hereafter referred to as TRC. These two texts when read along with the TRC document will elicit a meaning left unexplored. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in 1995 as an official Commission of Inquiry into public violence in South Africa during the *apartheid* era (1948-1994). It focuses on the violation of human dignity. The TRC focuses on race-informed violence such as torture, murder and rape that was distinctive to the *apartheid* era of South Africa and strives to reconcile the entire population with South Africa’s violent past. It insists on going forward and looking for peace and reconciliation in order to prevent further violence. The TRC has tried to bring about reconciliation through a process of dialogue. “Violence persists in post-apartheid South Africa, because it has been built on the legacy of its violent past” (Hamber 118).

As part of its reconciliatory function, the TRC was made responsible for the granting of amnesty. Amnesty was to be granted where applicants made full disclosure of all relevant facts and for acts committed in the course of the conflicts of the past. If the perpetrators of gross violations of human rights did not meet the TRC’s criteria for amnesty, they would be redeemed then from all criminal and civil liability and would not be prosecuted. It was meant to fast track the process of justice and move forward. If the criteria for amnesty were met, the TRC would substitute retributive justice in exchange for the truth. On the basis of evidence presented to the TRC, it was, according to the TRC Act, to put forward recommendations for a comprehensive reparation policy for those found to be victims of gross violations of human rights during the period that the TRC was investigating.
Violence is circular, it is not a linear process. Violence gives rise to vengeance. Violence only breeds more violence. The TRC was to release South Africa from the vicious circle of violence. It was to bring about reconciliation through a process of dialogue in order to prevent further violence in South Africa. According to Gandhi, “An eye for an eye only ends up making the whole world blind.” To put it simply, one should not respond to violence with violence because it won’t achieve anything and will just end up in breeding more violence. Revenge is a vicious circle that never stops. Seeking revenge is just one immense cycle of never-ending violence. Vengeance never solves anything, and just brings suffering to all as a cycle of violence occurs. Responding to violence with violence will make the humanity go around in an evil circle, forever looking for revenge and hurting others.

According to Hamber and Kibble, “South Africa’s approach to its Truth and Reconciliation Commission suggests that it has opted for the ethics of responsibility (which take into account the predictable consequences of actions) rather than ethics of conviction (where principles are adhered to regardless of the consequences)” (From Truth to Transformation: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa). The proponents of the amnesty argue that it has to be understood in its political context and with regard to the long-term outcomes of the process. The Nuremberg trials held after the Second World War showed that retributive justice is impossible because of lack of money. It also showed that human societies did not have the wherewithal to carry on along this path as one cannot carry the burden of the past and move forward. One has to acknowledge that wrong has been done and reconcile. One has to fix responsibility and guilt, one has to recognize the crime and move on.

The balance of forces, and the compromises made during peace negotiations have dictated that for the new government in present South Africa, criminal prosecution is not possible in most cases. The new government has to attempt to balance amnesty, clemency and justice, since prosecuting and imprisoning the previous regime’s officials and ministers will renew the conflict
and have economic repercussions. There are questions over the capacity and
effectiveness of the criminal trials system in South Africa. They will probably have
been overstretched by large scale trials. An example is the trial for murder of
former South African Defence Minister Magnus Malan, with nineteen others,
including the two chiefs of the South African Defence Force. They were charged
with the murder of thirteen people in KwaZulu/Natal in January 1987, when a hit-
squad attack was carried out on the home of the anti-apartheid activist Victor
Ntuli. The case collapsed because of lack of evidence linking directly to the
killings.

The TRC makes a similar point in relation to the trials of both Malan and
Eugene de Kock (former South African Police officer who tortured and killed
numerous anti-apartheid activists):

Trials of this nature are extremely time-consuming and expensive
and require large number of skilled and highly competent
investigators. It took over eighteen months to secure a single
conviction in the de Kock trial. A specialized investigative unit,
consisting of over thirty detectives and six civilian analysts, spent
more than nine months investigating and preparing the indictment in
the Malan trial. The trial itself lasted a further nine months.
Furthermore, since the accused in many of the trials were former
state employees, the state was obliged to pay for the costs of their
legal defence. In the Malan trial, these costs exceeded R12 million;
and in the de Kock trial, the taxpayer had to pay more than R5
million. These figures do not include the costs of the terms of the
investigators and prosecutors, nor do they reflect the costs of
supporting large numbers of witnesses, some of them placed in
expensive witness protection programmes. Despite this expenditure
of time and money, the former General Malan was found not guilty,
although numerous allegations continue to be made against him.
Judicial inquiries into politically-sensitive matters rarely satisfy the
need for truth and closure. As such, they should not necessarily be seen as superior alternatives to the Commission. (TRC Report, vol. 1, no. 5, pp. 73)

Criminal justice system works best where an individual, or a small number of individuals, can be shown to be guilty on the basis of the interaction of criminal motivation and actions. When these conditions cannot be met beyond reasonable doubt, then a non-guilty verdict has to be brought in. Paradoxically, the collapse of the Malan case was a set-back both to those wanting to hear the truth and those wishing to punish individuals perceived as embodying the apartheid system. The case strengthened the hand of those arguing that criminal trials are inappropriate for the fulfilment of either of these objectives.

However, for every case where the criminal justice system failed, another case has been successful. Of note was the prosecution of Ferdi Barnard, former apartheid-era Civil Cooperation Bureau agent found guilty of the murder of anti-apartheid activist David Webster and the numerous convictions of Eugene de Kock. In both of these cases, some versions of truth has been established, notwithstanding the indemnities granted to many state witnesses to ensure prosecution, and the costs.

Exchanging amnesty for truth probably offers the best chance of discovering the truth. In addition, in South Africa few people will have access to formal justice. The TRC provides potential access to both to some form of truth and to some form of justice. Proponents of the TRC argue that justice and amnesty are complementary. This is partly because the publication of perpetrators’ names is akin to shaming the offenders and making them publicly accountable. Furthermore, alleged perpetrators can be prosecuted if they did not apply for amnesty. Indeed in February 1999 Bulelani Ngcuka, The first National Director of Public Prosecutions in South Africa, established a special unit to coordinate the trials arising from failed amnesty applications. This followed the failed amnesty applications from four policemen relating to the death in custody of Steve Biko, an anti-apartheid activist.
There are inherent conflicts between reconciliation and the process of truth and justice, which can make for a painful transformation process. This is noted in the final report of TRC:

The talk assigned to the Commission proved to be riddled with tensions. For many, truth and reconciliation seemed separated by a gulf rather than a bridge. Moreover, in the process of implementing its obligation to consider amnesty for perpetrators (as required by the interim Constitution), the concept of justice also came under constant scrutiny. ‘We’ve heard the truth. There is even talk about reconciliation. But where’s the justice?’ was a common refrain. (TRC Report, vol. 1, no. 5, pp. 3-9)

Conducting trials will not lead to justice, it will just lock one in a vicious circle of violence thereby breeding more violence. The justice is not in prosecuting a criminal but it is in the recognition of the wrong. The justice is in the acknowledgement of the unethical wrongness of any official policy which promotes gross violations of human rights. It is a time consuming process to bring the perpetrators of crime to justice. One has to acknowledge that wrong has been done and affect reconciliation.

