Universiteit Utrecht

Faculteit Geesteswetenschappen
Versie september 2014

VERKLARING KENNISNEMING REGELS M.B.T. PLAGIAAT

Fraude en plagiaat
Wetenschappelijke integriteit vormt de basis van het academisch bedrijf. De Universiteit Utrecht vat iedere vorm van wetenschappelijke misleiding daarom op als een zeer ernstig vergrijp. De Universiteit Utrecht verwacht dat elke student de normen en waarden inzake wetenschappelijke integriteit kent en in acht neemt.

De belangrijkste vormen van misleiding die deze integriteit aantasten zijn fraude en plagiaat. Plagiaat is het overnemen van andermans werk zonder behoorlijke verwijzing en is een vorm van fraude. Hieronder volgt nadere uitleg wat er onder fraude en plagiaat wordt verstaan en een aantal concrete voorbeelden daarvan. Let wel: dit is geen uitputtende lijst!

Bij constatering van fraude of plagiaat kan de examencommissie van de opleiding sancties opleggen. De sterkste sanctie die de examencommissie kan opleggen is het indienen van een verzoek aan het College van Bestuur om een student van de opleiding te laten verwijderen.

Plagiaat
Plagiaat is het overnemen van stukken, gedachten, redeneringen van anderen en deze laten doorgaan voor eigen werk. Je moet altijd nauwkeurig aangeven aan wie ideeën en inzichten zijn ontleend, en voortdurend bedacht zijn op het verschil tussen citeren, parafraseren en plagiëren. Niet alleen bij het gebruik van gedrukte bronnen, maar zeker ook bij het gebruik van informatie die van het internet wordt gehaald, dien je zorgvuldig te werk te gaan bij het vermelden van de informatiebronnen.

De volgende zaken worden in elk geval als plagiaat aangemerkt:

- het knippen en plakken van tekst van digitale bronnen zoals encyclopedieën of digitale tijdschriften zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het knippen en plakken van teksten van het internet zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het overnemen van gedrukt materiaal zoals boeken, tijdschriften of encyclopedieën zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het opnemen van een vertaling van bovengenoemde teksten zonder aanhalingstekens en verwijzing;
- het parafraseren van bovengenoemde teksten zonder (deugdelijke) verwijzing: parafrasen moeten als zodanig gemarkeerd zijn (door de tekst uitdrukkelijk te verbinden met de oorspronkelijke auteur in tekst of noot), zodat niet de indruk wordt gewekt dat het gaat om eigen gedachtengoed van de student;
- het overnemen van beeld-, geluids- of testmateriaal van anderen zonder verwijzing en zodoende laten doorgaan voor eigen werk;
- het zonder bronvermelding opnieuw inleveren van eerder door de student gemaakt eigen werk en dit laten doorgaan voor in het kader van de cursus vervaardigd oorspronkelijk werk, tenzij dit in de cursus of door de docent uitdrukkelijk is toegestaan;
- het overnemen van werk van andere studenten en dit laten doorgaan voor eigen werk. Indien dit gebeurt met toestemming van de andere student is de laatste medeplichtig aan plagiaat;
- ook wanneer in een gezamenlijk werkstuk door een van de auteurs plagiaat wordt gepleegd, zijn de andere auteurs medeplichtig aan plagiaat, indien zij hadden kunnen of moeten weten dat de ander plagiaat pleegde;
- het indienen van werkstukken die verworven zijn van een commerciële instelling (zoals een internetsite met uittreksels of papers) of die al dan niet tegen betaling door iemand anders zijn geschreven.

De plagiaatregels gelden ook voor concepten van papers of (hoofdstukken van) scripties die voor feedback aan een docent worden toegezonden, voorzover de mogelijkheid voor het insturen van concepten en het krijgen van feedback in de cursushandleiding of scriptieregeling is vermeld.

Universiteit Utrecht

In de Onderwijs- en Examenregeling (artikel 5.15) is vastgelegd wat de formele gang van zaken is als er een vermoeden van fraude/plagiaat is, en welke sancties er opgelegd kunnen worden.

Onwetendheid is geen excuus. Je bent verantwoordelijk voor je eigen gedrag. De Universiteit Utrecht gaat ervan uit dat je weet wat fraude en plagiaat zijn. Van haar kant zorgt de Universiteit Utrecht ervoor dat je zo vroeg mogelijk in je opleiding de principes van wetenschapsbeoefening bijgebracht krijgt en op de hoogte wordt gebracht van wat de instelling als fraude en plagiaat beschouwt, zodat je weet aan welke normen je je moeten houden.

Hierbij verklaar ik bovenstaande tekst gelezen en begrepen te hebben.
Naam: Michelle van Toorn Studentnummer: 3906167
Datum en handtekening: 25-08-2016 

Dit formulier lever je bij je begeleider in als je start met je bacheloreindwerkstuk of je master scriptie.

Het niet indienen of ondertekenen van het formulier betekent overigens niet dat er geen sancties kunnen worden genomen als blijkt dat er sprake is van plagiaat in het werkstuk.

Intersectionality of Race and Gender in African American and South African Literature:

Racial and Gender Stereotypes in Alice Walker's *Meridian* and Zoë Wicomb's *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*

Michelle van Toorn
3906167
Pastoor van der Meijdenstraat 83
5061 CK, Oisterwijk
First Supervisor: dr. Paul Franssen
Second Supervisor: dr. Roselinde Supheert

Master Thesis
Literatuur en Cultuurkritiek
Utrecht University
British English
23 August 2016
18084 words

Content

Introduction	p. 3
Part I: Theoretical Framework	p. 6
Chapter I: The Origin of Racism	p. 6
Chapter II: Racial and Gender Stereotypes	p. 9
Part II: Literary Analysis	p. 28
Chapter III: Zoë Wicomb's *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*	p. 28
Chapter IV: Alice Walker's *Meridian*	p. 39
Conclusion	p. 52
Works Cited	p. 57

Introduction

The subjects of race and gender have both been discussed thoroughly, often also in relation to each other. However, the interconnectedness, or intersectionality, of race and gender has not been researched in relation to different countries. Two countries where race and gender intersect are the United States and South Africa. While these two countries seem to have much in common at first sight – a past full of racism, discrimination, and gender inequality – they are also quite different. In this MA thesis I will research whether the intersectionality of race and gender is written about differently in the literature of the US and South Africa, and I will focus on black and coloured women.

More specifically, I will analyse in what ways race and gender intersect in the literature of these two countries, since black women are often discriminated against because of their skin colour, in addition to their gender. I will do this by comparing one novel by a black female author from the US with one novel by a black female author from South Africa.

In order to make an honest comparison between these two novels, the stories had to at least have a similar setting, meaning that the plots of the novels had to be set around the same time. Moreover, I wanted the main characters to be black or coloured women as well, because this would ensure that race and gender would feature in the novels. For the American novel I chose *Meridian* by Alice Walker. Walker is most commonly known for her novel *The Color Purple*, but she tackles race and gender issues in all her work. *Meridian* is set in the American South between 1950 and 1970. It follows a black young woman called Meridian Hill, and describes her experiences with the Civil Rights Movement. The South African novel I chose is *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* by Zoë Wicomb and was published by The Feminist Press. It is set between the mid-1950s and mid-1980s. The main character is Frieda Shenton, a

coloured girl, and she has to deal with the segregated society of South Africa, specifically Cape Town.

