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The "I" as Implicated Subject: Performative Confession in Rian Malan's *My Traitor's Heart*

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Abstract: Confessional forms of autobiographical writing have predominated in post-apartheid South African literary studies. This paper discusses Rian Malan's *My Traitor's Heart*, published in 1990 during drastic social and political changes in South Africa's transition to democracy. It was one of the first and most prominent examples of this genre. Focusing on Malan's perspective as a white Afrikaner and an "implicated subject", this study explored how his confessional account grappled with the existential dilemma of post-apartheid Afrikaner identity. Malan simultaneously affirmed his Afrikaner identity to confront his implication in apartheid and sought to establish a legitimate place for this identity within the new multicultural society. Through a close reading of Malan's strategic performance, this paper argues that his work offers a means of reimagining the collective self in a new community and understanding historical injustices from a multidimensional perspective. Ultimately, *My Traitor's Heart* contributes to the post-apartheid project of envisioning a more inclusive psychological and topographical construction of individual and collective identity, with the implicated subject as its centre.

Keywords: South African literature; Rian Malan; *My Traitor's Heart*; politics of identity; performativity; confessional narrative; implicated subject

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1. Introduction

In his opening address to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1995, Archbishop Desmond Tutu claimed that "every South African has to some extent or other been traumatised. We are a wounded people . . . we all stand in need of healing". Tutu deliberately used the phrase "every South African" to include the white population in his analysis, with the "we" emphasising the commonality of the traumatising experience of apartheid (see Mengel and Borzaga 2012, p. 7). Although often criticised for its approach to amnesty for perpetrators and its idealism, this policy of reconciliation was a cornerstone of the TRC process. At a macro-level, the TRC played an important role in uncovering the truth about human rights abuses under apartheid in order to "enable South Africans to come to terms with their past and to advance the cause of reconciliation" (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2021). At a micro-level, personal narratives of trauma, testimony, and confession, through their intimate relation to identity construction, also played a role in the creation of a politics of reconciliation.

In this context, autobiographical and historical writing emerged as one of the most popular genres in South Africa, as remembering and reinterpreting the past were seen as vital means of shaping the future in the new political circumstances. This is not surprising, since autobiographical narratives enable their subjects to reconstruct their identities by making sense of who they are in relation to others and their context within a temporal framework that links their past, present, and future (Rogobete 2015, p. 205). During the period of transformation following the apartheid era, literary confession as a vehicle to express issues of identity came to add an important voice to the retelling and reforming of the country[1]. Against this background, the confessional narrative "has become in a sense

"*the genre*" of South African writing" (Brown, as cited in Twidle (2012, p. 6)). This paper examines one of the first and most prominent of these confessional narratives, Rian Malan's *My Traitor's Heart*, which was published in 1990 at a time of profound socio-political upheaval. The discussion focuses on how and for what purpose Malan's confessional narrative might be understood as *performance* of an *implicated*[2] *subject* in Michael Rothberg's term (2019) and as identity politics suited to the post-apartheid South African context. The argument begins with a brief introduction to autobiography and confession exploring implications of the confessional narrative in the post-apartheid socio-political context. It then turns directly to *My Traitor's Heart* to discuss Malan's strategic deployment of *performativity* and identity politics.

2. Autobiography and Confession

At this point, it is useful to look at the relationship between autobiographical writing and confessional narrative. From the early stages of Western culture, the writing process was important to understanding the "I". As Foucault (1988, p. 27) argues, writing about oneself is not a modern tendency that sprang from Romanticism, but one of the most ancient Western traditions (from the Christian creeds and Stoicism). Indeed, it was already established and deeply rooted at the time of Augustine's *Confessions* of the fourth century CE, widely regarded as one of the first autobiographical writings. Since *Confessions*, terms such as memoirs, *the life*, *confessions*, *essays of myself*, *journal,* and *my own life* have been used to describe a writer's self-reflections on history, politics, religion, science, and culture.

Translated literally from the Greek, the term *autobiography* simply means "self-life-writing". One of the most important points to be discussed in contemporary autobiographical studies is the issue of the self. This is linked to the growing interest in the *self* rather than the *life*, and also to the relationship between the *self* and *writing*. Poststructuralist, postmodern, and postcolonial theory, such as Derrida's deconstruction, Barthes's semiotics, and Foucault's discussion of discourse and power, led to the reconceptualisation of the self in the academic humanities from the 1970s (see Smith and Watson 2001, p. 132). In other words, the recent exploration of the self, the subject, subjectivity, and identity that is an important topic in contemporary literary criticism, joins the theorising about autobiographical writing.

During the twentieth century, the erosion of the concept of the united self led to the emergence of a new concept of the self and the truth in autobiographical study. Georges Gusdorf's essay "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography" (Gusdorf 1980) focuses on the creative nature of autobiography, viewing the genre as "art" rather than "history". What the autobiographical subject describes is not historical fact, but his or her own experience of and reflection on the past and present. Therefore, the value of the autobiography is less about the relationship between fact and fiction, than about the author's perspective and subjectivity. From this perspective, Pascal, in *Design and Truth in Autobiography* (Pascal [1960] 1985, p. 7), problematises the factuality of the autobiographical representation, regarding the autobiography as "life-illusion" because the subject of the autobiography is a projected image of the author themself, rather than an objective reflection. Olney (1972, 1980), in a similar vein, puts a greater emphasis on the creative nature of autobiographical activity, arguing that autobiography creates "metaphors of the self" and that it thus presents self-reflection as a process rather than an essence.

In this way, the concept of the universal "I" has been undermined throughout history by various theoretical challenges (such as self-fragmentation and self-alienation). The relationship between language and what it represents is also profoundly problematised. Against this background, a more nuanced investigation of autobiographical writing is possible if the autobiographical text is approached from the perspective of literary production. Put another way, the autobiographical subject has a certain kind of *agency* in their discursive identity formation. In Malan's autobiographical narrative, as we shall see, the author demonstrates his strategic self-positioning for the reformulation of the past, and for the sake of constructing a new identity.

3. Performative Agency and the Confessional Narrative

Autobiographical writing is by nature performative, that is, it serves as a kind of demonstration of the process of identity formation and self-positioning. *Performativity* is a concept coined by Jean-François Lyotard in the theoretical debate surrounding post-modernism. He understands performativity as a measure of legitimation prevalent within the cultural and scientific discourses of contemporary capitalism. Therefore, as Mowitt (1988, xix) argues, the "performativity" implies that political activism, which is essential for social changes, is also useful for analyzing the institutional formation of disciplines. In the context of autobiographical studies, the term "performativity" implies autobiographical activity as a dynamic space for the "performance" of the self. The concept of performance here, which is related to the notion of "performativity", signifies "both an "embodiment", a speaking-out of selfhood, and an enactment of "situation" and "position" which exploits the spatial and substantive metaphors of political affiliation ("This is where I stand on this issue")" (Marcus 1994, pp. 283–84). Accordingly, autobiographical activity can be viewed as a self-conscious performance, implying "I say this, and I would like my audience (readers) to respond to it".