South Africa has still not healed after the end of Apartheid or participation in the truth and reconciliation process. South African society is violent and intolerant because the TRC failed to address the emotional mutilation wrought by apartheid. Yet, with no real change in social conditions and no clear attempt to address perceptions of injustice and exclusion amongst certain groups, the TRC has lost its impact. The TRC has not brought about reconciliation which was one of its primary goals. The reality of holding those who are accountable and achieving real engagement with the victims has not been fulfilled in South Africa. The TRC is demonstrated to have provided a partial truth, not only because of the Commission’s mandate to examine gross violations of human rights, but also because of the negotiation employed by those who gave evidence.
The TRC was flawed to begin with as its focus had a limited mandate to deal principally with gross violations of human rights. With this limited mandate, the result of government imposed restrictions on the Commission’s reporting time and finances, the TRC was never in a position to record the full truth of South African life. Those implicated by the TRC are still in positions of power and those that should have been supported as victims of state crime have not received reparation. Those who committed crimes were given the opportunity of being forgiven for their crimes simply by telling their stories, whereas those who suffered the injustice raised the spectre of the atrocities again as they retold their stories, and were denied reparation, largely because South African government could not afford it because of inadequate funds to cover payment costs.

Therefore, when one analyzes the efficacy of the TRC, one has to ask if it failed to address the conflict and violence as remnants of apartheid in South Africa, which still has one of the highest crime rates in the world. It can be acknowledged that the TRC on its own cannot be the only vehicle to deal with years of trauma that apartheid yielded. The issue is too complex to determine success of the TRC in the fulfilment of its goals. The TRC has achieved partial success and the reality of violence in post-apartheid South Africa indicates what people think and what is done on the ground are at odds.

J. M. Coetzee’s Disgrace (1999) is a post-apartheid novel. The theme of the novel is focused on the way the White South Africans respond to the new circumstances brought about by the end of the White hegemony during Apartheid. In Disgrace, Coetzee depicts the consequences of the White South African disempowerment. This novel is representative of the new South Africa, where the social troubles relating to binary oppositions such as black-white and powerless-powerful are emphasized. The novel depicts the rape of a non-white woman by a white man, and the gang rape of a white woman by three black men. It takes a critical look at post-apartheid South Africa, suggesting that race relations are still problematic. Coetzee endeavours to show the characters’ struggle to adjust within
this new South Africa and he seems to imply that rape is a complex crime that destroys South African society.

The narrative tells the story of David Lurie, a white fifty-two year old professor of modern languages at the University of Cape Town. He is twice divorced and satisfies his sexual desires with a prostitute named Soraya, in the beginning of the novel. He abuses his power by seducing one of his non-white students named Melanie Isaacs. When she lodges a complaint against him, David is offered a compromise. The University committee wants him to apologize. David pleads guilty but he refuses to apologize. As a consequence of this, Lurie is forced to resign from the university.

Coetzee’s *Disgrace* can be read as an allegory of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Lurie’s trial resonates with the public hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. On account of Melanie’s complaint, Lurie receives a memorandum and is asked to appear before the University’s Committee of Inquiry. The University academic committee examines Melanie’s complaint of sexual harassment in order to make a recommendation. This committee bears some resemblance to the South African TRC. Firstly, the members of TRC were of different religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Likewise, in *Disgrace* the Committee of Inquiry includes members of different faculties and ethnicities, such as its chairman Manas Mathabane and his secretary Aram Hakim; Farodia Rassool from Social Sciences; Desmond Swarts, Dean of Engineering; and an unnamed female student who represents the Coalition against Discrimination.

The purpose of the inquiry into Lurie’s behaviour is to establish whether further measures should be taken against Lurie. Lurie needs to appear in front of the University’s Committee because he is charged with sexual harassment. Besides, the committee has reason to believe that he has kept false records of Melanie’s attendance and examinations. As demonstrated in the novel, the committee’s main purpose is to assess whether he should therefore be disciplined, “A committee will be set up. Its function will be to determine whether there are grounds for disciplinary measures” (*D* 41). Correspondingly, the Truth and
Reconciliation Commission endeavoured to agree on whether perpetrators of violence should be prosecuted.

Despite fierce controversy, many perpetrators were granted amnesty in exchange for a public disclosure of their wrongdoings. Hence, instead of pleading guilty, perpetrators were encouraged to openly reveal the details of their crimes. In so doing, they could avoid retribution. During David’s disciplinary hearing, Farodia Rassool therefore emphasizes the need to publicly disclose the truth. As she says, “‘The wider community is entitled to know,’ she continues, ‘what it is specifically that Professor Lurie acknowledges and therefore what it is that he is being censured for’” (D 50). Although Lurie states that he is guilty of all that he is charged with, Farodia does not accept his empty confession because she wants him to specify what it is that he is accountable for. Yet, Lurie refuses to go into details as he considers it a private matter. He does not really care about the truth. When Mathabane asks him whether he accepts the truth of the complaint that is filed against him, he answers, “I accept whatever Ms. Isaacs alleges” (D 50). As long as he does not have to go into detail about his sexual misconduct, he appears to be willing to accept every charge. Accordingly, whether Lurie’s acceptance of the charges merely indicates, “a willingness to pay the price, as in ‘accepting the charges’ for a collect phone call” or whether it does “require a performance of deliberative reason and sincerity” (Saunders 100).

Sue Kossew draws a parallel between the novel and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, “that of making a public apology for the past crimes of apartheid and receiving an amnesty for any public admission of guilt” (159). Farodia Rassool and Lurie have different ideas about confession. He regards himself as a “servant of Eros” and appears to blame his uncontrollable lust for the young woman. As he says, “It is not a defence. You want a confession, I give you a confession. As for impulse, it was far from ungovernable, I have denied similar impulses many times in the past, I am ashamed to say” (D 52). By contrast, Farodia does not acknowledge his impulse as a justification of his immoral behaviour. Hence, she strongly doubts his sincerity. Nevertheless Lurie compares
his desire to that of a dog; he suggests that disallowing a dog to follow its instincts, is crueler than shooting it.

Lurie and Farodia have different ideas about the implications of Lurie’s affair with Melanie. She thinks that Lurie raped his student. Consequently, she alludes to South Africa’s history of *apartheid* and relates his abuse with the white exploitation of the black and the coloured:

> We are again going round in circles, Mr.Chair. 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. (*D* 53)

In doing so, she suggests that Lurie was racially motivated. She strongly wishes him to acknowledge his guilt and this episode echoes “the frustrations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, faced with the admissions of those who confessed but who failed to acknowledge their guilt, those who seemed to remain in their hearts unrepentant” (Cornwell 316).

Farodia Rassool repeatedly attempts to convince Lurie to openly confess his sins. She thinks it necessary that Lurie shows genuine remorse for his abuse of power. However, Lurie argues that sincerity is “beyond the scope of law” and does not change his plea. Lurie suggests that contrition belongs to a religious discourse. As he says, “Repentance is neither here nor there. Repentance belongs to another world, to another universe of discourse” (*D* 58).

Lurie refuses to apologize because he considers his relationship with Melanie to be part of his private life. He discards a compromise offered by the University because he does not see the point of such an apology. Lurie does not understand the Committee’s eagerness to hear a confession. As he says, “Confessions, apologize: why this thirst for abasement? A hush falls. They circle around him like hunters who have cornered a strange beast and do not know how
to finish it off” (D 56). Lurie suggests that his colleagues blindly hold on to confession and do not know how to act upon his decision not to issue an apology in a public manner. Considering that the novel remains rather ambiguous about the nature of Lurie’s relationship with Melanie, it appears to be something more complex than rape. For instance, the text does not directly refer to this relationship as rape but describes it as “an impulse” or “an affair.” Although the novel hints at Melanie’s presumably non-white features, one cannot be certain that she is black or coloured.