In chapter one and two I will first of all sketch a clear theoretical framework, which will help me make a literary analysis of both novels. Important Black Feminist critics in the US are bell hooks and Audre Lorde, who both write about the intersectionality of race and gender. Bell hooks, especially, writes about the origin of racial and gender stereotypes of black women. In addition, the history of slavery will be discussed, as well as academic sources that look at racial and gender stereotypes, and why some find their origin in slavery. For the South African academic literature, George Fredrickson is an interesting and solid source; he researched the origin of slavery and racial stereotypes in South Africa. Moreover, other sources will also be looked at, for example, sources on the Zulu state, and their views regarding women.

Thus, the histories of the countries are important, especially the history concerning slavery, and may have influenced the writings of Walker and Wicomb. The US and South Africa have dealt, and are still dealing, with a discriminatory past, where black people have been continuously suppressed. However, the discriminative pasts in the US and South Africa have different origins and have evolved in a very different manner. For example, the US has a more extensive history of slavery of black people, while South Africa's slavery at first mostly consisted out of Asian slaves.

Moreover, the historical context[1] has also influenced the feminist movement. Black women in the US actively started to fight for their rights between 1960 and 1970, while black women in South Africa started to fight more prominently for equal rights between man and

[1] In this case I refer to the histories of the countries, but in the future writings of this thesis, when I write about the historical context in relation to the literary writings of Wicomb and Walker, this term means both the history of the country, as well as the specific setting of the novel.

woman only after the end of Apartheid in 1994. Moreover, gender stereotypes may have evolved differently due to the different historical context of the US and South Africa.

Thus, to effectively analyse the before mentioned topics, I will divide my thesis into four chapters, spread over two parts. In the first part I will discuss the theoretical background, which includes the historical context, but also a more in-depth analysis of both racial and gender stereotypes. Afterwards, in the second part, I will write a literary analysis of both *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* by Zoë Wicomb and *Meridian* by Alice Walker. My research question is: Do black female authors in South Africa and the United States write differently on the subject of the intersectionality of race and gender, and in what way are these differences caused by historical contexts?

Part I: Theoretical Framework

Chapter I: The Origin of Racism

In this first chapter I would like to establish a firm theoretical background. First and foremost, it is important to provide definitions of several terms. Both the terms "race" and "gender" will feature heavily in this thesis. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* race means an "ethnic group, regarded as showing a common origin and descent; a tribe, nation, or people, regarded as of common stock" (OED race). People are often discriminated against on the basis of their race, and this is racism. This term is defined as follows:

> A belief that one's own racial or ethnic group is superior, or that other such groups represent a threat to one's cultural identity, racial integrity, or economic well-being; (also) a belief that the members of different racial or ethnic groups possess specific characteristics, abilities, or qualities, which can be compared and evaluated. Hence: prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against people of other racial or ethnic groups (or, more widely, of other nationalities). (OED racism)

This idea that one's own ethnic group is superior to another can be traced back to the early years of colonialism. Audre Lorde, an African American writer, feminist, lesbian, and civil rights activist, writes that "Western European history conditions us to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other" (284). For example, dominant versus subordinate, and superior versus inferior. Moreover, George Fredrickson states that is was "[l]and hunger and territorial ambition" that drove white people to differentiate amongst themselves. In other words, they differentiated between those who were superior, and to the "savages", who had to be inferior (5). The term "savages" came about in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and

was not solely applied to the native people of the United States. In fact, every non-European was thought to be a savage (7). Not only were non-Europeans seen as savage and Europeans as civilised, religion also played a big part in conceiving the image of the savage. Most Europeans were Christians and the Christian Church had a lot of power. For example, in the fifteenth century the Pope had "authorized the enslavement and seizures of lands and property of 'all saracens and pagans whatsoever, and all other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed'" during the Christian resistance to Islamic Power in Spain and Portugal (Fredrickson 8). Therefore, the Catholic faith allowed the enslavement of savages. Moreover, seizing land from savages was justified, mainly because the savages were seen as enemies of Christ. The savages could be saved, or would be allowed to live in relative freedom with the Europeans, if they converted to Christianity (8).

This way of thinking was also transferred to black slaves. They were subjugated for the same reasons as the Native Americans, namely, they were not civilised, and they did not belong to Christianity. However, there is another reason why especially black people were used as slaves in the area that would later be called the United States. There is a story in the Book of Genesis, the first book of the Christian Old Testament, about the curse of Ham. In this story Noah curses Canaan, son of Ham, because Ham has shamed Noah. While this is the basic understanding of the story, David Goldenberg writes that there exist several versions of the story. For example, the Bible only mentions slavery as part of the curse, but some still believe that Noah cursed Canaan to be a black slave. Another version of the story is that Canaan became black because of the curse (170). Therefore, the connection between slavery and blackness was established early on in Christianity. However, this connection is shaky at best. Goldenberg makes it clear that the original text does not make a connection between slavery and blackness, and that it has become part of the discourse through erroneous oral and written repetition of the story. Goldenberg writes:

> The curse of Ham myth legitimized and validated the social order by divine justification. No matter then how irrational or circular, the arguments were accepted because they supported society's beliefs and practices, and with God's approval. (177)

Therefore, slavers used the Curse of Ham as a means to justify slavery and the slave trade. Moreover, Audre Lorde was right in stating that people look at things in oppositions: one is either civilised or not civilised, and one is either superior or inferior. Therefore, also Christianity is guilty of a black and white worldview, which in part made slavery justifiable to Europeans.

However, since I will be looking at the intersectionality of race and gender, the definition of gender is also important. The definition offered by the *Oxford English Dictionary* is: "[a] class of things or beings distinguished by having certain characteristics in common" (OED gender). Perhaps the most generalised, and more accepted, definition is: "[m]ales or females viewed as a group […] Also: the property or fact of belonging to one of these groups" (OED gender). Both these definitions come closest to what we understand as gender nowadays. It is a clear division between men and women and the characteristics that separate these two classes. The *Oxford English Dictionary* also states that gender is "the state of being male or female as expressed by social or cultural distinctions and differences, rather than biological ones" (OED gender). It is interesting here that the focus is not on biological differences, but on social and cultural ones. The general belief in Western civilisation seems to be that men are tougher than women, and women are more emotional than men. This cultural belief is reinforced in social situations. Due to this social reinforcement, gender stereotypes have been created.