These perspectives on "performativity" and "performance" represent certain general trends in the cultural field such as the appreciation of personal histories, an emphasis on positionality, and the importance of "speaking out" as a means of identity empowerment, while at the same time understanding that identity can be constructed in a variety of ways. As Hall (1994, p. 394) argues, "identities are the names we give to the different ways in which we are positioned by". Cultural identity is not an essence or a stable point, but a matter of positioning. That is why there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, in question. From this perspective, it is possible to investigate how subjects are placed at a specific crossroads in their relationship with power. These questions of agency, performativity, and positioning are central to the approach taken in this paper to Malan's confessional narrative, because in the socio-political context of the new South Africa (to which I shall return below), the author is actively engaged in the "performance" and "positioning" of his identities. His confession is regarded as a conscious attempt of an "implicated subject" to articulate his responsibility and stake out a political affiliation.

Indeed, the particular political and ethical stakes of this context underscore that the performance of a personal identity is also always entangled with questions of collective or communal identity. This is particularly the case for the confessional text, a subset of autobiography particularly concerned with the individual's relationship to the community.

Confession is a plea for forgiveness, pardon, and even condemnation, as long as the confessor can be brought back into the community (Spender 1980, pp. 120–21). A confession could, therefore, entail a record of the penitent's errors and may also be the narrator's attempt towards the reaffirmation of communal values. As such, the performative aspects of confession are particularly pronounced, often directed towards a specific audience or community and motivated by a desire to rejoin the collective. To quote Doody (as cited in Gallagher 2002, p. 18), "Confession is always an act of community, and the speaker's intention to realize himself in community is the formal purpose that distinguishes confession from other modes of autobiography"[3]. Confession allows for the formation of personal and collective identity simultaneously because testimony confirms the reciprocal dependency between the self and the other. Confessional narrative, therefore, implies the moral obligation and ethical responsibility for truth as the narrator attempts to reconstruct the self and rebuild the community.

These elements of confessional narrative, which frequently include the genre of witnessing or testimony, can be perceived in Malan's text. In *My Traitor's Heart,* historical events are observed and documented in both personal and public (i.e., journalistic) terrains. In this paper, I use the term "confessional narrative" so that the more intricate forms of the confessional style utilised in Malan's text may be comprehended. This term is also related to the confessional mode described by Gallagher (2002, p. 17) as "a narrative first-person account by either a fictional or a historical speaker who expresses the need to

testify concerning and admit guilt about certain events in the speaker's life story in order to construct, or reconstruct, a "self" within a particular community". As the confessional narrative of a white Afrikaner, Malan's *My Traitor's Heart*, which emerged in a changing political atmosphere in South Africa, demonstrates the effectiveness of the confessional text in this postcolonial historical context.

4. Redefining Afrikaner Identity and the Position of Implicated Subject

The colonial history of South Africa is a long narrative replete with violence and exploitation. From the periods of Dutch and British colonial rule through the era of apartheid, Indigenous peoples and Africans endured severe oppression and discrimination. The keywords "white" and "black" have adorned the history of South Africa alongside colonialism, imbuing "skin colour" with complex political, historical, and ethical implications. This notion of "skin colour" expanded into "body politics", whereby power regulated and controlled bodies, forming the foundation of apartheid and legitimising discrimination by justifying hatred and violence (Todorov 1986, p. 370). These colonial prejudices defined Africans as inferior "races", savages, disorderly beings, etc., and created a history of violence including the introduction of slavery, the implementation of pass laws, the enactment of the Bantu Education Act, the Sharpeville Massacre (1960), the Soweto Uprising (1976), township violence, and forced removals and relocations. Edward Said, in *Orientalism*, explains how Western biases towards the East (or its Other) evolved into a scientific framework (Said 1978, p. 12). He contends that the Western view of the Other is not an essentialised reality but a spectral image constructed from biased interpretations. Hence, the Other cannot exist independently but is defined as an image regulated by the West. Ultimately, the West perpetuates its superiority through Western culture, morals, religion, and lifestyle, allowing for "flexible positional superiority" to persist in all interactions with non-Europeans, thereby rendering the Other as an inferior subject.

In this context, the South African literature has produced a body of postcolonial works that actively examine the relationship between black and white, historical violence and its remnants, and issues of identity and positioning. Not only black writers such as Zakes Mda and Es'kia Mphahlele but also white authors such as J. M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, and Breyten Breytenbach—despite the diversity in their perspectives—occupy significant positions within this postcolonial literature. These writings deal with the re-evaluation of history, addressing, for example, the painful historical "realities" of life lived in the midst of apartheid, the social and psychological trauma of living under surveillance, and the experiences of black people and people of colour living as outsiders in a white-dominated South African regime.

With the passing of the apartheid era, new forums for storytelling emerged (Schaffer and Smith 2004, p. 65). The new parliament passed the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, mandating the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that would engage in an extensive project of individual and collective remembering. Charged with bringing to the public "as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed during apartheid", the commission sought to "restore the human and civil dignity of such victims by granting them an opportunity to relate their own accounts of the violations of which they are the victims" (TRC 1998, p. 112). Seeking national consensus about the new terms of identification in South Africa—across racial and ethnic divides, across the divide of contested history—the TRC sought to confront South Africa's violent rights-violating past to mark "the birth of a new South African consciousness" (Schaffer and Smith 2004, p. 65).

Such commissions promote the idea that governments, to be legitimated in the eyes of the people, have an obligation to search for the "truth" of the past in order to provide a fair record of a country's history and its government's much-disputed acts (Hayner 1994, p. 607). This social atmosphere of truth-seeking is closely related to the context in which a large volume of autobiographical literature, testimonies, and confessions emerged in the 1990s within the broader framework of historical re-evaluation.

The re-evaluation of history in the post-apartheid era consists of different discourses that involve, in particular, unmasking the myths of Afrikaner history, which were central to the development of apartheid ideology in the early twentieth century. Afrikaner nationalism, with its self-protective "*laager* mentality" arose from myths surrounding the Great Trek and the Battle of Blood River, which were later strengthened by events such as the Anglo-Boer War. Afrikaner identity was, to a great extent, constructed by means of group discourse rather than individual voices. Such group discourses also contributed to the creation of a collective identity of "us" and "them". This collective identity and their myths became an important part of the political ideology of Afrikaner nationalism: "Historically, Afrikaner identity has drawn heavily on Afrikaner nationalism, which depended on several tightly interwoven discourses. These centred on the themes of religious, racial, and cultural purity, superiority" (Verwey and Quayle 2012, p. 553). This ideology of Afrikaner nationalism eventually formed the bedrock of the apartheid system. In this system, white Afrikaners "have either perpetrated or innocently benefited from oppression and exploitation thereby reinforcing the ideology that justified the subordination of black Africans" (Kaunda 2017, p. 5).

It is worth noting that Malan's confessional narrative *My Traitor's Heart* was published in 1990. This year marked the beginning of drastic revolution in the country and the beginning of the period of negotiation (the CODESA period between May 1990 and December 1993), during which time there was intense debate on the issue of the Afrikaner's position in the new South Africa, amongst others. The Afrikaner identity, instrumental in the political, economic, and social ascendancy of Afrikaners, was stigmatised as morally suspect (Van der Westhuizen 2016, p. 3). It is in this context that Malan's Afrikaner identity appeared strongly intermingled with deep-seated anxiety that stemmed from a perpetual sense of "un-belonging" (Scott 2019, p. 25). Malan's book focuses on the inner paradox of white South Africans that involves feelings of guilt and fear and of belonging.