Lurie then goes to his only daughter’s farm in Salem. Lucy, probably a lesbian, keeps a kennel and is a subsistence farmer selling her produce in Grahamstown at the weekend. Petrus, a black, is a neighbour of Lucy. Lurie and Lucy are attacked by two black men and a boy at Lucy’s farm. Lucy is also gang raped by them. Earlier Petrus had been a helper in the house of Lucy and took care of her dogs and garden. But the racial dynamics become strained after the attack and this incident represents the interracial rape and power-reversal in post-apartheid South African perspective. Fanon in Black Skin, White Masks avers that the violence that the colonizer exercises on the colonizer is always in the form of rape. What Fanon emphasizes is not only the sexual economy of colonialism, but also the potential for violence inherent within this economy. According to Fanon, sexual violence is common to white and black, men and women, due to the very nature of their racial interactions. The white man seeks to assert his superiority through violence targeted at the black woman as depicted in the novel where Lurie, a white man takes sexual advantage of one of his non-white students Melanie. The black man too seeks to overcome his inferiority through violence targeted at the white woman and he seeks vengeance through the (fantasized or real) rape of the white woman as depicted in the novel through Lucy. The fantasy and the anxiety of rape is the white man’s fear of the black emphasized by the “unseen” crime.

Rape, in Disgrace becomes a trope for the fight for power. The woman circulates as a token of exchange between the black man and the white man as depicted in the novel where Lucy and Melanie circulate as a token of exchange
between three black men and a white man. As the secret fantasies and fears of both the ‘white’ Lurie and the ‘black’ Petrus and the three rapists come true, with the possession of the ‘other,’ the theme of retribution surfaces. Lurie wants Lucy to report crime to the police and bring the culprits to justice but Lucy does not want to report the crime to the police because she understands that the systems put together by ‘white’ have been broken up. Also, because she represents a new generation of white South Africans who understand the culpability of their ancestors and wish to atone for it. She sees the rape not as personal, but as an act against a collective injustice. Here Lurie and Lucy show two different attitudes towards reparation and justice. Neither Lurie, Lucy, nor Melanie reveals the details of their abuse. Lurie is the perpetrator and Lucy and Melanie are victims and they prefer to treat the crime as a private matter. Both victims’ and perpetrator’s silence was a common problem during the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The TRC staged public hearings in order to reconcile the nation and restore justice. Victims and perpetrators were called before the Commission so that they could give their account of history.

Lurie chooses not to reveal the details of his relationship with Melanie because he does not really consider it rape. He argues that it was “not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core” (D 24). Lucy is convinced that Lurie deliberately represented himself in an undesirable way in front of the Committee because he did not want to reveal the details of his crime. His ex-wife calls him up to abuse him:

That may be so, David, but surely you know by now that trials are not about principles, they are about how well you put yourself across. According to my source, you came across badly. What was the principle you were standing up for? Freedom of speech. Freedom to remain silent. (D 188)

Hence, as for his relationship with Melanie, Lurie considers both silence and articulation amongst his rights.
Ironically, just as Melanie’s father Mr. Isaacs has reported sexual violence against his daughter to the University, Lurie as the father of Lucy wants to seek justice for her abuse. Lurie wants Lucy to report the rape to the police. As Lurie expects her rapists to be aware of the possibility that she will not force down charges against them, he encourages her to move beyond this shame. Lurie fears that they will take advantage of her integrity. As he says, “It will not dawn on them that over the body of the woman silence is being drawn like a blanket. Too ashamed, they will say to each other, too ashamed to tell, and they will chuckle luxuriously, recollecting their exploit” (D 110).

Lucy also considers her rape to be a private matter, “What happened to me is my business, mine alone, not yours, and if there is one right I have it is the right not to be put on trial like this, not to have to justify myself - not to you, not to anyone else” (D 133). Furthermore, Lucy suggests that post-apartheid South Africa is a country where a white woman’s rape is to some extent justifiable because of the country’s history of apartheid:

> The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, 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. This place being what? This place being South Africa. (D 112)

Though, Lurie disagrees with Lucy and argues against her stand that this is not how vengeance works. He argues that “Vengeance is like a fire. The more it devours, the hungrier it gets” (D 112). The novel portrays the complexity of rape; despite South Africa’s current state of affairs it is difficult to decide whether rape should be considered a private or public matter. Both Lurie and Lucy contrast one another and blame each other. Lucy does not tell the truth about the violence she suffered but she considers Lurie’s fault to be a public matter. In contrast, Lurie considers his relationship with Melanie a private matter, whereas he wants Lucy to speak up in order to come to terms with her rape.
A significant feature of TRC is the willingness of a perpetrator to acknowledge his or her responsibility for past misdeeds. Considering that Lurie holds himself responsible for Lucy’s rape, in this regard the novel to some extent discusses responsibility. He has never really felt accountable for anything but after the incident of Lucy’s rape things tend to change, “Despite Bev’s counsel, despite Petrus’s assurances, despite Lucy’s obstinacy, he is not prepared to abandon his daughter. This is where he lives, for the present: in this time, in this place” (D 141). To some extent he starts appreciating his responsibility. He fails to distinguish between responsibility and guilt. He feels guilty about Lucy’s rape; despite the fact that he does not truly acknowledge that he has committed a similar crime. Lurie cannot come to terms with his daughter’s rape, because he had been there during the attack but could not save her from her rapists. Although he endeavours to understand what she has been through, he seems to be more concerned whether she blames him for not stopping them. As he says, “You were in fear of your life. You were afraid that after you had been used you would be killed. Disposed of. Because you were nothing to them. And? Her voice is now a whisper. And I did nothing. I did not save you” (D 145).

However, Lucy says that he should not blame himself. She does not expect him to feel responsible because she does not truly hold anyone accountable. Nevertheless, Lurie considers it possible that she blames herself. Consequently, Lurie tries to warn Lucy against future violence and says, “Slavery. They want you for their slave” (D 159). Lucy disagrees and instead claims that it is, “Not slavery. Subjection. Subjugation” (D 159).

This is making a fine point about the colonized seeking justice. They wish to assure … that the colonizer will not rise again. Whereas Lurie wishes to reinstate justice, when injustice has been done to his daughter. For instance, although he previously refused to apologize for his immoral behaviour towards Melanie and the University, he now feels it incumbent to strive for justice. As he says, “Am I wrong? Am I wrong to want justice?” (D 119). Here, the novel resonates with the TRC’s desire to restore justice. Both incidents are similar:
Lurie’s sexual exploitation of Melanie and Lucy’s gang rape and their helplessness. The first incident appears to be natural, and treated with casualness; the second is treated with utter seriousness.

The novel also discusses notions of retribution and revenge. For instance, the rape of Lucy can be interpreted as an act of retribution. She compares her rapists to tax collectors, who have come to make her pay for her debt. As she says, “They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors. Why should I be allowed to live here without paying?” (D 158).

While the rapists of Lucy ransack her house and steal her father’s car, they supposedly seek some sort of financial compensation. However, by gang raping her and shooting three of her dogs, they deprive her of her dignity. Lucy decides not to prosecute her rapists and does not seem determined to restore justice. She considers her rape a compensation for crimes that have been carried out in the past. Lurie does not support her idea and urges her to stand up for herself. As he says, “Lucy, Lucy, I plead with you! You want to make up for the wrongs of the past, but this is not the way to do it. If you fail to stand up for yourself at this moment, you will never be able to hold your head again” (D 133).