Chapter II: Racial and Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes have existed for a long time. Most feminists strive to undo these stereotypes and create gender equality. However, feminism nowadays is often wrongly understood as exclusive for women. While there are certainly feminists who identify with this view, I refer to the feminists that want equality for everyone, which means undoing all gender stereotypes, so that everyone can be who they want to be. Thus, feminism works both for women and men, since gender stereotyping also works both ways; both men and women are restricted in how they are allowed to act. In a study titled "Are People Prejudiced Against Women?", which combines different studies on gender stereotyping[2], it turns out that there are certain traits that are considered specifically feminine. Moreover, this study differentiates between positive and negative gender traits. It gives a great insight into society's perception of both men and women. For the experiment the researchers made a group of feminine-positive traits, namely "communal, warm and expressive, or feminine" (Eagly 23). The results show that these traits are indeed often ascribed to women. Researchers De Lisi and Soundranayagam have stated that "the consensual core of the female stereotype [consists] almost exclusively of 'niceness-nurturance' qualities" (23). Positive traits that are often ascribed to men are "independent, self-confident, competitive, stands up under pressure, active, makes decisions easily, never gives up easily, feels superior" (21).

African American Gender Stereotypes

This specific manner of gender stereotyping cannot only be seen in the two novels I will discuss later on; gender stereotypes can be traced back to early times, but they can also be found during the times of colonialism and slavery. This argument can be found in the work of

[2] Most of the studies mentioned in the article have been conducted in the United States. The studies I specifically mention in my thesis are known to have been conducted in the United States, at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. In total 203 students participated, of which 99 were men and 104 were women. The average age was 19.38 years (Eagly 546).

bell hooks, whose real name is Gloria Jean Watkins. Hooks is known as one of the major critics on the subjects of feminism and the intersectionality of race and gender. With intersectionality one usually refers to "[t]he interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise" (OED intersectionality).

In her book *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* hooks talks about how gender stereotypes concerning black men and women came about in the United States and how it has set the tone for the treatment of black men and women nowadays. She starts by describing the reason racism exists. From this point of view, she goes on to explain the repercussions of the past and how it affects people nowadays. Hooks has a clear and direct writing style, and is enormously critical. She bases her critique on published accounts from people who have experienced slavery, racism, and discrimination first hand. Moreover, she writes about the lives and statements of more contemporary black women, such as Audre Lorde and Sojourner Truth. As Beverly Guy-Sheftall writes, hooks' book "is a long overdue examination of the complexity of Black womanhood from the perspective of Black women themselves", since the lives of black people have too long been analysed and described by white people (84).

In *Ain't I a Woman* bell hooks describes that "[s]exism was an integral part of the social and political order white colonizers brought with them from their European homelands" (15). With this statement hooks describes that Europeans brought a certain social hierarchy with them to North America, and implemented it there as well. Willem Ickes writes that "the traditional feminine gender role […] emphasizes closeness and solidarity, whereas the traditional masculine gender role is a social orientation that emphasizes power and status" (76). However, there is quite some controversy regarding the origins of this social hierarchy.

Ickes writes that there are two main explanations, namely biology and culture (77). On the subject of biology Ickes writes:

> Women should be attracted to men who appear to be stereotypically masculine (i.e. assertive, dominant, wealthy, high in status) because a masculine appearance is associated with the men's capacity to contribute those genetic and "external" resources that help guarantee their offspring's survival and reproduction. By the same token, men should be attracted to women who appear to be stereotypically feminine, because a feminine appearance is associated with those communal/linking traits that signal the woman's potential nurturance toward offspring. (78)

The biological account is controversial because nowadays this view no longer holds up. Gender roles have changed, so that the woman does not have to be a stay-at-home mother and the man is not the sole provider of a family. However, it does partly explain why these gender roles were also already to be found within black communities before they were introduced to European stereotypes. Hooks writes at one point that "[b]lack slave men regarded tasks like cooking, sewing, nursing, and even minor farm labor as woman's work" (44).

The cultural account Ickes mentions is perhaps more believable than the biological account. The cultural account states that "gender roles have their origin in cultural beliefs, institutions, and practices" (79). An example of an institution is Christianity and the Church. A story that circulates within this community is that of Adam and Eve, a well-known story even before Christianity took it up as well. This story proved for many people that "women were less rational than men and prone to evil" (Schearing 113-114). Consequently, they saw this story as proof of a "divinely ordained hierarchy of gender relations" (114).

These beliefs the Europeans brought with them to the United States. These gender roles had a repressive effect on white women, but black women were doubly discriminated against; both because of their race and gender. As slaves, black females were often placed inside the household of the white slaver, because as women they were fit to complete these tasks. However, because they had to work within the white household, any form of rebellion had to be annihilated from the female slave (hooks 19-20). Dehumanisation of the slave was a normal practice during slavery, but the female slave got the worst of it. As hooks writes: "it was crucial that she [the black female slave] be so thoroughly terrorized that she would submit passively to the will of white master, mistress, and their children" (20). As black women within a white household, they had no right to a sense of self, to an identity.

Not only were black women subjugated to beatings and work in extreme conditions, they were also often raped or otherwise sexually harassed. In this way, black women were repressed in two ways; the first one also applies to black men, namely that they were seen as lesser beings and animals, but the second way was only applied to black women, and that is that they were often sexually exploited. According to hooks this treatment of black women by white men exposed the deep hatred white men harboured towards women and their bodies in general (29). It was only with the black woman that the white man could show his hatred explicitly. Christianity, after all, taught people that women were sexual temptresses, and to counteract their inherent nature, men should force them into a passive and subordinate state (29-30). White women were therefore also victims of sexism, but because black women were generally seen as animals, and because they were also subjected to racism, they were at the receiving end of extreme violence.

This violence became worse when the perception of the white woman changed in the nineteenth century. The woman was now "depicted as goddess rather than sinner; she was virtuous, pure, innocent, not sexual and worldly" (31). On the other hand, black women were

seen as "the embodiment of female evil and sexual lust […] and accused of leading white men away from spiritual purity into sin" (33). Therefore, rape was usually not a term associated with black women. White women could be raped by black men, but black women could not be raped, because they were temptresses. Moreover, white women had to be protected from rape because they were seen as chaste beings, an image which is in line with the innocent and pure goddess. Black women, however, were never described as chaste, and because of this several courts ruled that black women could not be raped (Crenshaw 68).

Not only white men sexually harassed black women; black men were encouraged by white men to also harass black women. Hooks writes that, "rather than assuming the role of protector, black men imitated the white male's behaviour" (35). White men approved of this behaviour for several reasons. The first reason, of course, is that black men following the lead of white men portrayed the white men as superior. Secondly, slavers were very interested in the breeding of black people. Hooks gives the reader the example of Frederick Olmstead, who was a white observer of this practice. Olmstead commented: "In the states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, as much attention is paid to the breeding and growth of negroes as to that of horses and mules" (39). This statement declares that black people were perceived as cattle.

The US' history of slavery explains how racism developed over time and shows how deeply rooted racism is in American society. Therefore, racism still exists today. however, sexism, and its intersectionality with racism, is an incredibly big problem for black women. Hooks writes in *Ain't I a Woman* that "[c]ontemporary[3] black women could not join together to fight for women's rights because we did not see 'womanhood' as an important aspect of our identity" (1). Moreover, she states that the fight against racism was perceived to be more important, and, so hooks writes, black women were "afraid to acknowledge that sexism could

[3] Contemporary black women here refers to black women in the twentieth century.

be just as oppressive as racism" (1). Audre Lorde echoes this sentiment. She writes that for women of colour, it is not only about gender equality, because they are also discriminated against because of their skin colour. Therefore, "[a]s white women ignore their built-in privilege of whiteness and define woman in terms of their own experience alone, then women of color become 'other'" (286). Hooks supports this statement by saying that "[e]very women's movement in America from its earliest origin to the present day has been built on a racist foundation", to which the feminist movement also belongs (124). Black women therefore had no real place within this feminist movement, because it was unable to stand up for them in all manners they needed.