When Afrikaner myths and ideologies began to be dismantled with the political and social transformation at the beginning of the 1990s, the previously sustained Afrikaner identity was also subverted. An urgent attempt to define the concept of "Afrikaner" anew (i.e., the search for a new identity), therefore, became an important issue in the new South Africa. It is not surprising, therefore, that something of a boom in memoir, confessional, and autobiographical writing accompanied the transition to a new political context. Due to the complicity of the former beneficiaries of apartheid in the system, the issues dealt with in many literary and historical studies of white South Africans and in the TRC concern guilt, forgiveness, and reconciliation. The example of the TRC in systemising confession is repeated in various forms in the South African literature, inter alia in autobiographical writing combined with the confessional narrative. This has resulted in public discourse in South Africa being intensely occupied with retribution, re-division, and economic empowerment.

As the first independent political body in the post-apartheid era, the TRC commenced in 1996, founded on a confessional principle for which there had hitherto been no prior example. In the TRC, victims were invited to testify, and former perpetrators of apartheid atrocities were granted amnesty provided they told the full truth about the events. In this regard, Farred (2004, p. 114) critically points out the politics of the TRC:

> The TRC [. . .] represents the Oprah-isation of (mainly white) national guilt and expi- ation [. . .] According to TRC logic, apartheid constituted a traumatic event that can be exorcised by the confessional—the bearing witness in front of the whole country. The TRC, in terms of both its live performance and its many subsequent narrativisations, provides the means for the public telling of the story, [. . .] the composition of apartheid history as a series of meae culpae. [. . .]The TRC represents the melding into a peculiarly South African oneness, the unity of the present that is born out of the segregation of the past, the claiming of a national singularity that supersedes past divisions.

The TRC practice, in which a person confesses their guilt concerning specific events in the past, can be seen as a process towards formulating a new national memory. This national discourse, therefore, sought to shape a new South African identity by reclaiming the past, allowing previously silenced voices to be heard, and rewriting history. The public drama of witnessing was also accompanied by the personal confessional accounts of ordinary Afrikaners. In these confessions, one could frequently recognise the attempt by Afrikaners to negotiate their position in a democratic South Africa.

At this point, Michael Rothberg's concept of the "implicated subject" can provide an important framework for analysis. This is because the process of confession reveals the collective responsibility of those positioned as beneficiaries. These are people who do not fit neatly into clear categories of victims or perpetrators. They occupy histories and structures of racial privilege and white supremacy. In the context of South Africa, they occupy histories and structures of the colonialism and the apartheid policy.

> An implicated subject is neither a victim nor a perpetrator, but rather a participant in histories and social formations that generate positions of victim and perpetrator, and yet in which most people do not occupy such clear-cut roles. Less "actively" involved than perpetrators, implicated subjects do not fit the mold of the "passive" bystander either. Although indirect or belated, their actions and inactions help produce and reproduce positions of victims and perpetrators. [...]. Modes of implication—entanglement in historical and present-day injustices—are complex, multifaceted, and sometimes contradictory, but are nonetheless essential to confront in the pursuit of justice". (Rothberg 2019, pp. 1–2)

An example that illustrated the position of the implicated subject was Antjie Krog's *Country of my Skull* (Krog [1998] 2002), in which the narrator described her inner struggle with feelings of guilt in her attempt to negotiate her Afrikaner identity. In *Country of My Skull*, fragments of the traumatic memories of the victims of history are interwoven with Krog's autobiographical narrative. The narrating "I", who had previously been in the position of a privileged Afrikaner, is a witness at the TRC. Krog's inner turmoil concerning her Afrikaner identity and the position of the Afrikaner in the new South Africa comes to the fore. Krog's book can be seen as an acknowledgement of complicity as well as an apology. White South Africans who attended the TRC hearings, journalists who reported on it, and second-hand witnesses like those viewing the proceedings on television at home could experience their complicity by acknowledging the ways in which they were directly or indirectly responsible for the suffering of others.

In this regard, confessional narrative could become "a productive site for dislodging the binary schema of victim–perpetrator stances and for representing the complex and problematic visibility" of the implicated subjects (see Schaffer and Smith 2006, p. 1578). In turn, the writing process may have also played a therapeutic role for at least some white writers, i.e., a means of redemption or release from a guilty conscience[4]. What is more, I submit that confessional narratives offer Krog and Malan a *performative* space, where a reconstruction of the self and a reformulation of the identity, essential for survival and acceptance in the new social and political context, might take place. The confusion and inner discord of Afrikaner identity and the investigation into what it means to be an Afrikaner in the new post-apartheid South Africa have been evident in different areas from the beginning of 1990 through to the present day. With the particular implications of performative confession and Afrikaner identity in the post-apartheid South African context in mind, I now turn directly to Malan's *My Traitor's Heart*.

5. *My Traitor's Heart* as a Confessional Narrative of an Afrikaner

In *My Traitor's Heart*, Malan reports the events that occurred during the period of political transition. Although working as a journalist at the time, Malan wrote the text using a variety of narrative forms. The book begins as an autobiography but changes from the second chapter ("Tales of Ordinary Murder") onwards into a series of stories involving murder that are reminiscent of a police record or a newspaper report. Various

anecdotes, observations, and court hearings are presented in this text. The multiplicity of the narrative forms in the text, ranging through autobiography, historiography, political commentary, journalism, fiction, and confessional narrative also reflects the multiplicity of the author's subjectivity.

Indeed, the factual information that Malan relates is densely interwoven with a (frequently unstable) personal perspective. The "history" portrayed is, therefore, ambiguous, complicated, and sometimes contradictory. For this reason, reviewers such as Cook (2001, p. 80) have criticised Malan, asserting that the text stands between journalism and personal or emotional narrative and between authenticity and subjectivity. With his account situated in a liminal space between fact and fiction, Malan (1991, p. 410) acknowledges that what he narrates does not comprise journalistic and historical truth: "I am so deeply enmeshed in half-truths and fictionalization of myself that I'll never escape until I simply tell the truth". Autobiographical narrative transforms empirical facts into artefacts, and the autobiographer follows the process of selecting, ordering, and interpreting life experiences. Personal experience gives meaning to the "truth" of history; conversely, historical events influence the interpretation of one's personal life. To what extent, then, can there be any allusion made to pure historical "truth" in autobiographical texts like this by Malan?

In the epilogue of *Le pacte autobiographique*, Lejeune (as cited in Olney 1980, p. 18) suggests that autobiography as a genre encompasses a range of heterogeneous and complex self-referential writings, "one should not think of a specific genre as an isolated or isolable thing but should think in terms of an organic system of genres within which transformations and interpenetrations are forever occurring". Freely crossing different genres, autobiography in the modern literature, from a stylistic point of view, is characterised by its heterogeneous and hybrid character. Malan's text also contains elements of the journal, newspaper article, historical records, family memoir, autobiography, confession, testimony, essay, fiction, short novel, and travel writing. Such an omnivorous form with varied generic elements give a heterogeneous character to the text despite its outward journalistic appearance. In a similar vein, Coburn (1990, p. 2) asserts that Malan's book is under no obligation to be purely journalistic: "He is enduring his own long night of the soul, and he has absolutely no obligation to adhere to any of the conventions of pure journalism". Through this manner of writing that blurs the lines between historical fact and personal experience and the journalistic and the autobiographical, Malan creates a heterogeneous and hybrid autobiographical form that reflects his search for a suitable form of self-representation in the new South Africa. In an interview, Malan himself commented as follows: "Did people want me to write an objective, academic treatise? The thing I wanted to describe is like a feeling of being white and living with your own shadows" (Moodley 1990, p. 4).