Although Lurie thinks it is unfair that Lucy treats him like an outsider while he had actually been present during the attack, the violence that has been inflicted upon his daughter helps him to reassess the concept of rape. According to Lurie, Lucy’s rapists were not merely expressing their lust but they were mating:

> It was not the pleasure principle that ran the show but the testicles, sacs bulging with seed aching to perfect itself. And now, lo and behold, the child! Already he is calling it the child when it is no more than a worm in his daughter’s womb. What kind of child can seed like that give life to, seed driven into the woman not in love but in hatred, mixed chaotically, meant to soil her, to mark her, like a dog’s urine. (D 199)
Lurie states that rapists of Lucy attempted to mark Lucy like “dog’s urine” because they seem to think of Lucy as their territory a metaphor for Africa. Horrell, therefore, points out that “it is on and through her flesh, it would seem, that the conditions of the new South Africa are written. Not only has she borne the burden of shame through rape, but she will bear a child whose flesh will bear witness to her moment of inscription” (32). By referring to the word “mating,” Lurie points out the bestiality of the gang rape.

The juxtaposition of white and black power positions emphasizes their burden on the present. Lurie as perpetrator and Lucy as victim create a dialogism between ‘self’ and ‘other.’ Lurie feels impelled to revisit his former stance with regard to Melanie. Lurie decides to pay a visit to Melanie’s family. It seems that he wishes to apologize and hopes to find redemption. Thus, Disgrace, “is a mirror to the fate of the country locked into required rituals of self-examination, but unable to find true repentance or comfort in the process” (Segall 49). However, Lurie is unable to find redemption when he visits the Isaacs family. Melanie’s father does not consider regret to be a solution. He does not want Lurie to apologize but he wishes that he acts upon his misdeeds. He states that “But I say to myself, we are all sorry when we are found out. Then we are sorry. The question is not, are we sorry? The question is, what lesson have we learned. The question is, what we are going to do now that we are sorry” (D 172). This is a direct reference to the question of reparation. It can also be argued that Melanie’s father expects religious expiation because “the expression of contrition is given validity only to the consequent actions issuing from it” (Diala 57). Here, the novel alludes to the religious character of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In religious terms, Lucy identifies Lurie as a “scapegoat that wanders in the wilderness” (D 91), as his abusive sexual relationship with Melanie has caused such a displacement that he could not stay on as a Professor at the University of Cape Town. However, Lurie does not regard himself as a scapegoat because he regards post-apartheid South Africa as “a post-religious” country, and “his ideals of expiation exclude religious symbolism” (Diala 59). Further:
Scapegoating worked in practice while it still had religious power behind it. You loaded the sins of the city on to the goat’s back and drove it out, and the city was cleansed. It worked because everyone knew how to drove the ritual, including the gods. Then the gods died, and all of a sudden you had to cleanse the city without divine help. Real actions were demanded instead of symbolism. The censor was born, in the Roman sense. Watchfulness became the watchword: the watchfulness of all over all. Purgation was replaced by the purge. (D 91)

Elleke Boehmer considers this to be a crucial statement as it conveys how one achieves “moral cleansing in both an individual and a collective capacity in a secular age” (136). Likewise, the TRC aims to bring about such cleansing in post-apartheid South Africa by means of individual catharsis through confession, and national reconciliation through the hearings of the Truth Commission.

The TRC process hopes to create a setting where forgiveness and reconciliation can take place. It has been claimed that the novel fails to depict national reconciliation. For instance, Buikema claims that “Disgrace demonstrates in an unforgettable way that in a situation as complex as South Africa’s post-apartheid era, one cannot get away with empty mantras” (195), such as reconciliation. Although Lucy forgives her attackers because she has to think about her future, Lurie does not truly understand how Lucy is able to forgive. However, he wonders whether his daughter will ever recover from the violence that was inflicted upon her. As he says:

Presumably Lucy is healing too, or if not healing then forgetting, growing scar tissue around the memory of that day, sheathing it, sealing it off. So that one day she may be able to say, the day we were robbed, and think of merely as the day when they were robbed. (D 141)
Rosemary Nagy claims that several questions arise while taking into consideration to what extent the novel succeeds in pointing out the complexity of the national reconciliation, such as “Does reconciliation depend upon moral atonement, or is formal recognition of past wrongdoing sufficient?” and “How much should a nation look backward in order to move forward?” (709). Considering that the novel’s main character does not truly atone for his actions and does not formally recognize his relationship with Melanie as wrong, the novel holds a negative attitude towards the future of South Africa. Boehmer points out that “Coetzee has openly cast doubt on the possibility of achieving closure on a painful past, of ever adequately saying sorry. Instead, he proposes the far more painful process of enduring rather than transcending the degraded present” (343). Likewise, Hannan Hever underlines Coetzee’s skepticism by claiming that:

Coetzee, who casts a sober and even somewhat cruel gaze over the aftermath of the enormous victory of the anti-apartheid struggle, demands sustained skepticism regarding some of the illusions attaching to ‘truth and Reconciliation’ in South Africa, particularly regarding to the quasi-official notion that treaties and agreements are sufficient to purge the traces of oppression from the deepest tissues of the South African social body. (42)

Diala argues that “Coetzee hardly seems to be under any delusions of the immediate possibility of reconciliation so soon after apartheid” (68), and Nagy suggests that the process established some truths but has merely begin the process of reconciliation: “But these minimal ‘truths’ have, at best, initiated rather than fulfilled the goals of national reconciliation” (719).

Thus, *Disgrace* bears resemblance to South Africa’s truth and reconciliation process. Emphasizing the need to look deeply into racial relations in South Africa, the text draws various comparisons with dogs and suggests that justice is absent in the novel and so are the possibilities of forgiveness and reconciliation. Hence, Lucy believes that it is necessary to start at ground level in order to restore the balance within South Africa. As she says:
Yes, I agree, 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. (D 205)

Lucy and Lurie use the simile “like a dog.” Here, humiliation is equated with being like a dog.

Lucy wants to be sheltered by Petrus, but she has to pay a penalty for it as Petrus offers her protection in exchange for her land. She consents to marry Petrus and become his wife. Thus, Petrus becomes the prime example of a black man who acquires power and property, and becomes a landowner from a care-taker. Petrus acts out of revenge to take away Lucy’s rights to her land in order to improve his economic status. Rebecca Saunders has a different view with regard to justice in the novel and she points out that:

Petrus proposes to Lurie a series of indemnifications that, while extra judiciary, largely conform to the exchange structure of justice: that the insurance will give Lurie a new car, that is his promise of future protection will compensate for Lucy’s lost sense of security, and his offer of marriage will function as reparation for her rape.

(100)

Accordingly, Coetzee has reflected that the land transfer policy has the foremost implication in changed status for both the whites as well as the blacks in post-apartheid South Africa.

Nadine Gordimer’s The House Gun (1998) can also be read in the light of TRC debate. The manifestation of violence as sexual crime related with the body is the major issue here as in Disgrace. The novel is set in post-apartheid Johannesburg and deals with the trial of Duncan Lindgard, a twenty-seven year old white architect who has been accused of murdering his friend and former lover Carl Jespersen. Duncan fires a bullet at Carl after finding his girlfriend Natalie and
Carl having sexual intercourse on the sofa in the living room. Duncan’s crime deeply affects and alters the lives of his parents, Harald and Claudia Lindgard, because they never imagined him committing such an atrocity. However, Duncan’s guilt is unquestionable as he immediately confesses that he has shot Carl. The narrator emphasizes that the novel cannot be interpreted as a murder mystery. When Harald reads the charge sheet and acquaints himself with the facts of Duncan’s crime, the narrator says, “this is not a detective story. Harald has to believe that the mode of events that the genre represents is actuality” (Gordimer, The House Gun 16). Here, the narrator explains Gordimer’s choice of genre; he claims that the mode of events a detective story represents, such as violence and one’s search for information about what has happened and who can be held responsible, are omnipotent characteristics of post-apartheid South Africa.