Many feminist movements or communities had racist members or leaders, but there also existed the overall consensus amongst white women that "problems black women faced were caused by racism – not sexism", and therefore black women had no place in the white feminist movement (hooks 12). In other words, the problems black women faced were often ignored. Moreover, Lorde writes that it was the safer choice for white women to believe the "dangerous fantasy" that promised them that if they were good, nice, pretty, quiet, looked after the children, and married a good man, then they were allowed to remain in the patriarchy in "relative peace" and they would be protected and left alone (289). These white women, then, were not feminists. In this manner some white women buried their heads in the sand and refused to see the problems of black women, just so that they could continue living their safe lives.

Kimberle Crenshaw also writes on the topic of black women and how they are "theoretically erased" (57). However, Crenshaw takes a closer look at certain lawsuits in the United States, and how these lawsuits, in combination with the perception of people in general, explain why black women are the most discriminated against persons in the US. According to Crenshaw black women experience "double discrimination", because black

women experience the effects of both racial and sexual inequality (63). However, the State is not equipped to help or represent the black woman, because "the paradigm of sex discrimination tends to be based on the experiences of white women", while racial discrimination is based on the experiences of the black man (65). The black women must therefore choose, and cannot be fully and justly represented. As a result, the belief has come about that only black men or the black middle class experience racism, and that sexism only happens to white women (65). This shows that class is another aspect of intersectionality; in this case it intersects with race, and shows that black people who were of a higher class, did not presumably experience racism. For the black woman it means that she is not protected and therefore heavily discriminated against.

Both hooks and Lorde write that black women were not only dismissed by white women, but also by black men. During the Civil Rights Movement, black men wanted their wives to be at home, so they could support their husbands, and "breed warriors for the revolution" (hooks 5). This shows once again that black women were doubly oppressed. Hooks writes that "the struggle to end racism and the struggle to end sexism were naturally entwined" (13). With this she already shows how race and gender intersect, and that these cannot be seen apart from each other. Moreover, Lorde writes that "a black feminist vision [was often] mistaken for betrayal of our common interests as a people", with the common interests referring to the end of racism (289). Therefore, black women were expected to wait until after the fight against racism had been won, and if they did not wait, like many women did not, they were seen as traitors.

While this thesis will mostly focus on female gender stereotypes and how this affects black female authors and how they write about the intersectionality of race and gender, I would also like to briefly touch upon male gender stereotypes, since this will help me analyse the male characters in the books I will discuss. Hooks writes extensively in another book of

hers, namely *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*, about the behaviour of black men and how they were perceived by society. I have already explained how black men were seen during the time of slavery, namely as animals, and specifically cattle. Later they were also perceived as "animals, brutes, natural born rapists, and murderers" (x); they were supposedly more violent than white people and committed horrendous crimes. However, according to hooks black men have done little to counteract this viewpoint. Hooks writes that this "demonization of the Afro-American male" causes many black men "to become the 'beast' as a surrender to realities they cannot change" (45).

This sentiment can be found in other literature as well. James Baldwin, a well-known African-American author, wrote a book in 1963 called *The Fire Next Time*. In it he explains how he became frightened of the "evil" that was within him, and the evil that waited for him outside (16). Baldwin, as a fourteen-year-old, started to consider himself as "one of the most depraved people on earth" (17). Moreover, this sentiment was somehow "more vivid in the boys" (17). Black boys and men knew that they could not change their situation; because they were born black, they were destined for a life of crime. Crime was not "a possibility but *the* possibility" (Baldwin 19, 21). Moreover, Baldwin did not want to belong to the white American society. Instead, he writes about creating a better and new world, because, so he asks himself: "Do I really *want* to be integrated into a burning house?" (94). There was therefore a feeling of not wanting to belong in America's society as it was then. Being integrated in that society would only mean more repression, and no real freedom for black people. For freedom a new society must be created.

Audre Lorde, however, brings a bit more nuance to the image of the black man. She writes that the black man, because of racism and the black man's powerlessness to really fight it, became violent (289). This idea of powerlessness can also be seen in Baldwin's statement, namely that black men often did not believe they could change themselves or change how

people perceived them. However, Lorde writes that black men often became violent towards black women and children, because this was how their "manliness [could] be measured" (289). Black men, therefore, did not only fall into a self-perpetuating image, but they also acted out of hopelessness.

South African Gender Stereotypes

As I have argued, the history of a country, and specifically at the history of a race, helps to explain the reasons why black people are perceived in a certain way. Even though the United States and South Africa both have a racist past (and present), the history developed in a different manner. For example, there is much less information to be found on the development of the feminist movement in South Africa. The main reason for this, Wolpe writes, is that the movement does "not have a 'professional' body" (87). In other words, the subject of feminism in South Africa has not yet been thoroughly researched, and not many academic articles have been written on this subject. Moreover, the Western feminist movement cannot easily be transferred to South Africa, because the situation is much different than, for example, in the United States. According to Wolpe, Kate Truscott "expressed the need to take account of the specificities of South African conditions", specifically, as Truscott herself states, "the political economy of apartheid, as well as the culture of mass resistance and struggle" (qtd. in Wolpe 92).

However, there do seem to be some similarities. For example, Wolpe also writes that feminist groups often ignored the sufferings of black women, and even excluded black women from their groups (88). Moreover, there also seems to be a parallel between the American behaviour of black men and that of the South African black men. Wolpe quotes Salo, who says: "the emasculation of black men by the South African state has shaped black and working class feminist struggles" (qtd. in Wolpe 96). In addition, because of constant

repression, and because of black women's drive for equal rights, black men in South Africa feel the need to strongly portray themselves as men, which means coming across as strong, firm, and as leaders. Therefore, while the feminist movement did not have a "professional body", it most definitely was present in everyday life in South Africa. This is similar to the US, where black men felt the same thing, which caused them to be violent, for example towards their own women and children. Another similarity between the US and South Africa can be found in how people see black women in connection to sexuality. Celina Romany writes that black women in South Africa are often seen as "seductive sex objects", and therefore it is their fault if they get sexually assaulted (Romany 867). This echoes hooks' statement that black women were the embodiment of sexual lust (33).

There are, therefore, already some similarities to be seen in the intersectionality of race and gender in the US and South Africa. However, I will first delve somewhat deeper into the origins of racism and discrimination in South Africa, before drawing further conclusions.