In this sense, one could also view Malan's narrative as representing the honesty of "subjective truth". Gusdorf (1980, p. 43) similarly argues that factual truth is subordinate to the truth of the self in autobiography, because it is the self (*autos*) that is actually in question, i.e., "the narrative offers us the testimony of a man about himself, the contest of a being in dialogue with itself, seeking its innermost fidelity". The significance of autobiography must therefore be sought beyond truth and falsehood. Consequently, there is need of a second critique that, instead of verifying the literal accuracy of the narrative, its artistic value would attempt to draw out its innermost private significance by viewing it as the symbol or the parable of a consciousness in quest of its own truth (Gusdorf 1980, p. 44). Therefore, what ultimately matters in all processes of witnessing is not simply the information and the establishment of the facts but the experience itself of *living through testimony* and of giving testimony (Laub 1992, p. 85). The stress on "living through testimony" suggests that both individual and social change are possible through the transformative power of testimony and the power to (re)inscribe humanity and subjective agency into both social and psychic life.

While Malan engages the past in *My Traitor's Heart*, he portrays the inward pain of a white South African with "diachronic implication" who is living with a discordant

heart. He loves the country but is in mourning for its history. He loves his family but rues the community that assisted in its formation. It is my contention that Malan's liminal self-positioning in this manner should be understood as a kind of socio-cultural *performance*. The impure position of implicated subject can be analytically and politically productive (Rothberg 2019, p. 37) and "technologies of the self" (Foucault 1988, pp. 16–49) are most effectively demonstrated in the practices of self-production and performativity. Against this background, Malan's confessional narrative could be regarded as a *performance* of the implicated subject and the Afrikaner, which takes place in a process of multiple self-positioning within complex socio-cultural discourses.

At this point, it would be worthwhile to attend in more detail to how Malan's painful search for identity as a white South African at the end of apartheid is portrayed in his hybrid form of autobiographical writing.

Malan begins by telling the story of Dawid Malan, his ancestor, who left everything (his wife, his beautiful property, Vergelegen, and the world of Voltaire and Rousseau) behind to flee into the interior of Africa with Sara, his neighbour's slave girl. While there is no record of his actions during the twenty-seven years he spent beyond the Great Fish River, those were probably formative years for him. He returned as "a race-hating white savage" (Malan 1991, p. 26) and a ringleader of the Slagtersnek Rebellion. The first part of the book shifts between this historical perspective and the more personal story of the author's youth. As a young adult, Rian Malan presents himself as "a Just White Man" (Malan 1991, pp. 286, 412), a white liberal, and even a communist who places all the blame for the country's ills on the white oppressor and the government. When he can no longer endure the madness of the situation, he escapes to the USA, eventually returning eight years later to write a book about the Malans. *My Traitor's Heart*, originally planned to trace the history of the Malan family, became an unmasking of the mental dispositions of both black and white South Africans.

The tales of "ordinary murder" in the South Africa that Malan goes on to explore are presented together with the guilty and tortured conscience of the author. For Malan, each of these tales represents a disease in the country, a scourge visited on the land due to apartheid. He juxtaposes the political violence, human rights violations, and trauma inflicted by the oppressive apartheid system on black South African victims with the violence and "ordinary murder" in the country of which white South Africans were also victims.

He narrates the stories of the horrendous murder of Dennis Moshweshwe, who died under torture meted out by an inebriated drunk white man, and of Moses Mope, who was kicked and killed by another. With these murderers on the one hand, we find the series of murders committed by Simon Mpungose, the Hammerman of Empangeni, on the other. This story forms an important part of Malan's book. The Hammerman breaks into the homes of white people, apparently without any motive other than to crush the skulls of white men. It is clear that the Hammerman is not fully sane, but his story is handled with complexity. During Mpungose's hearing, Malan hears the story of this black man who had been persecuted under apartheid and felt compelled to hate whites and do them harm. Malan is not content with this explanation of the Hammerman's background and thus investigates his history in order to gain an understanding of the motivation for his gruesome deeds. In court, Mpungose states: "The court is full aware of what happened. . . . In fact, m'lord, I might state quite bluntly that I am not sorry for all what I did. In fact, my heart is free, and I feel relieved" (Malan 1991, p. 203). He continues:

> I have given the reasons that caused me to act in this manner. It is because of what I had witnessed happening to my fellow black men and also to me, because of all that was done to us by the white people. There is no fairness on this earth. (Malan 1991, p. 203)

This unusual statement by the murderer juxtaposes the issues of right and justice within the political and social system. Mpungose does not regret the atrocities committed by him but feels relief at having in some sense made good (or paid back) the injustice meted out to him by history and apartheid. In this manner, the Hammerman wishes to clarify how

justice ought to be administered. Malan (1991, p. 205) comes to realise that the structural injustice that the Hammerman alluded to had been shaped by his own ancestors, with whom he still has to identify:

> Mpungose's life had surely been shaped by forces I knew and understood—by D.F. Malan's apartheid, by Verwoerd's Bantu Education policies, and by Vorster's barbaric prisons, I presumed to know exactly what Simon meant when he spoke of a world without fairness.

The stories in this book are those that can be read in the daily newspaper, but Malan brings readers into the realm of understanding by sketching the backgrounds of both the victims and the offenders. Readers observe not only white men killing black men but black men murdering white men, and black men murdering one another. In this sense, this book could be regarded as a *testimonio* against both white and black South Africans—a kind of testimony against apartheid but also an indictment of the dissonance among black people in South Africa. Malan outlines, for instance, the black conflict and bloody struggles between groups such as AZAPO and the UDF, together with horrifying examples of atrocities committed against members of the "wrong" factions. He asserts that, with this writing, he tries to revive truths about South Africa that had effectively been suppressed and he confesses that "the things that he knew about South Africa were regulated by a kind of taboo about which you were not supposed to talk. You were not supposed to talk about the fact that *you, as a white person, were afraid in South Africa*, or about *the Coloured Malans* [emphasis added] in Bonteheuwel" (as cited in Krüger 1990, p. 11). The act of writing becomes "an act of catharsis" (Jones 1990, p. 49) for him.

In this way, the author blurs the line between black and white, oppressors and victims, and good and evil under the apartheid system. Since identity is often predicated on an act of recognition that presupposes exclusion and demarcation, and especially so in apartheid South Africa, where such demarcations were written into law, Malan uses the "bastard" identity (*the Coloured Malans*) in his confessional narrative. In this way, both the identity of Malan and that of the white South African are contextualised within the inclusive space of South Africa. In the process of identity formation, Malan tries to stake out a liminal position between "South African" and "Afrikaner". The experience of the intermediate position is characteristic of the way in which identities are positioned in Malan's text. Perhaps the remark by Morley and Robins (1993, p. 27) is also valid in this case: "Identity must live out of this tension. Our feet must learn to walk on both banks of the river at the same time". In this sense, Malan's confessional narrative gains great value in his negotiation with history and with himself.

Malan's ambivalent and paradoxical self-positioning can be understood as a representation of the emotional and positional uncertainty experienced by Afrikaners in the new South Africa in general, as the next section will now explore.