Duncan is part of a rather unconventional household, as he shares a premises with David Baker, a fellow architect, Nkululeko Khulu Dladla, a journalist, and Carl Jespersen, who works for an advertisement agency. Although Duncan and his girlfriend Natalie James live at a cottage adjacent to the house, they “more or less run the whole place together” (HG 22). Their household resembles the ‘rainbow nation’ in that the young adults constitute different ethnic groups. For instance, Duncan, David and Natalie are white South Africans, Khulu is a black South African and Carl is Norwegian. Claims have been made that Duncan’s household is a microcosm of Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s ‘rainbow nation.’ The latter has often been considered as a paradigm of the new South Africa in which ethnically diverse South Africans ideally live side by side. The TRC “was intended as a process that would consolidate the spirit of the ‘rainbow nation’ (Gobodo Madikizela 271). Desmond Tutu used the allegory of “a rainbow over South Africa as a symbol of reconciliation and unity among all the diverse people in the nation” (246). Hence, the new South African constitution demanded social equality and South Africans were encouraged to accept one another, regardless of one’s colour, sex, or sexual preference. David Medalie endorses this claim as he argues that Duncan, Khulu, David, Carl and Natalie represent “in a microcosmic way, the society which the new South African constitution is making
possible, one in which there is no discrimination on the basis of race, gender or sexual preference” (638).

The novel alludes to the persistence of violence in post-apartheid South Africa by focusing on the violence that is carried out in a domestic setting. It can be regarded as a response to the country’s political, economic, legal and social change. However, this violence can no longer be framed as political violence because it was neither carried out on behalf of the apartheid government nor by members of the liberation movement. Nonetheless, the narrator suggests that violence remains part of South African society as, “state violence under the old, past regime had habituated its victims to it. People had forgotten there was any other way” (HG 50).

The title of the novel suggests that a shared gun is used to commit a crime. Duncan kills Carl with a gun that is shared by the members of their household. The very fact that Duncan’s household collectively owns a gun in order to protect them symbolizes the violence that still troubles post-apartheid South Africa. The narrator of the novel considers guns to be “the tragedy of our present time, a tragedy repeated daily, nightly, in this city, in our country. Part of the furnishings in homes, carried in pockets along with car keys, even in the school-bags of children, constantly ready to hand in situations which lead to tragedy, the guns happen to be there” (HG 267). With regard to the novel, it can, therefore, be argued that the gun is a microcosmic equivalent of the country’s culture of violence. In this particular context, Duncan’s trial seems to be another parallel of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. While the public hearings of the TRC dealt with the violence of the apartheid regime, the novel’s fictional trial deals with the harm caused by the gun.

According to Hamber, the TRC “was created to assist in smoothing the political transition from authoritarian to democratic rule” (9). While the TRC has helped people to come to terms with painful past experiences, it has facilitated change in South Africa. South African society required change because a common future for black, white and coloured South Africans could not be built on racial
imperatives. Considering that the novel points out a reversal of former roles such as the fact that a white man is now defended by a successful black lawyer, it can be stated that Gordimer strongly wishes to accentuate this need for change. In this particular context, “Harald and Claudia can be seen as representative figures in the new South Africa, which has to contemplate and reassess its past in order to discover its future” (Killam 151). Hence, the Lindgards need to come to terms with their involvement in past and present violence in order to coexist peacefully with blacks and coloureds in the new South Africa.

Though not many critics have endorsed that the TRC finds a certain resonance in the novel. The trial of Duncan does draw parallels with the healings of the TRC. Moreover, Isidore Diala puts Gordimer’s novel alongside the TRC in observing that “in addition to None To Accompany Me, The House Gun touches upon intense discussions of the new South African constitution, the truth and reconciliation commission, and appropriate immigration laws” (136). Similarly, Sue Kossew claims that “the unspoken but clearly present backdrop to the narrative is the process whereby the whole society is on trial: the truth and reconciliation commission” (134). In order to support her claim, Kossew addresses the themes that often arose during the truth and reconciliation process, such as truth, justice, guilt and forgiveness. Along these lines, a parallel can be drawn between Gordimer’s text and South Africa’s process of reconciliation:

In tackling questions about justice, truth, and coming to terms with the past in the more private, intimate, and self-contained space of a middle-class white family whose son has been accused of committing a murder, Gordimer is presenting a kind of microcosm of the wider political process of remembering, forgetting and reconciling that was being played out in the commission hearings. (Kossew 134)

Hence, Kossew suggests that the way in which Herald and Claudia deal with their son’s murder represents the way in which South African society handles the TRC
process. The past has to be dealt with and cannot be wished away, forgotten as an idealization of ‘white’ South Africa and the ‘white’ world.

The novel focuses on four stages of the process of Justice: the period in anticipation of the trial; its rescheduling; the hearings in a court of law and the consequences of the trial; in order to examine to what extent they reflect upon the themes that dominate the TRC process. Duncan appoints a lawyer named Hamilton Motsamai, a black man after being arrested for murder. Duncan does not want his parents to come to visit him. The narrative focuses on the way in which Duncan’s crime disrupts his parents’ relationship and social life during the period of waiting, in anticipation of the trial. The Lindgards have never been to court before. The idea of murder fills Lindgards with repugnance “so long as nobody moved, nobody uttered, the word and the act within the word could not enter here. Now with the touch of a switch and the gush of a breath a new calendar is opened. The old Gregorian cannot register this day. It does not exist in that means of measure” (HG 5). Harald and Claudia are engrossed in their own sorrow and fail to understand how violence has entered their safe environment.

The novel seeks to search the truth. The portrayal of Duncan’s trial and his family’s response to his murder is not about pleading guilty but about confession. Similar confessions were made throughout the country’s truth and reconciliation process. The TRC disclosed the suffering of individuals and attempted to construct a shared history by means of public acknowledgements of the perpetrator’s guilt. The narrative seeks the truth about what has happened like the TRC. The narrator conveys how the characters feel about what happened and how they attempt to find an explanation for Duncan’s violent behaviour.

Duncan does not wish to explain his behaviour when Harald and Claudia visit him in prison. He initially remains silent about what happened and does not cooperate with his lawyer. During the public hearings of the TRC the right to remain silent about one’s misdeeds was often addressed. Motsamai urges Harald and Claudia to get involved in the process and asks them to convince Duncan to tell him the truth about what happened. They manage to persuade Duncan to
confide in his lawyer, but he still does not want to tell his parents what happened. It is Motsamai who eventually provides Harald, Claudia and the reader with a better understanding of Duncan’s intentions as he determines Duncan’s motive and “explains Duncan’s confession as a type of suicide for Duncan after his humiliation and fall from grace” (Durst 305).

The novel suggests that telling the truth is valuable just like the aim of the TRC. It can be stated that Gordimer regards storytelling as “a form of liberation and a shield against forgetting or the repetition of past sins” (Durst 311). Harald and Claudia appreciate the trial as it provides them with all the facts about the murder their son committed and concurrently helps them to cope with it “there is something salutary, necessary, for Herald and Claudia, perhaps even for their son himself, in this plain setting out of facts that, within themselves, have been so overgrown by emotion and entangled out of comprehension by distress” (HG 253).