The first people to be "incorporated" into the households of white traders were the Khoi people, or as the Dutch called them: Hottentots. The women worked in the homes of the traders, while the men "became bonded labourers on the farms" (Keegan 15). A Khoi man could free himself if he converted to Christianity, because then he would no longer be a "savage" (16). However, Keegan writes that this practice was often not followed, mainly because farm slaves were often considered "too valued as labourers in the fields to be liberally granted their freedom" (19). Interesting here is also that the slaves had varied racial backgrounds. For example, there were many slaves that were imported from Asian countries. This was not the case in the US. This shows that the US mostly dealt with black Africans, while South Africa, and specifically the Cape, was a trading post, where slaves of all nationalities were bought and sold. Fredrickson also states this in his book *White Supremacy*: "the Cape Colony was virtually born as a multi-racial slave society" (65).

Therefore, slavery in South Africa was not originally targeted against one specific race. Fredrickson writes about the coming of racial slavery in South Africa. Europeans enslaved Africans and other non-Europeans not because of their skin colour, but because they were "vulnerable to acquisition by whites as a form of property, either because they were literally captured in war or because a slave trade existed or could be inaugurated in their societies of origin" (75). Moreover, who could be made a slave was first determined according to religion. Those who were considered heathens were allowed to be made slaves. However, this practice shifted at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Fredrickson writes that the British administration of 1812 changed the criteria of enslavement, so that "it was no longer religion *and* race but race alone that was the essential distinguishing mark of the slave class" (84). Slaves could no longer free themselves by converting to Christianity, since they were now also judged on their race and the colour of their skin. This practice took somewhat longer to arrive in South Africa than in the US where this was quite common at the time, since racial slavery had started much earlier in the US (84).

Racial slavery began later in South Africa, and it ended earlier. In South Africa slavery was abolished by the British in 1834, while slavery in the US was officially abolished throughout all states in 1865, after the end of the Civil War. Fredrickson explains that "South African whites were accustomed to have their menial work done by non-whites, but they were not absolutely fixated on slavery as the only way this could be arranged" (90). I would say, tentatively, that white people in South Africa were less attached to their slaves than perhaps white people in the US, since there were alternatives. According to Fredrickson, this is one of the reasons why people in the Cape mostly "resigned themselves to the prospect of abolition and devoted their energies to making the best of the situation by struggling to maintain or establish other methods of labor control", and why people in the South of the US went to war to retain their right to hold slaves (90).

How female slaves specifically fared in South Africa, however, proves hard to find. As I stated before, for a long time gender studies did not have a body of work; it seems that only after the end of Apartheid in 1994 did gender studies really come about in South Africa. Therefore, most articles or studies look at women under Apartheid or after Apartheid, and not specifically at black, coloured, or Asian female slaves in colonial times. However, there is some information to be found on, for example, the role of the female in Zulu society.

The Zulu are the largest ethnic group in South Africa, and the effect of their gender stereotype can therefore still be seen in South African society today. In Zulu society, women were oppressed, but also "located at the very source of power within that society: agricultural production" (Hanretta 391). Moreover, women were exchanged among men, and were often also used to make alliances with other tribes (391). In this regard, Zulu society does not seem so different from European society, since it was also a habit there to marry to make alliances. Women could also attain higher positions within Zulu society, such as that of powerful diviners. It seems that, from the perspective of the Zulu men, women were "the transcendental 'other'", meaning the men believed the women to be both connected with the natural and spirit world (392). However, this link to the other world was seen as a "pollution", and therefore Zulu men believed their women and wives to be lesser than them (393).

Even though women could sometimes attain more power within the Zulu society, men generally saw them as inferior. One reason for this is that the status of the men in Zulu society depended on women's fertility (the fertility of men is not taken into consideration), and when the women did not get pregnant, it would reflect badly on the men. Therefore, women were prepared for their role as wives and mothers, girls, at several stages in their lives, by learning that they had to submit to their husbands. For example, they sang "puberty songs" that describe to women how they must act during intercourse (396). As Hanretta writes, everything from "sexuality to menstruation and from birth to death was accompanied by

expectations, obligations and restrictions associated with these constructions of the body" (397). The focus was therefore very much on being able to reproduce, and thereby being a good and supportive wife. In contemporary Zulu society the focus is still very much on marrying and bearing children, but there seems to be a shift in focus. Varga writes that fertility is still important, but getting pregnant at a younger age is seen in contemporary Zulu society as "a major setback and associated with school disruption, economic strain, limited job prospects, emotional stress, and even social stigma" (165). Thus, the situation has become somewhat more complicated, as education has become more important in Zulu society; not only fertility can now gain a Zulu woman status, but also education helps achieve this goal.

This sexual and familial oppressiveness cannot only be found in aboriginal South African cultures, but also in slave communities. According to Ross, being able to conceive and reproduce was one of the reasons why female slaves were popular (424). It also seems that sexual assault occurred often in slave communities. There is the well-known case of a female slave called Cathryn van Batavia, whose husband left for several days to get some food for their master. In the meantime, her master Daniel Dikkop asked her to sleep with him, and when she refused he strangled her (427). In addition, male slaves were also known to be violent to their wives. For example, a male slave kept visiting his wife after she had been sold to a different master, but when he saw her having sex with another man he attacked her with a knife (428). It seems, therefore, that female slaves had to fear for their lives from both white men and their husbands[4]. Moreover, there is a good chance that the latter woman was forced into having sex with someone else, but her husband did not take this into account and attacked her instead of the other man. This shows that women were blamed for adultery and perhaps even rape, much the same as in the time of slavery in the US.

[4] As Scully writes, "[n]o laws existed at the Cape prohibiting interracial marriage and sexual relations such as were found in the postemancipation legislation of the American South" in the nineteenth century. Slaves were also allowed to marry (342). Interracial marriages became prohibited in 1949 with the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act.

The importance of marriage returns when speaking about rape. Pamela Scully writes about a black woman called Anna, who won the case against the odds, since black women did not often win in court. While in court, she explained that she resisted to being raped by a black man, because she was married, had a child, and she would risk getting late to work. However, the fact that she was married gave her the "status as a 'respectable married woman,' thus emphasizing her claim to honor and protection" (351). It is interesting to note that her argument does not focus on the fact that rape is inherently bad because one should never force oneself onto someone else. Instead, she focuses on the fact that she is married, and should therefore not be raped. The fact that a black woman was married showed that she conformed to white societal rules, and should therefore be respected and protected. Unmarried women did not experience the same rights. Scully writes that people understood "that race functioned silently as a salient colonial category dividing beneficiaries of colonial rule from people more explicitly subject to it" (344). Marriage was seen as subjecting to colonial standards, and was therefore used as "a potential social marker, dividing women deserving respect and status from the underserving" (344). This shows once again the intersectionality of race and gender, and that black, coloured, and Asian women were therefore discriminated against in several ways.

Moreover, according to Scully, the records show that it was much easier to "bring a black man to court for rape or attempted rape than […] a 'respectable' white farmer" (354). Moreover, the outcome of these cases shows that the judges were influenced by a discourse which portrayed black women as hypersexual (359). Therefore, also in South Africa the female stereotype involves the idea that black women are sexual creatures. This idea may then be a result of colonialism, where black women were expected to breed and rape was very common.