6. The Paradox of the Self and the Positioning of the Afrikaner

It seems that a change in positioning is a necessary process for adaptation to a new society. In *My Traitor's Heart*, the ambivalent positioning of the author brings paradoxical aspects to the fore by means of his voices that vary between expressing love for and a fear of black people. There are also voices that call for the radical denial of Afrikaner identity and the unavoidable acknowledgement thereof. This ambivalent positioning represents the strategic liminal self-positioning of an Afrikaner during the period of transition in South African history.

Malan is a descendant of colonisers who helped establish the country. They include D. F. Malan, one of the architects of apartheid, and Magnus Malan, the then-Minister of Defence (Malan 1991, p. 15). Due to this family background that established him as an Afrikaner, Malan had long been riddled with shame and, therefore, tried to deny his Afrikaner heritage. In his book, he commences his search for identity with an initially harsh criticism of Afrikaners and continues the attempt to distance himself from the Afrikaner identity, as in the following quotation:

> They had become Afrikaners, the white tribe of Africa, arrogant, xenophobic, and "full of blood", as the Zulus say of tyrants. . . . They spoke of themselves as bearers of the light, but in truth they were dark of heart, and they knew it, and willed it so. (Malan 1991, p. 27)

He regards this act of self-deception as the central force that drove the Afrikaners' history. The guilt of history (and of his Afrikaner forefathers) thus leads to harsh criticism of the Afrikaner: "The word *Afrikaner* . . . had become synonymous with "spiritual backwardness, ethnical decay, cruelty, dehumanization, armed baboon bandits, and the stigma of brutal violence"" (Malan 1991, p. 157). In distancing himself from particular Afrikaner values, Malan (1991, p. 53) accordingly adds other value to his identity by adopting liberal values:

> We were into the concept of just war and supported the struggle of the people against the tyranny of the rockspiders, crunchies, hairybacks, ropes, and bloody Dutchman. Those were the names by which we referred to Afrikaners. I was an Afrikaner, too, but I was a member of a subspecies known as the detribalized krantz athlete—that is, a Boer who'd somehow become a liberal or whatever and thrown himself in the struggle against apartheid.

Malan (1991, p. 95) also states the following: "I, Malan, an Afrikaner secretly beset by all manner of racist equivocations, called myself Nelson Mandela. It was meant as a tribute". With this, he set aside his identity as an Afrikaner and consistently tried to draw a line between "their kind of Afrikaners" and himself as a liberal Afrikaner rebel. This led to his communist and socialist activities on behalf of black people.

The paradoxical nature of his identity is related to his education. As is the case with a large majority of white children in South Africa, he was cared for by a black childminder. Growing up, he developed a true affinity for black people, which may have been unusual for someone who grew up in an atmosphere of strict racial separation. While explaining his reasons for becoming a "communist", he tells a story from his youth. On his way home from school one day, he saw a black man being assaulted by whites because he had stolen a purse. In a vaguely self-deprecatory manner, he describes how he felt at the time.

> All my sympathy lay with the black, because he seemed an underdog. That is how I was. I was a sentimental little fellow who liked natives and thought it a pity that they were so poor and that so many whites were nasty to them. (Malan 1991, p. 51)

This somewhat sentimental conceptualisation of his relationship with black people developed into social idealism, and he painted the slogan "I'm Black and I'm Proud" in large letters against a wall (Malan 1991, p. 62). Malan recalls how proud he had been during a visit to Soweto: "If anyone asked what whitey was doing here, Mike spoke up for me. "He's a liberal rebel of the Afrikaner *volk*", he said. "I'll go the whole hog for him." That, too, meant a lot to me" (Malan 1991, p. 286).

However, Malan confesses that his liberal sentiments and his emotional affinity to black people were actually pretence and *performance*. As a result, there are two layers of *performance* going on in this text: Malan's younger self's liberal *performance*, and that of the older Malan in the text itself. After having returned to South Africa, he admitted in an interview that he had actually always been afraid of the future, of black people, and of particular situations in South Africa (Krüger 1990, p. 11). In several places in the book, he also confirms having a fear of black people and of the situation at the end of apartheid (Krüger 1990, pp. 289–90). Throughout the book, it is possible to see how Dawid Malan's flight with the enslaved woman relates to Rian Malan's own eight-year departure from the country. This connection with Dawid Malan strengthens the ideological paradox of the author's love and fear of black people. Through his fear, he comes to realise that he, in the end, is not able to be a black person, as he had earlier tried to pretend with "I'm Black and I'm Proud". He admits, "I was scared of them, and yet I loved them. It was a most paradoxical condition" (Malan 1991, p. 88). This emotional ambivalence regarding black

people results in his oscillation or "yaw[ing] between extremes (Malan 1991, p. 88)", caught in the paradox of positioning facing Afrikaners in South Africa.

> I ran away because I was scared of the coming changes, and scared of the consequences of not changing. I ran because I wouldn't carry a gun for apartheid, and because I wouldn't carry a gun against it. I ran away because I hated Afrikaners and loved blacks. I ran away because I was an Afrikaner and feared blacks. You could say, I suppose, that I ran away from the paradox. (Malan 1991, p. 33)

In this way, Malan tries to describe the dilemma of a white person who is simultaneously aware of the shocking inequality of the apartheid system and their personal fear of the other (black people). The subject position with a diachronic implication is often found in the collective responsibility for historical legacies. Therefore, it necessarily occupies complex and sometimes dilemmatic self-positioning. The subject position of the implicated subject is frequently found to be crosscutting. To paraphrase Primo Levi, the zone of implication possesses an "incredibly complicated internal structure" (Rothberg 2019, p. 48). This dilemma leads him to acknowledge that he ultimately cannot escape his identity as an Afrikaner. His confession reads as follows:

> In our imaginations, painting "I'm Black and I'm Proud" on a wall was an entirely logical act of subversion. In the real South Africa, it was pointless. . . . The sole result of the entire effort was to boost our sense of self-righteousness. (Malan 1991, pp. 62–63)

With this confession, he admits that the psychological background of his struggle on behalf of black people may have been the result of an Afrikaner's feelings of guilt and self-comforting.

He eventually arrives at the acceptance of being an Afrikaner. He says, "I was one of them. I didn't have to dig in the archives for Dawid Malan; I looked in the mirror and there he was" (Malan 1991, p. 412), and "If Dawid Malan had a disease of the soul, then Rian Malan had it too" (Malan 1991, p. 412). To make a confession or apologise from the perspective of an Afrikaner, Malan must first position himself as an Afrikaner. Therefore, he concedes that he had always been an Afrikaner, despite having believed that he was an enlightened political exile. His acceptance of his inescapable identity as an Afrikaner is presented as follows: "I've never particularly felt like an Afrikaner, but then I am one. I have spent most of my life trying to pretend that I wasn't and then realised that there wasn't anything as pathetic as denying what I am" (Smythe 1990). Malan (1991, p. 89) indicates that white people in South Africa are not really able to escape the destiny with which they are saddled. They will always remain white and they will also always be aware of the "primordial and primeval" identity of whiteness in South Africa.

However, Malan's identification with Afrikaners is related to the question of "who am I?" in an ethnic sense, which does not just denote a certain shared language, belief system, and rituals, but also refers to a certain claim to represent individuals belonging to a specific ethnicity and speak on their behalf (Alsheh and Elliker 2015, p. 434). He thus confesses on behalf of Afrikaners as follows:

> What would you have me say? That I think apartheid is stupid and vicious? I do. That I'm sorry? I am, I am. . . . [I]n truth I was always one of them. I am a white man born in Africa, and all else flows from there. (Malan 1991, p. 29)

Malan (1991, pp. 201, 289) admits that he possesses a "secret racist heart" with a "primal fear" of black Africans and their violence. He mentions that he named the book *My Traitor's Heart* because he had tried to join one side (either the apartheid system or the ANC) by "betraying that side to the other in the interest of compromise" (as cited in Moodley 1990, p. 4). This made him aware that what he was doing constituted the betrayal of his people in general and that of his left-minded comrades. He admits that he, in his final analysis, was betraying everyone, including himself.