It has often been suggested that the TRC attempted to achieve justice through shared accountability. The very fact that the TRC was willing to hold the entire country responsible for what happened under Apartheid, has caused fierce controversy. Besides those involved in the TRC process, critics seem to disagree whether atrocities constituted individual responsibility or collective guilt. the dilemma can be summarized as “what degree of autonomy, in other words, is to be granted to the private choices of a private life, especially in a country where the majority of the population has had so little control over their own lives” (Medalie 639). The novel raises a similar question, as it blames individuals but also develops a notion of shared guilt.

Harald and Claudia feel guilty about Duncan’s crime. They reassess Duncan’s upbringing in order to find out what might have influenced Duncan to commit such a crime. The opening line of the novel describes that something terrible has happened. There is a description of a suicide in the novel that happened at Duncan’s boarding school years ago. Although Harald and Claudia were concerned when they heard that one of Duncan’s classmates had killed himself, they did not consider their safe environment invaded by the boy’s suicide.
failed to detect how it influenced their son’s life, until they identified it as “the forgotten other time, first time, they were invaded by a happening that had no place in their kind of life they believed they had ensured for their son” (HG 69). There can be no evading of violence, death or tragedy - all have to bear responsibility or sooner or later one has to face it.

Harald visits Duncan’s cottage and comes across a notebook there. Harald does not wish to interfere in Duncan’s relationship with Natalie but he desires to attain the truth “Harald is what is known as a great reader, which means a searcher after something that is ambitiously called the truth” (HG 27). One of the passages of Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot* in the notebook provides him with an insight into Duncan’s relationship with Natalie “Harald recognized with the first few words, Dostoevsky, yes, Rogozhin speaking of Nastasya Filippovna. ‘She would have drowned herself long ago if she had not had me; that’s the truth. She doesn’t do that because, perhaps, I am more dreadful than the water’” (HG 47). He learns that Duncan feels responsible for Natalie. Dostoevsky’s words suggest that Natalie would have killed herself, had Duncan not saved her. Later on, Harald discovers that Duncan had indeed saved Natalie from drowning and attempted to protect her on other occasions. As Natalie had a history of depression and already tried to kill herself once, Duncan might have considered it necessary to kill Carl in order to save her from being exploited by Carl. Hence, murdering Carl was not so much an act of jealousy, but an attempt to protect the girl from another depression or suicide. Thus, Duncan’s true motivation for murder is eventually revealed.

Duncan’s trial gets postponed and Motsamai is pleased with the postponement as it provides him with extra time to prepare his defence. He wants Duncan to be tested by a psychiatrist because he wishes to prove that Duncan “momentarily lost the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong” (HG 91). When Duncan’s trial is postponed, the personal seems to become political. Harald and Claudia are still immersed in their own anxieties but they try to cope with the country’s reversal of roles. Harald and Claudia are truly challenged with the topsyturvy social reality of post-apartheid South Africa when they “find themselves
dependent upon a distinguished black lawyer to defend their son” (*HG* 89). Hence, Harald and Claudia gradually realise that this “black man will act, speak for them. They have become those who cannot speak, act, for themselves” (*HG* 89). Consequently, the novel alludes to change “in the democratic South-Africa, the tables have been turned, and Hamilton Motsamai wields power in the legal system” (Stobie 170). This insight of change is conveyed through Duncan, because his crime and the trial that follows set the process off. The text suggests that things have changed between blacks and whites by the dismantling of *apartheid*. Duncan also has to appear before a black judge and his defence is carried out by a black lawyer like the TRC was presided over by Archbishop Tutu and the majority of the commissioners were black and coloured judges. As Duncan is white, the novel suggests that it predominantly concerned white South Africans who had to appear in courtrooms or before the TRC and were at risk of being persecuted. Just as many blacks were deprived of their rights and voices under the apartheid regime, Harald and Claudia currently lose their voice to Hamilton Motsamai.

Though Harald and Claudia do not think themselves as racists, their behaviour occasionally suggests otherwise. For instance, they wonder whether it is an advantage or a disadvantage that Duncan is represented by a black lawyer. Hence to establish whether Hamilton Motsamai is the most competent lawyer to defend his son, Harald asks one of his company’s legal advisers about Motsamai’s competence. The adviser is convinced that Motsamai is an exceptional senior counsel who excels in cross examination. However, he understands Harald’s doubts with regard to Motsamai’s colour because of the country’s former policy of racial segregation:

> It is a fact, incontrovertible fact, due to racial prejudice in the old regimes, black lawyers have had far less experience than white lawyers, and experience is what counts. They’ve had fewer chances to prove themselves; it’s their disadvantage as yours, if entrusting defence to most of them. If you were to say to me, now, that you still would prefer to have a white counsel - that’s a different matter.
I should have no comment. You are the one who has the grave burden. I can simply say: with Motsamai you are in good hands. (HG 38)

Harald and Claudia are bothered when Motsamai launches into first name terms, as he does so “without bothering to ask permission for them” (HG 86). The whites were previously addressed by their surnames due to the discriminatory policies of the apartheid regime. In doing so, Motsamai points out that things have changed “he has complete authority over everything in the enclosure of their situation. Motsamai, the stranger from the other side of the divided past. They are in his pink-palmed hands” (HG 86).

The violence that was carried out in the struggle over apartheid completely demoralised the country. Faith was believed to enhance reconciliation and nation-building considering that South Africa has always been considered as a highly religious nation. The religious character of TRC was believed to promote an understanding of the past. Religion was used as a means to establish a more positive attitude between blacks and whites. Shore and Kline consider religion in the truth and reconciliation process can be considered as “a necessary step in a peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy. Though neither a miracle nor a model, the TRC stands as an example, however, flawed, of a transitional justice body that found a religious dimension of a people vital to a successful transition” (328-29). Hence, Motsamai links Harald’s Catholicism and Claudia’s Humanism in order to establish a better future. As the narrator points out:

What a strong argument for the defence a dramaturge like Motsamai could make of that the force of perversion and evil the woman Natalie must have been to bring this accused to fling aside into a clump of fern the sound principles with which he was imbued one, the sacred injunction, thou shalt not kill, two, the secular code, human life is the highest value to be respected. (HG 98-99)
The values and certainties of people were strongly challenged as South Africa’s major power shifts represented enormous change. Likewise, when Harald and Claudia find themselves in a terrible crisis because of Duncan’s murder, they try to fall back upon the ideologies they previously held on to. Whereas Harald is a devout Catholic who regularly attends mass, Claudia is a Humanist. Claudia’s Humanism seems to challenge Harald’s religion while Claudia and Harald are trying to find an explanation for Duncan’s murder in these ideologies. The TRC’s amnesty committee argued that perpetrators of Apartheid horrors should get a chance to improve their lives. Hence, the perpetrators were given the opportunity to express their remorse and act on it by being better Christians. Motsamai argues that Duncan deserves a life after his imprisonment considering that Motsamai draws attention of the judges towards the moral principles which were instilled in Duncan’s mind by his parents.