However, while racism already existed in South African society, it became extremely explicit during the Apartheid era. As a consequence, according to Gay Seidman gender equality was not attainable in the Apartheid era. In 1985 an ANC spokeswoman stated that "[i]t would be suicide for us [women] to adopt feminist ideas. Our enemy is the system and we cannot exhaust our energies on women's issues" (qtd. in Seidman 297). Moreover, in 1989 a woman stated that "[o]ur immediate task is the liberation of the black people" (Seidman 297). Therefore, not only black men did not want black women to fight for equal rights, since this would undermine their masculinity and power, but also black women themselves did not see it fit to fight for gender equality when racism and Apartheid were still oppressing black people in general. Looking at the dates, one can see that this mentality existed much longer than it did in the US. Hooks writes that racism was often perceived to be the harsher reality, and it should therefore be fought first (1). She talks about her generation, the generation of the 1950s and on. The fact that South African black women believed for a longer time that they had no right to fight for equal gender rights, can perhaps also explain why there is not as much literature to be found on women and feminism in South Africa as in the US.

A specific result of discrimination based on the intersectionality of race and gender for black women in South Africa is that due to the "strictly sex- and race-segregated labor market […] African women seeking work were limited to low-paid domestic or farm labor" (Seidman 295). Thus, Seidman writes, African women have been left behind (294). However, the rule that one could only enter so-called "white-designated areas" when their white employer gave them permission, applied to all black South Africans (294). Therefore, people of colour were geographically restricted in their work. For women who worked in subsistence agriculture this meant they had to depend on their husbands sending them money, and hoping they did not spend it in the city. As a result, urban employment became more attractive to African women, but these women were often kept from moving to town by state policies, who hereby hoped to

"preserve existing household relationships" (294-295). This meant that these women had to travel great distances to work, or they had to find work in rural areas.

However, it would be wrong to think that women did not fight at all for gender equality. As Unterhalter writes, there were several groups for women that fought for equal rights. For example, two women's political organisations arose in the late 1970s, namely the United Women's Organisation (UWO), and the Federation of South African Women (FedSAW), and both strove for wider equality and therefore included both white, black, coloured, and Asian women (Unterhalter 892). Nonetheless, in this case there also exists the debate of whether gender equality should make way for racial equality first. The two groups found it hard to focus, since the question arose "whether women should fight against oppression and violence from men or from the *apartheid* state" (893). Moreover, even in the ANC women could not fully fight for what they believed. For example, the armed wing of the ANC called Umkhonto we Sizwe, but commonly known as MK, did allow women to enter, but they could not attain leadership positions (890). Moreover, they were expected to help the men in the MK, and therefore the women were pushed "back into traditional roles as cooks and cleaners" (890).

African women, however, had much to fight for. African women under Apartheid were not allowed to do or own many things. For example, married women were "deemed a minor and her husband deemed her guardian" (Unterhalter 888). Due to this status, African women could not own any property or land, they could not marry without the consent of their fathers, all her money went to her husband, and she could not claim custody of her child (888). Therefore, the African woman was made to be incredibly dependent on her husband. Moreover, the Bantu Laws Amendment Act of 1965 "stipulated that a woman could only live with her husband in the urban areas of his original entry had been legal" (888), and if then a woman could live with her husband, the authorities would not be obligated to pass on the

house to her should her husband die. With this act, authorities hoped to reign in the influx of Africans to the city (888). Thus, once again it becomes clear that women of colour were heavily restricted in their movements, both because of their race and their gender.

Conclusion

Thus, in both the US and in South Africa there is a clear history of discrimination against black people. Black women have been discriminated against the worst; they do not only experience discrimination based on the colour of their skin, but also on their gender, and often also their class.

At first sight it seems that both the US and South Africa have many aspects in common in regards to the black female, but by taking a closer look a more nuanced and varying picture is painted. Firstly, slavery has caused a certain stigma to arise, namely that of a sexual creature. However, there seems to be a greater number of sources to be found on rape and sexual harassment of South African women, than among African American women. One could wonder, of course, whether this is caused by negligence or because it did indeed occur more in South Africa. There seems, however, to have been a greater focus on breeding in the US than in South Africa. On the other side, marriage looks to have been more important in South Africa than in the US, which may have something to do with a clear and direct Zulu history. The Zulu history could also explain where this idea of the sexual South African black or coloured woman comes from, since it was common to teach Zulu women different aspects of marriage and sex in different parts of their lives. For example, puberty songs taught girls how to behave during sex. This idea is also present in US society, and its origin can be found in slavery history where white women were seen as pure, while black women were perceived to be sexual temptresses.

Secondly, there existed the belief in both South Africa and the US that the fight against racism had a higher priority than the fight of black women against gender inequality. However, this seems to have evolved differently in the two countries. This belief that black women had to wait their turn seems to have lasted longer in South Africa than in the US. This could explain why there are relatively fewer sources to be found regarding a feminist movement, or female opposition in general, in South Africa, compared to sources about US movements and oppositions.

Thirdly, black men in both the US and South Africa experienced a sense of emasculation due to constant oppression. Moreover, black men were intimidated by the emergence of a feminist movement. Their wives no longer wanted to stay at home, but instead they wanted to actively fight for their own rights. This often made black men, who were still fighting against racism, feel unimportant. It was most often believed amongst black men that racism was the bigger problem and had to be solved first. They could not understand that many women saw this differently. This often resulted in frustration, and eventually in violence. Often this violence was focused against their wives and children. Thus, the fight for equal gender rights for black women was made even harder due to the fact that they often did not have their husbands' support.

This brings me to my last point: sexual violence. Both the US and South Africa know many cases of rape or sexual harassment against black women, by both black and white men. However, it seems that rape is more rooted in South Africa than in the US. Perhaps this was caused by Apartheid rules, which restricted women in their movements, as well as in their jobs. Urban women had to work in low-paid jobs, worked late, and had to come home alone in the dark, making them an easy prey (Scully 349). However, physical violence was greater in the US. This may be explained by the fact that white people were a majority, and the hate of race was perhaps more deeply rooted in US society. In South Africa there is a white

minority, and while slaves were also treated with violence, during the Apartheid era the laws restricted the black community. However, these laws were often reinforced by using unnecessary violence, and it is therefore quite difficult to determine whether violence against people of colour was more usual in the US or South Africa.

Therefore, even though it seems the US and South Africa have many aspects in their histories in common, there are nuances that indicate differences in the gender stereotypes of both black men and women. In the following two chapters I hope to establish and describe these nuances even more by analysing a novel by an African American female author – *Meridian* by Alice Walker – and a South African female author – *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* by Zoë Wicomb.

Part II: Literary Analysis

Chapter III: Zoë Wicomb's *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*

The rise of female South African writers came relatively late compared to this type of literature in the US. This is reminiscent of the rise of the feminist movement, which also occurred later than in America. According to Gloria T. Hull the rise of female African writers came late because the market was controlled predominately by men, and especially white men (qtd. in Nfah-Abbenyi 1). Moreover, it seems that the feminist movement in South Africa and the rise of female African authors goes hand in hand. After the end of Apartheid in 1994, women could write more freely about "female characters who confront not only a racist world but a sexist one" (1). Thus, intersectionality of race and gender became a more spoken about topic.