> I had betrayed the memory of my dead friend Piet, and all my promises to Miriam and her grandchildren. I had betrayed the brotherly spirit of *The Star's*

> fourth-floor canteen. I had betrayed my tribe, whose cause I understood in my blood, and I had betrayed my Afrikaner father. And finally, I had betrayed myself. (Malan 1991, p. 96)

The book accordingly deals with the dilemma of a white Afrikaner in the midst of political and ideological bewilderment and also with his longing to belong somewhere while failing to find a place where he belongs. Malan (1991, p. 415) remains unable to resist the "dissenting voices in his heart" and the dilemma of his self-positioning. Eventually, he puts forward this question "Where do we really stand in relation to one another, *bra* [brother]?" (Malan 1991, p. 273) For Malan, the continent of Africa is a space in which white people believe they belong and he admits that he returned to South Africa "because this is where he belongs" (Smythe 1990, p. 72). Malan (1991, p. 422) writes the following:

> There is only one path for the likes of me, the path that leads into Africa, the path of no guarantees. There were no guarantees for Dawid Malan in 1788, and there are none for white South Africans today. The place where we are going will clearly be very different from the whites-only moonbase where I was born. Strange terrors and ecstasies await us in Africa, but that is the choice we face: either we take up arms and fight, or we open the door to Africa and set forth into the unknown.

In this manner, Malan attempts to come to terms with his Afrikaner identity and reposition it in the African context.

A "confession" can generally be made on an individual or communal level. In this context, Malan delivers what can be seen as a duplicate confession. First, even though he shows that the ambiguities of South Africa are more complex than the simple story that whites oppress blacks, he admits his errors and responsibility regarding apartheid from the perspective of an accused Afrikaner. Second, he explains that the Afrikaner's dilemma of positioning—how to feel at home within the old (as well as the new) South African community—is an attempt to articulate the burden of history that has been laid on Afrikaners and to realise a future reconciliation. In this sense, the confession is an explicit *performative* activity and an embodiment of particular ethical values. Similarly, his persuasive strategy in favour of the new South Africa comprises a more future-oriented approach than repetitive backward glances to the past and pleas to be excused. This performative activity represents his attempt to be accepted as a fellow citizen responsible for the past and as a denizen of the new country. At this point, Young's insight in *Responsibility for Justice* is appropriate, "an account of the continuities of present with past injustices is important [...] for understanding how present conditions are structural, how those structures have evolved, and where intervention to change them may be most effective" (Young 2011, pp. 181–82). Therefore, any society aiming to transform present structure of injustice requires a reconstitution of its historical imaginary (p. 182). Historical injustice cannot be undone. This irrevocability of unrepaired past injustices compels Malan, the implicated subject with responsibility, to confront the past for changes in the present and future.

Malan comes to the conclusion that white people will only gain a place in the future of South Africa through a high degree of tolerance. Toward the end of the book, he articulates that "one way of overcoming apartheid's legacy of cultural illiteracy is to learn to be connected and embedded in the broader South African national community" (Scott 2019, p. 26). As an example of what such a community might look like, the book concludes with the story of Neil and Creina Alcock, who settled in the deep interior of Msinga to manage a development project for the impoverished local community. There, Neil Alcock came face to face with various natural and human disasters and was murdered in the midst of a meaningless faction war. He was buried with full Zulu honours and Creina continued the struggle in the Msinga valley. It is ostensibly in people like Alcock that Malan discovers a glimmer of hope for the future of the country. In this final section,

Malan suggests how the concept of love functions on not only a psychological but also a communal level by the reclamation of ethical and political agency.

Oliver (2001, p. 216), while discussing Irigaray's concept of love, asserts that it could be extended to communal and political transformation and that the effect of love should be re-interpreted and reworked in terms, inter alia, of its performative dimension. Oliver states that in our embrace of the concept of an "ethics of love", we should continually remain aware of blind spots in the structure of dominance. Love would then be an ethical agent that motivates people to move closer to the other despite differences. She argues that "Love is an ethics of differences that thrives on the adventure of otherness" (Oliver 2001, p. 20). This means that there is an ethical and social responsibility through which a personal and communal space is created within which otherness and differences may be articulated freely. To nurture this otherness and these differences, as indicated by Creina, love requires trust. Malan (1991, p. 423) quotes her:

> "The path of love is not a path of comfort," she said. "It means going forward into the unknown, with no guarantees of safety, even though you're afraid. Trusting is dangerous, but without trust there is no hope for love, and love is all we ever have to hold against the dark."

Malan's book foregrounds "love against the dark" as a profound answer to his existential question of how to come to terms with the past and live as an Afrikaner in South Africa. This perspective represents a key political notion in the immediate post-apartheid moment—*ubuntu*. After the TRC was established, the language of reconciliation became more generally synonymous with the term *ubuntu*.[5] In the epilogue of the 1993 interim constitution the term appears in the following famous passage: "there is a need for understanding but not for vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for *ubuntu* but not for victimization" (see Wilson 2001, p. 9). In this way, the use of this concept of love or *ubuntu* in the confessional narrative of the white Afrikaner involves a transformative relation with the past (including justifying amnesty) as a condition sine qua non over the future (see also Mbembe, as cited in Mengel and Borzaga 2012, p. xiii).

At this stage, further investigation into Malan's politics of identity is an interesting approach to take. In identity formation, which is based on a dialogic relationship with the other, the self does not stand *in opposition to* the other but, rather, *in terms of* the other. Our identities are constantly going through stages of negotiation and reconstruction, yielding new relationship forms both with one's self and with others.

7. The Politics of Identity

It is significant that Malan's book was published in 1990, a year that heralded the commencement of radical changes in South Africa. On 2 February 1990, F. W. de Klerk, the then-president, announced that the ANC was unbanned and Nelson Mandela would be released. This introduced the period of transition that would affect the whole of South Africa and the relationship between black and white South Africans. In this regard, the publication of Malan's confessional narrative at this specific time could be considered strategic. Malan's book takes a backward look at the beginning of South Africa's colonial history in the seventeenth century. He acknowledges the guilt for the mistakes that were made by his ancestors during that history and accepts his complicity. At the time of political upheaval, he expresses this complicity through confession and relates how it has resulted in existential confusion for him in terms of the identity and position of an Afrikaner existing in modern-day South Africa. His book may, therefore, be read in terms of political motivation and the politics of identity[6].

The question of identity is often observed in empowerment politics because of the close relationship between identity and political power. To lay claim to a redistribution of power, it is imperative to outline the identity of the specific groups involved. Although Malan had denied his Afrikaner identity during apartheid, it became important to accept this identity at the beginning of the period of political change in order to be able to make his confession from the position of a bearer of Afrikaner guilt in order to position the Afrikaner

community (and himself) within the new South Africa. Identity politics may thus affect both the inclusion and exclusion of a group (or individuals) within the greater community.