The TRC strives to attain justice through the principle of collective responsibility. As Llewellyn and Howse suggest, the entire South African community should participate in the TRC process. It “must include not just the individuals who were perpetrators and victims in the conventional sense, but those in their communities who were supporters and silent witnesses and those painfully affected by the incident” (380). With regard to the novel, Duncan’s parents gradually come to confront their involvement in past atrocities because of their son’s crime. Until the arrest of Duncan the dismantling of Apartheid had not really changed the lives of Harald and Claudia. However, now they find themselves in a terrible crisis, they somewhat identify themselves with those who have experienced similar or even worse hardships in the past. Harald and Claudia are unable to liberate themselves from collective white guilt, because they never did anything to change South African society. Harald and Claudia, in due course of time learn that the fact that they have been bystanders of past atrocities is what makes them accountable. Harald and Claudia “could understand themselves as complicit with some aspects of perpetrator violence or acknowledge the ways in which they directly and indirectly benefited from the suffering of others” (Schafer and Smith 1578).
The pain of the murder committed by their son can be interpreted as the price Harald and Claudia pay for their reluctance to act against South Africa’s former regime of oppression. According to Stobie, Duncan is, therefore, “the scapegoat who carries the symbolic weight of the history of violence and oppression” (170). However, the novel also suggests ironically that the Lindgards problem cannot be compared to the pain that was caused by the Apartheid regime:

There had been so much cruelty enacted in the name of the state they had lived in, so many fatal beatings, moral interrogations, a dying man driven across a thousand kilometres naked in a police van; common-law criminals singing through the night before the morning of execution, hangings taking place in Pretoria while a second slice of bread pops up from the toaster - the penalty unknown individuals paid was not in question compared with state crime. None of it had anything to do with them. (HG 126)

These lines point towards another reversal of roles whereas the Lindgards previously thought that these acts of violence had nothing to do with them, but defined the lives of other people, presumably blacks - they are forced to realize that injustice affects the entire society.

Harald and Claudia initially deal with questions of guilt individually. Their different ways of coping with the past stand between them and disrupts their relationship. When Motsamai invites the Lindgards to a party at his house, there is a distance between Harald and Claudia. Harald assumes that she uses the party in order to get away from him, because she had never spent time amongst black or coloured families before, “he had the curious feeling she wanted to move away from him, away among others choosing their food, among them, these strangers not only of this night, but of all her life outside the encounters in her profession. The dissection of their being into body parts” (HG 170). Claudia merely tries to enjoy herself, as she has not been able to do for a while. However, Motsamai’s party can be considered as an eye opener for both of them by claiming that “the Lindgards experience at Motsamai’s house a distinctively African fellowship and
conviviality that there is a revelation to them” (Diala 65). Hence, they gradually get closer again, when they recognize that they are in the same position. Despite different interpretations of their child and the crime committed by him, the Lindgards seem to share a crime themselves “revulsion was the crime, committed against their own child and they were in it together. The seals of silence there had been between them broken” (HG 120).

When Duncan is brought before the judges in a court of law, South African politics is truly attended to. Issues such as the country’s culture of violence and the availability of guns, and the debate about capital punishment are addressed while Motsamai and the prosecutor carry out their interrogations and Duncan’s fate is decided. Motsamai pleads that Duncan is not guilty because of extenuating circumstances. Natalie is very negative about Duncan when she is interrogated by Motsamai. For instance, she claims that he is a manipulative character who controls her entire life and argues that he is afraid of her. Natalie taunts Duncan about his middle class background and describes him as chaotic. Motsamai uses her behaviour and her negative attitude towards Duncan and proves she has had her share in what happened to Carl. Although Duncan might have been driven by his love for Natalie and his feelings of responsibility for the latter, he agrees with Motsamai that she has been an influence, because he says that Carl’s murder “was something made possible in me by her” (HG 181).

A feeling of sympathy for as Duncan as perpetrator is produced by Motsamai’s approach to the crime and his interrogation of Natalie. This rarely happened during the hearings of the TRC, as those involved in the process usually sympathised with the victims. Motsamai argues that Duncan felt emasculated, because of the humiliation of seeing his present and former lover together. He states that Duncan did not plan to take revenge, but suddenly found himself standing at the doorway, the same spot where he saw Carl and Natalie the night before. Carl’s answer “o dear. I am sorry, bra” (HG 155) disturbed Duncan because it made him think about the end of their relationship. Carl’s indifference and lack of shame supposedly shocked him:
Jespersen’s unexpected presence on the very sofa where the degrading spectacle had taken place, Jespersen’s incredible lack of shame, his assumption that it could just be brushed aside between men who were brothers, once even been lovers, over a drink together-this was a second terrible shock on top of the first. Equalling the force of a blow to the head, psychiatric evidence bears out, such shock has the effect of producing blank out. (HG 246)

Carl’s expression of remorse is not sincere, but he expects to get away with it, as was often the case during the hearings of the Amnesty Committee. He underestimates the effect of his act, because he unashamedly deems it all unfortunate and wants Duncan to have a drink with him. Subsequently, something appears to snap within Duncan’s mind. He momentarily loses control of himself and shoots Carl. The murder committed by Duncan points towards the prevalence of crime and violence in contemporary South Africa:

In a society where violence is prevalent the moral taboos against violence are devalued. When it has become, for whatever historical reasons, the way to deal with frustration, despair or injury, natural abhorrence of violence is suspended. Everyone becomes accustomed to the solution of violence, whether victim, perpetrator or observer. You live with it. (HG 226)

Durst claims that Motsamai draws attention to the violence that wreaks havoc in South Africa as the lawyer “invokes the climate of violence, the actual presence of the gun at the house as a possible result of the societal equilibrium” (308). The crime was committed with “a gun that was handy” (HG 215). Hence, this expression “a gun that was handy” draws attention to the inevitability of guns in contemporary South African society. Motsamai, therefore, relates the murder committed by Duncan to South Africa’s culture of violence, and the house gun to the omnipresence of guns in South African society “the climate of violence bears some serious responsibility for the act the accused committed, yes; because of this climate, the gun was there” (HG 271). This fits in with the call of TRC for
collective accountability; besides Duncan, other things are to blame for Carl’s murder.

The TRC offers restorative justice in order to re-establish South Africa’s social equilibrium. Hence, it wishes to restore the balance within South African society and prevent vengeance and future violence. Although South Africa has attempted to move towards justice, violence nevertheless remains a dominant characteristic of post-apartheid South Africa. According to Stephen Clingman, the novel, *The House Gun*, illustrates that Johannesburg is founded on murder “murder underlies the foundations of Johannesburg, and in extended way South Africa is a country that in some sense has been built on murder. The murder in this novel is also the past - an inscrutable past whose essence will not finally be interpreted, understood, or redeemed” (156).

The novel struggles to establish whether justice is possible within the new South Africa. On the one hand, Motsamai achieves justice as he arranges that Duncan receive a lenient punishment and his “effective lawyering not only secures Duncan’s conviction on the least serious charge, guilty of murder with extenuating circumstances, with the minimum sentence of seven years, but leaves all concerned with some sense, that justice has been done” (Durst 308). On the other hand, Harald believes that justice cannot be achieved in a court of law. Justice appears to be irrelevant because he believes that Duncan will be judged, no matter whether or not he is sentenced to death “in the air of the country, they are calling for a referendum; they, not the constitutional court will have the last judgement on murderers like Duncan ... the malediction is upon him even if the law does not exact it. No performance; this is reality” (*HG* 241).

The novel to some extent also reflects upon means of punishment. Harald and Claudia are anxious about the outcome of trial before it has actually begun. Although capital punishment was considered unconstitutional in June 1995 (Bae 49), the possibility of putting a criminal to death appears to be officially recognized at the time of the text’s fictional trial. The death penalty has been incorporated into the novel because the public debate about capital punishment
continued unabated after it was abolished. Whereas the ANC strongly opposed it, many other parties repeatedly asked to reinstate capital punishment, because they thought it would serve as “a deterrent to violent crime” (Bae 61). Although the last few pages of the novel reveal that “the last judgement of the constitutional court has declared the death penalty unconstitutional” (HG 284), the concern of the characters about capital punishment is justifiable.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission discouraged retributive notions of punishment as South Africa wished to set the right example. Likewise, the novel prioritizes rehabilitation to retribution. For instance, Motsamai believes that one should not punish but rehabilitate. He is certain that the death penalty will therefore be abolished, “I’m confident the court will rule that it’s unconstitutional. It will be abolished” (HG 125). The TRC wished to do away with gross human rights violations and death penalty can be judged a similar violation of human rights. As Bae points out, “the experience with capital punishment under apartheid has shaped the values and ideas of the leadership on what they now consider as a relic of a barbarous past and having no place in a civilised legal system” (49). However, Harald thinks that capital punishment can never be abolished for some people “he hears them, those callers for the death cell and the rope, early mornings with the hangman in Pretoria ... the only reconciliation there is for them, lies in the death of one whose act took one of their own, or whose example threatens other lives” (HG 241). As Harald believes that only God can bring true justice into one’s life, he does not wish to retain the death penalty.