Zoë Wicomb is a South African author, and *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* is a short story collection, first published in 1987 in London by Virago[5], several years before the end of the Apartheid era. This collection does have one main character, namely Frieda Shenton, a young coloured girl, but her story is told through short vignettes. These snapshots give the reader information about Frieda in different stages of her life. For example, there is a short story where Frieda is a young child, a story where she is in school, and a story when she comes back from England. There are more of course, and through these glimpses into her life Wicomb is able to show how Frieda is affected by racial and gender stereotypes, and also how the situation of South Africa affects her.

In this chapter I hope to not only analyse the novel based on the intersectionality of race and gender, but also how heavily historical context features in her novel. I will make an

[5] In 2000 the book was published by the Feminist Press at the City University of New York, and only in 2008 was the book for the first time published in South Africa by Umuzi.

analysis based on the theoretical framework I described in the first chapter, and with several additional sources that specifically look at Wicomb and this novel.

The main character, Frieda Shenton, falls under the category "coloured", which is different from black Africans. In South Africa during the Apartheid era there existed four different categories into which citizens could be grouped, namely "Bantu/Black, White, Coloured, and, later, Asian" (Pinto 161). These racial categories caused "spatial relations" (161) between the different races. In other words, divides were created between different races, but also within one race itself. These divides were created due to the fact that different racial groups had different rights. For example, Frieda is categorised as "Coloured", which means she has a lighter skin colour than black people, and it means she is considered to be better than black people, but still inferior in comparison to white people. Thus, even though she is limited by the State in what she may or may not do, she has more rights and freedom than the people within the "Black" category. The stories in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* portray the complex relations of the different racial and ethnic groups in South Africa, how they interact, and especially what they think of each other. It shows, Sue Marais writes, the existing opposition within South African society (29). On the one hand there is "the conflict between community, solidarity and national unity" and on the other hand there is the "dissociation, segregation and 'apartheid'" (29).

Being Coloured in South Africa

It becomes clear, by reading dialogue between the characters of the Shenton family, that there are two sides to being "Coloured". Firstly, there is a certain sense of shame attached to the classification. Zoë Wicomb herself writes that coloured people feel ashamed of their heritage, because their black ancestors "mated with the colonizer" (92). Therefore, their ancestry is tainted. Whittington writes that the blame for this is often directed at women (330), but does

not really explain the reason for this blame. Perhaps women were seen as the pollutants of the "pure line", since they were the ones who would bear the mixed children. This way of thinking would reflect colonial society, since it was also believed that black women could not be raped, because they were seen as sexual creatures. Therefore, the women were to blame.

Whittington does write that the fact that "black ancestors had engaged in sexual collaboration with white colonizers" was shameful (330), and this sentiment is also echoed by Frieda's family in the title story of the collection. In "You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town" Frieda is on the bus on the way to get an abortion. Her white boyfriend, Michael, who goes to the same college as her, has given her directions. During the bus ride, Frieda reflects on her and Michael's relationship. Her cousin Marge also had a relationship with a white man, but she is no longer welcome in the family. As her aunt Trudie, Marge's mother, says, "[t]here's no place in this house for a girl who's been used by white trash" (Wicomb 66). It does not become clear in the novel who are "white trash" according to Frieda's family. White trash could refer to white men who are married or are in a relationship with a white woman, and have an affair with a black or coloured woman on the side. It cannot refer to all white men, since Frieda and her family do look up to their white Scottish ancestor.

However, it does not take away that Frieda's family frowns upon relationships with certain white men, and the fact that Frieda has kept her relationship with Michael hidden may indicate that she believes her family will not react positively. Therefore, that the "white rule cuts divisions even among people of one race" (Marais 30) also becomes apparent in Wicomb's collection. Perhaps the difference between the white trash and their Scottish ancestor is a difference between Afrikaans and English men. However, it is never stated in the story whether Michael is Afrikaans or English, and thus it is not clear whether Frieda's family discriminates between these two categories.

When Frieda tells Michael she is pregnant, he wants to marry her, because that is the gentlemanly thing to do. However, according to the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act from 1949 this was prohibited. Michael's solution is to go into exile in England. Frieda refuses, thinking there is no place for her in white society. Not only race divides Frieda and Michael, also gender divides them. When talking about the abortion, Michael says that he does not understand why she would choose for abortion, and "[t]here is revulsion in his voice" (Wicomb 75). According to him, this child is a gift from God, and the fact that she is pregnant now is all part of God's plan. Moreover, she loves babies, she wants babies at some point, so why not start now (75)? These comments show perfectly the intersectionality of race and gender. Michael assumes Frieda loves children, and that she wants children later in life. He sees no problems having a child now, even though she is still going to school. He believes this because both from the standpoint European society a woman must be married and have children. Frieda refuses to conform to this stereotype at her young age, and instead choses her own wellbeing and education. In addition, the choice Frieda has to make between her child and education is similar to the choices many Zulu girls have to make in contemporary Zulu society.

Moreover, an element of race can be found here because Michael, at no point in the story, thinks about the consequences of Frieda leaving her family. It would mean she could no longer go back, while she also does not belong in the world of white people. This attests to a lack of empathy, or a certain nativity. Michael is white, and therefore he has more opportunities than Frieda, and it is hard for him to see things from her perspective. He simply cannot imagine that marrying him and having his child would be a problem for her.

While the exact time of the abortion is not named, it is most likely before the Abortion and Sterilization Act of 1975 was passed, since Frieda is still in college, and in the story "A Clearing in the Bush" the assassination of Hendrik Verwoerd is mentioned, which occurred in

1966. Thus, it cannot be much later than that. Abortion was therefore still illegal, and even after the Abortion and Sterilization Act was passed, women were only allowed to have abortions when their own lives, or the life of their child, was in danger. However, even though it was illegal, there were doctors, or people who tried to pass as doctors, who helped women. However, when Frieda arrives at the house for the abortion, she experiences racial discrimination. The older woman who will perform the abortion asks Frieda whether she is Coloured. Frieda's educated voice blinds the woman to Frieda's skin colour. In the somewhat dark environment, Frieda may not seem as coloured as she is, and her educated voice makes the woman believe she must be white, because coloured girls were often not as educated as white girls. Consequently, Frieda denies she is Coloured, to which the woman replies: "These Coloured girls, you know, are very forward, terrible types […] I try to help decent women, education you know. No, you can trust me, No Coloured girl's ever been on this sofa" (79). This dialogue shows another gender stereotype, which intersects with perceptions of race. This woman believes that coloured girls and women are sexual creatures, a social stigma that can be traced back to colonial times, as can be seen in the previous chapter. After the woman is satisfied that Frieda is not a coloured girl, her attitude changes. She finds Frieda to be a "good girl" and addresses her as "lovey" (80). Thus, the woman is willing to help white girls, but not coloured girls.

Thus, by being classified as "Coloured" Frieda is restricted in her actions. Frieda, for example, cannot give birth to her child because it would mean exile from her community, and it would ruin her opportunities later in life; she would have to quit her education. On the other hand, she normally would not be able to have an abortion as a coloured girl. However, as I stated earlier, there are two sides to being classified as "Coloured"[6]. The first was shame, but the other side is that it also comes with a certain sense of superiority.