This is of particular significance in circumstances such as those of post-apartheid South Africa, wherein the changed socio-political atmosphere seems to demand that people negotiate their personal and group identities anew. Identity is always influenced by the social relationship with power; for this reason, Afrikaners in a changed socio-political context have had to reinterpret the relationship between "self" and "the other" to construct a new form of their common identity.

Coullie et al. (2006, p. 35) remark that the contemporary flood of autobiographical writing by white South Africans reveals that many whites have experienced a crisis of identity because of trying to reconceptualise the context in which their narrative has been embodied. Placed between empathetic pain and guilt by virtue of being an Afrikaner, Malan also portrays the disintegration of the self, feelings of shame, disappointment, and the situation of being in a state of siege. Illuminating his dilemma of self-positioning and identity problems, Malan continuously attempts to come to terms with and reposition his Afrikaner identity in the context of Africa.

> I think most whites have an enormous yearning to feel that we really belong in Africa and have a future here. I think that's why you have such a strong self-sacrificial strain among white activists. There was a time when I would have done absolutely anything to compensate for my white skin. (Smythe 1990, p. 72)

Appiah comments on the adaptation of African identity:

> To accept that Africa can be in these ways a usable identity is not to forget that all of us belong to multifarious communities with their local customs; it is not to dream of a single African state and to forget the complexly different trajectories of the continent's so many languages and cultures. (As cited in Viljoen 2002, p. 45)

The existence of multiple group identities is, therefore, able to strengthen the frequently politically motivated inclusiveness of social identity. The hybridity of this (South) African identity is realised by Malan, who simultaneously manifests the identity of the (South) African as well as that of the Afrikaner.

According to the politics of identity, the individual evaluates different aspects of the self to decide which aspect may be used as a leitmotiv in a particular situation. The individual is aware of the possibility of different identities having conflicting implications; in such an instance, a particular self-identification represents a certain negotiation between the different aspects of the self. The construction of different identities is determined by the requirements of the collective context and this process involves selecting from a repertoire of identities that exist within the self (Brewer 2001, p. 121). In this regard, Malan succeeds in taking up his cultural Afrikaner identity within the new political context of South African identity.

8. Confessional Narrative and the Performance of Identity Formation

Malan's book contains, inter alia, voices of a white South African who is struggling with his Afrikaner heritage, his feelings of guilt as a privileged white man, and the limited position of Afrikaners in the transition period in South Africa and beyond. According to *My Traitor's Heart*, Malan believes that what has happened over recent decades was the outcome of a particular culture in which he has had a share. Malan (1991, p. 189) suggests that white South Africans should "examine their lives, and the structure of their society, and when whites do so, they see that they cannot escape complicity". While focusing on his guilt and co-responsibility for apartheid, Malan begins to grapple with the difficult and sensitive issue of how Afrikaners have to deal with the past.

It is impossible for him as a white South African with Afrikaner ancestry to escape his cultural heritage. The confessing subject must reckon with his painful history. In the process of confronting the uncomfortable past, Malan shows readers the value of the confessional narrative as a possible path towards reconciliation. He demonstrates his search for a new

self as well as for the reformulation of the past for the sake of constructing a new South African identity. For this reason, the confessional narrative has an effect on the individual *and* on the community. The confessional disclosure of the issue of history by a public intellectual could bring a moral charge and affect contemporary society, while it, accepting its guilt and complicity, searches for an ethical response to the past (Garman 2006, p. 331).

With the occurrence of the TRC hearings after 1996, the confessional narrative emerged as a particularly appropriate form through which a new national identity could develop in the time of collective struggle. For both the individual and the community, the confessional narrative provides a way in which the historical memories of oppression and injustice may be dealt with and a new identity built. However, confession offers neither complete knowledge nor full disclosure; it merely remains a representation of reality (Gallagher 2002, p. 32). Even so, the delivery of such a text comprises explicit performative behaviours that are an embodiment of ethical values and norms. Malan's confessional narrative also allows the collective, political, and personal to play a role. Similarly, he attempts to link the traumatic history with the present. As observer and narrator of this history, he participates in a performative activity of identity formation, which has the potential for a restorative and constructive effect to take place. Confessional narrative, therefore, provides a meaningful agency for reconciliation and nation building in the South African historical context.

The question concerning where and how the Afrikaner would find a place in the new South Africa becomes an absorbing issue as Malan's text unfolds. According to Foucault (as cited in Garman 2006, p. 323), uncovering the truth in all forms of a confession is intertwined with one's expectation to be relieved and thus be freed. Garman (2006, p. 323) explains as follows:

> The author as confessor writes and creates a unity from the different components of experience by bringing them together in such a way as to make the world meaningful and applicable to the self. The practice of writing is both an introspection and "objectification of the soul" but also a way of manifesting oneself to others.

Probably, for exactly this reason, Malan suggests that the time has arrived for Afrikaners to acknowledge the errors of the past and accept responsibility for those errors. According to Nuttall and Coetzee (1998, p. 3), "good" white South Africans in this era would gain entitlement "to membership of the new nation by means of ... confession and a performance of a purge". This performative activity is inevitably linked to the shaping of identity and the politics of reconciliation. Together with radical change in the privileged Afrikaner position, Malan also refers to the fact that he lays claim to his position in the context of the new South Africa. It is through this confessional narrative and the performance of an identity (re)formation that Malan comes to understand his beneficiary and "implicated" position in the past, establishes a new place for himself in post-apartheid South Africa, and takes part in the formulation of a new identity that he regards as useful in the socio-political arena.

9. Conclusions

This study has focused on *My Traitor's Heart* by Rian Malan, an example of the post-apartheid confessional narrative of an "implicated subject", in which the author's constant search for his position and identity within the complexity of the new South Africa is foregrounded and discussed. Taking an approach to autobiographical writing (including confessional narrative) that views the autobiographical self as emerging through a process of construction and creation, and even as a kind of literary production, I have explored the performative agency of the autobiographical subject in the process of discursive identity formation. As we have seen, Malan's identity is constantly negotiated and constructed through the text in relation to the post-apartheid social context, involving a strategic position taking and *performance* on the author's part.

Employing the concept of the "implicated subject" (Rothberg 2019) provided a valuable framework for understanding Malan's position as a white South African who, while not

directly perpetrating violence and injustices of apartheid, nonetheless benefited from the system and was also historically implicated in the system. As an implicated subject, Malan confronted the responsibility of Afrikaners and realised that this diachronic implication involved the "ongoing relevance of the past in the present" (Rothberg 2019, p. 55). While original victims and perpetrators are gone, groups who were implicated in that history remain. The question of redress involves determining the relation between those who have inherited histories of victimisation and those who have inherited or benefited from histories of perpetration. Malan served as a powerful exploration of this complex relationship. He grappled with his own guilt and historical implication and the collective identity of Afrikaners in the context of post-apartheid South Africa.

It seems that the change of self-positioning is a necessary process for adaptation in the new society. Therefore, Malan's illustration of "the I as bearer of the guilt of history and as an implicated subject" and his self-positioning as an Afrikaner in the new South African context provides the raison d'être for his book. While Malan attempts to deal with his guilt of and complicity in apartheid, he simultaneously grapples with the awkward issue of collective identity (both as an Afrikaner and as a South African) and a personal negotiation with the past. The thorny position of the author and his inner struggle come to the fore in the hybrid forms that the narrative and self-representation assume. Malan's confessional narrative can then be seen as a powerful tool for discovering, exploring, and evaluating the nature of the historical memory—how people make sense of their past, how they connect individual experience and its social context, how the past becomes part of the present, and how people use it to interpret their lives and the world around them (Frisch, as cited in Plummer 2001, p. 401).