In addition to restorative justice, the TRC has encouraged forgiveness by means of Ubuntu. This ancient African philosophy holds that every human being should treat one another with respect. Perpetrators were often forgiven in the spirit of Ubuntu, because many South Africans believed that their community will have no future without forgiveness. Both Duncan’s friend Khulu Dladla and his lawyer Hamilton Motsamai are committed to South Africa’s future and forgive Duncan in the spirit of Ubuntu. Whereas Motsamai is undoubtedly professionally motivated, Khulu seems to be a true friend. For instance, he visits Duncan in prison and is
present throughout the trial. Khulu, apart from being a black man, supports his white friend, Duncan. He helps Motsamai’s defence by testifying that “Natalie tortured Duncan and swears on his own life that it was not in Duncan’s nature to kill” (HG 225). Motsamai and Khulu also represent hope. For instance, Motsamai arranges that Duncan can continue his work as an architect from prison. When Khulu visits the Lindgards at the end of the novel, he convinces them to do something about the child that Natalie is carrying. Consequently, they decide to provide for Natalie and the baby as some sort of reparation.

The novel is positive about South Africa’s future, because the characters acknowledge their guilt and forgive one another despite the fact that continuing violence in post-apartheid South Africa suggests that reconciliation is cannot be truly achieved. The characters in the novel are to some extent, in fact, reconciled with the past. For instance, Harald’s religion taught him how to forgive but he thinks that nothing can be exchanged for forgiveness “so Harald is able to believe his son did it and that he must be punished. No confession (already made), repentance in exchange for forgiveness possible” (HG 105). Nonetheless, Harald somewhat achieves reconciliation because he establishes a new relation to god “out of something terrible something new, to be lived with in a different way, surely, than life was before? This is the country for themselves, here, now. For Harald, a new relation with his god, the god of the suffering he could not have had access to, before” (HG 279). Claudia wants another child after Duncan has been imprisoned. Eventually, she does not get a baby, but Khulu advises them to provide for Duncan’s baby. Duncan’s unborn child represents hope “Natalie has a child who may be Duncan’s or Carl’s, but whom all accept, with varying degrees of difficulty, as an emblem of reconciliation and of hope for the future” (Stobie 169).

Duncan confesses but he never explains his actual motivation nor does he show remorse. Duncan thinks that there is no need to say sorry, because he places remorse “beyond mere performance” (Diala 56). He raises an important issue:

How could they know, any of them, what they have a word for.
How could they know what they are thinking, talking about. Harald
and Claudia, my poor parents, do you want your little boy to come in tears to say I’m sorry? Will it all be mended, a window I smashed with a ball? Shall I be a civilized human being again, for the one, and will god forgive and cleanse me, for the other. Is that what they think it is, this thing, remorse. (HG 281)

Duncan finds salvation in literature like his father. He has been granted permission to work in the library of the prison. While Duncan reads Homer’s *Odyssey*, he comes across a literary passage which explains Duncan’s murder as an act which binds Duncan, Carl and Natalie together “Carl acted, I suffered him, I acted, Natalie suffered me, and that night on the sofa they acted and I suffered them both. We belong to each other” (HG 282). Although Duncan does not really forgive himself, he eventually realises that life and death become one:

> Or throw away the gun in the garden. That was a choice made. Can you break the repetition just by not perpetrating violence on yourself? I have this life, in here. I didn’t give it for his. I’ll even get out of here with it, some year or other. The murderer has not been murdered. My luck, this was abolished in time. But I have to find a way. Carl’s death and Natalie’s child, I think of one, then the other, then the one, then the other. They become one, for me. It does not matter whether or not anyone else will understand Carl, Natalie/Nastasya and me, the three of us. I’ve had to find a way to bring death and life together. (HG 294)

Hence, Duncan thinks about new relations and supposes that the child can possibly bring Carl’s death and his life together, “It’s absurd for the murderer to outlive the murdered. They two, alone together-as two beings are together in only one other human relationship, the one acting, the other suffering him - share a secret that binds them forever together. They belong to each other” (HG 282). The novel can be read as an allegory of the South African process of truth and reconciliation.
The TRC illumines the two texts and makes one understand them better. In South Africa Reconciliation remains a contested term. Merely forgiveness or uneasy co-existence is not Reconciliation; Reconciliation implies knowing and acknowledging the truth about the past. Reconciliation should not be a search for stability without transformation. Reconciliation has often remained at a formal level rather than being translated into policy. Although the TRC has revealed some new truths and enormous amount of information, many cases have not been resolved. Much investigative work needs to be undertaken, and therefore, the issue of establishing a permanent organization to continue investigating the crimes of the past must be considered which can help in engendering a culture of accountability and responsibility. Some individual and collective healing processes in South Africa may have been started by the TRC. However, much social and psychological support for survivors still needs to be undertaken. The TRC substituted truth for justice in South Africa. Racism and violence continues in contemporary South Africa, and the real challenge is to understand the changing nature and roots of violence that still exists - in particular the shift from political to criminal violence. As racism and violence is prevalent in post-apartheid South Africa, an understanding of suffering of others is significant and it will be helpful in providing solution towards peace and stability in South Africa.

The criminal justice system is not adequate to judge the crimes committed by individuals in a society that is permeated by violence. Colonization is a violence committed on the colonized, and State apparatuses are required to maintain the rule of the colonizer. The resulting violence permeates every aspect of life. The difference between the discursive innocence of the dominant whites and their inherent culpability is examined minutely in both the texts, *Disgrace* and *The House Gun*. Lurie as the perpetrator of crime assures an innocence based on his assumption of his domination in South Africa. Harald and Claudia echo his bewilderment at being accused of a crime Lurie thinks is his “nature,” when they cannot understand how they can be responsible for Duncan’s crime. The culpability of Lurie is not at an individual level but a part of ‘white dominance’ in South Africa. Similarly, Duncan is excited into a violent relation because of the
predominance of violence in South Africa which the Lindgards have done nothing to remedy. Both the novels establish crime as not only an individual but a collective responsibility.
Rainbow Nation is a term coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu to describe post-
*apartheid* South Africa. The term was intended to encapsulate the unity of
multiculturalism and the coming-together of people of many different nations,
in a country identified with the strict division of white and black. *Apartheid*
created more than physical distances between colour groups; South Africa is
made up of people with often separated minds. Leaders of the South African
democratic government draw from and modified the ancient African tribal
value called *Ubuntu* as the philosophical basis for their cultural strategy of
unification. From this idea of *Ubuntu*, new concepts to represent South Africa
have emerged, such as the Rainbow Nation of God, which draws on the
Biblical promise of peace and the visual lesson of distinct but inseparable
colours as a powerful rhetorical tool for unity. While colonization and the new
threat of globalization both typically declare themselves good proportionate to
the evilness of the other, such division is precisely what *Ubuntu* challenges. To
be unified, all are accountable to each other.