In this way, Malan's text represents the close relationship between the autobiographical self and the socio-political context, and suggests ways forward for a new inclusive South African identity. Therefore, Malan's manifestation of his hybrid self-positioning is regarded as a performance of the "politics of identity" of a white South African in an important stage in the creation of reconciliation politics, i.e., I am here as a bearer of guilt, and I am also traumatised by the burden of history. As wounded South Africans, let us reconcile with one other and live together in the new South Africa.

Malan's approach is not without significant criticism. The notion of a single collective trauma is problematic, given the vastly different experiences of black South Africans who suffered under colonialism and apartheid, and white South Africans who were beneficiaries of the system. His narrative, advocating a shared culpability between black and white South Africans, can be interpreted as another manifestation of power discourse, potentially perpetuating, albeit subtly, the hierarchical relations between the coloniser and the colonised. This approach could be criticised as an attempt to erase racism, which Frantz Fanon (1961, p. 76) identifies as an intrinsic component of colonialism. Fanon argues that the pernicious effects of systemic racism persist even after the formal cessation of colonial rule, continuing to marginalise the formerly colonised. This enduring marginalisation is largely attributable to the entrenchment of social and economic structures established during the colonial era, which remain substantially intact in the postcolonial period. Consequently, while Malan's narrative aims for reconciliation, it may inadvertently downplay the ongoing impact of systemic racism and overlook the persistent socio-economic inequalities rooted in colonial structures, thus risking an oversimplification of the complex historical and ongoing power dynamics in South African society.

However, in the text, the weight of ethical accusation attributed to Africans is in obvious asymmetry with the weight of historical burden that Malan himself must bear. Although Rothberg's theory of the implicated subject seeks to shed light on a position beyond the victim/perpetrator binary, it does not presume a homogeneous space of implication, just as it does not suppose the disappearance of victims and perpetrators (Rothberg 2020, p. 209). Rather, the non-binary terrain of implication refracts subjects differentially. Crucially, Hammerman in the text remains a victim who was "distorted" by the apartheid system despite his atrocious criminal acts; this asymmetry between the victim

and perpetrator, colonised and coloniser, in the interpretation of historical violence is fundamental and obvious.

Malan directs our (or South African readers') attention to the everyday, long-lasting, and deeply affecting violence of the colonial system. This includes those implicated subjects who would never understand themselves as "criminally" or even "politically" guilty, who might not even register or remember the events in which they were implicated, and yet whose responsibility is not merely moral or metaphysical (see Rothberg 2020, p. 209). The implication of Malan and the colonisers in South Africa derives not from conscious perpetration but from the material ways they have enabled and benefited from the very histories and social relations that traumatised black South Africans.

This awareness of historical implication is essential in the pursuit of justice, as Rothberg points out. Recognising one's own implication in multileveled conditions of violence and injustice is necessary, though not sufficient, for creating social change. This awareness can serve as a vital stepping stone towards building alliances among people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. "Opening up the more ambiguous space of the implicated subject between and beyond the victim/perpetrator binary paradoxically provides a more precise picture of the production of damage and a better starting place for thinking about responsibility for historical and contemporary injustices than can clear-cut categories of guilt and innocence" (Rothberg 2019, pp. 33–34). While it may not entail active punishment or judicial justice, the form of justice that Malan articulates is exemplified by the passive justice embodied in the character Creina. As an "implicated subject", she relinquishes the social benefits she has hitherto enjoyed as a beneficiary of the system, choosing instead a life of sacrifice for the sake of historical victims. This symbolically represents a subtle yet potentially profound manifestation of justice through the voluntary divestment of privilege.

In the context of post-apartheid South Africa, the notion of truth has been bifurcated into two distinct categories, as elucidated by Constitutional Court Judge Albie Sachs. He distinguishes between "microscopic truth" and "dialogic truth" (TRC 1998, p. 113). The former represents factual verifiable information that can be documented and proven, while the latter embodies a social construct, derived from experiential narratives and established through intentional discourse and debate. Henry (2012, p. 109) argues that despite the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's focus on factual truth, it is the socially constructed "dialogic truth" that remains a challenge for South Africa's reconciliation. This dialogic truth is essential for a divided nation to come to terms with its new reality and build a lasting social peace after conflict. It is this concept of dialogic truth that Malan ardently pursues in his work. Through his confessional narrative, Malan extends an apology to the other, and he takes part in the imaginative project to seek a new and more inclusive psychological and topographical construction of the self, both individually and collectively. As Doody astutely notes, the act of confession is inherently communal. Malan, positioning himself as an implicated subject, acknowledges the political ramifications of his stance. By recognising and articulating responsibility on behalf of the Afrikaner people, he performatively presents the moral obligation and ethical responsibility for truth that is deeply embedded in the colonial history. This strategic employment of confessional narrative not only serves as a means of personal catharsis but also contributes to the larger project of (ideally) reconciliation and identity reconstruction in post-apartheid South Africa.

In the end, we might understand Malan's confessional performance as a means of reimagining the collective self in a new community that might facilitate understanding among the remnants of colonialism (colonised or coloniser; post-memory generation or implicated subjects), and counter the trends of ethnic exclusion and discrimination (whether of race, ethnicity, or gender) that are still observable in many parts of the world.

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Notes

[1] Some examples include Antjie Krog's *Country of My Skull* (Krog [1998] 2002), *A Change of Tongue* (2003), and *Begging to be Black* (2010); Karel Schoeman's *Stemme* [Voices] trilogy (Schoeman 1993, 1996, 1998); Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf* (Van Niekerk 1994); and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (Coetzee 1999).

[2] Derived from the Latin stem implicāre, meaning to entangle, involve, and connect closely, *implication*, like the proximate but not identical term *complicity*, draws attention to how we are *folded into* (im-pli-cated) events that at first seem beyond our agency as individual subjects (Rothberg 2020, p. 201). Malan's book is not just a narrative about implication; rather, it is a confession that seeks to produce the self and the beneficiaries in South African history as bearers of "implication".

[3] Hart (1974, p. 227) makes a distinction between *confession*, *apology*, and *memoir*, all of which involve one's personal history in a similar fashion. According to him, *confession* is ontological and "seeks to communicate or express the essential nature, the truth, of the self". *Apology*, on the other hand, is ethical and "seeks to demonstrate or realize the integrity of the self". *Memoir*, which is historical by nature, primarily represents the practice of social and cultural history, and "seeks to articulate or repossess the historicity of the self". Hart (1974, pp. 227–28) acknowledges that these categories seldom occur in a pure form: "such intentions must overlap; one can hardly appear in total independence of the others. In practice, they complement or succeed or conflict with each other".

[4] An example of this is Mark Behr's novel *The Smell of Apples* (1993, 1995). This is Behr's own confession of having been an apartheid spy while a student.

[5] According to Desmond Tutu (as cited in Wilson 2001, p. 9), *ubuntu* is a humanistic principle that states that a person is a person because of other people.

[6] "Political" can be defined as the conscious forging of a coalition of interests and the deployment of a strategy for their promotion (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). Political identity may then be indicative of certain common interests in the process of forging and facilitating such a coalition (see Alsheh and Elliker 2015, p. 434).

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