[6] See page 24 of this thesis.

To know exactly how Frieda and, especially, her mother feel superior, it is important to first look at the ancestry of Frieda. Her family are part of the Griqua, "an Afrikaans-speaking people of mixed Khoekhoe and South African Dutch descent" (OED griqua). This is, however, not exactly the case with the Shenton family. While they do have connections to the Khoikhoi, they also have an English white ancestor. The term "Griqua meid" is apparently a negative one, since Frieda's mother thinks back on it as "old grievances" (165). Frieda's mother is known to downplay their Khoikhoi ancestry, while emphasising their British ancestry. As Whittington writes, the Shentons cling to their English ancestor "who provided their last name, and they set about learning English rather than the Afrikaans spoken by the surrounding community" (333). Frieda herself states in the story "Behind the Bougainvillea" that "[w]e, the Shentons, had an ancestor, an Englishman whose memory must be kept sacred, must not be defiled by associating with those beneath us. We were respectable Coloureds" (116). Not only do they not want to be associated with the Khoikhoi part of their ancestry, they also want to be superior to other coloured people, and black people.

Frantz Fanon supports this idea of using language for upward mobility in his book *Black Skin, White Mask*. He writes that the Antilles Negro learned the French language to become more white, since, one can become "whiter as he gains greater mastery of the cultural tool that language is" (25). Frieda and her family try to distinguish themselves from the rest of the coloured community by speaking the English language. Thus, they try to become more white. Moreover, it is interesting to think for a moment about the colouredness of the Shentons. During Frieda's abortion it becomes somewhat clear that Frieda may be able to pass for white, since the abortionist is confused and asks Frieda whether she is coloured. Therefore, by speaking English the Shentons hope to pass as white.

Thus, language is an important element with which the people in South Africa established racial rank. People who speak English, but especially people who are originally

from England, are gentlemen and superior to people who speak Afrikaans or even Zulu. In the first story, "Bowl Like Hole", the Englishman Mr Weedon visits Frieda's father. Her mother notes: "A gentleman, a true Englishman" (2). This statement shows that Frieda's mother connects gentlemanly behaviour to English men. Mr Weedon drives, or lets his servant drive, a Mercedes, and he does not "blow a horn like the uncouth Boers from the dorp" do (2). Therefore, the Afrikaans speaking Boers are seen as uncivilised. Afrikaans, one of the official languages of South Africa, besides English, was spoken by a great part of South African society, and also by the Griqua community. Therefore, what Sue Marrais said also shows in this book; there is a struggle between wanting to belong somewhere and wanting to distinguish oneself (29).

Community Versus Apartheid

This dilemma of community versus difference shows itself in Frieda. Her father and mother want her to reach for upward mobility by being like the respectable English people. However, the Griqua community will not allow her to have a relationship with a white man, such as Michael. Thus, this causes an identity crisis to occur. She does not fully belong in the white community, even though her knowledge of the English language is great, but nor does she belong in the Griqua community, mainly because of her education and manner of thinking. As Jacobs writes, Frieda is "not only not white, but less than white; not only not black, but better than black" (2). This often results in coloured people, and also Frieda, adopting "an exclusionary white nationalism" (2).

For Frieda this dilemma manifests itself in both gender and racial elements. She is very aware of her position as a coloured woman, and she is willing to do everything to become more superior, but most of all, become more free of restrictions. In the story "Jan Klinkies" her father notes that the floor is dusty and should be smeared. Frieda instantly

knows that this means she should smear the floor, “since I am a girl” (18). Moreover, the Shentons also strive to meet the standard of the English lady. When Frieda and her father are waiting for the train that will take her to college in Cape Town in the story “When the Train Comes”, her father tells her not to “play with boys now that you’re a young lady, it’s dangerous” (23). With this statement Frieda’s father insinuates that one could get pregnant, and this is exactly what happens to Frieda. She “plays around” with Michael and ends up getting an abortion. In this manner Frieda is unable to attain the reputation of a pure woman, a reputation many English ladies had, and also fails to adhere to Apartheid rules, namely to not involve oneself in interracial relationships. In addition, her family would not approve.

Another aspect that reoccurs several times in this short story collection is the catcalling and wolf whistling. Frieda states that she is “not the kind of girl whom boys look at” (21). Frieda knows why, she is fat (22). In “A Clearing in the Bush” Frieda describes that everyone is “familiar with the scale of appreciation, from the festive tantara for the beauties to the single whiplash of a whistle for the barely attractive” (50). Frieda, however, seems to find these cat calls derogatory and uncomfortable, since she is relieved that when she enters the cafeteria that her table is at the front, so she does not “have to endure the tribute for long” (49). She finds it to be a “nagging discomfort” (50). On the other hand, Frieda seems to yearn for the derogatory cat calls, because, according to the scale of appreciation, it means she is not that ugly. Moreover, besides the discomfort, it also makes her “shiver deliciously” (50). This shows that she deals with complicated gender issues, such as body image and male attention.

However, her other encounters with boys and men do not go very well. Interesting is the scene where she is on the train on her way home from Cape Town. In this scene the intersectionality of race and gender is once again present. A guard opens the door to her compartment where she is sleeping, and in walks a drunken man. The skin colour of the man is not explicitly stated, but it can be assumed that the man is either black or coloured, since he

addresses the guard with “my baas” (88). Moreover, segregation would not have allowed white, coloured, and black people to have mixed. Frieda knows that she should object, but the cold blue eyes of the Boer guard stop her. It is clear that the white man does not care about her wellbeing (88). Moreover, the guard’s statement “[c]ome boy, and behave yourself; here’s a woman up there” is ambiguous (88). The guard can either mean that the boy should behave himself in front of a woman, or he should use this woman in order to behave himself. Either way, the fact that the guard lets the drunken man into the compartment with Frieda portrays both gender and racial discrimination. In addition, the guard may have assumed she would not mind having sex with the drunken guy, because she is coloured, and coloured women are sexual creatures. Frieda, however, clearly states that she fears both men (88), and she is ready to defend herself from a man “who will not leave [her] alone for long” (89). Frieda seems to believe that sexual intercourse with this man is inevitable. It never becomes clear whether she does have sex with the drunken man. Frieda states afterwards: “I will not come back. I will never live in this country again” (90). This statement could implicate they did have sex, and that this encounter is the straw that breaks the camel’s back, or she has managed to escape the man, and she never wants to have such an experience again, and therefore wants to leave South Africa.

Ironically, the encounter with the drunken man in the train occurs just before her aunt Cissie tells her that she should behave like a lady, because girls who are “good and careful” will always be happy (87). Frieda can no longer live in a place where guards will not help her because of her skin colour, and where men take advantage of her. Her family is naïve to this duality in society, and Frieda wonders: “Why do I find it so hard to speak to those who claim me as their own?” (94). They no longer speak the same language. Through her education Frieda has realised that she no longer belongs with her family; she has learned enough about the world, language, and the political climate of South Africa to know that her family is naïve

and oblivious to many of the issues in South Africa. As Sue Marrais writes, her family is "both politically and linguistically unconscious" (36). Frieda, on the other hand, is aware of the "fictionality of self as a unified sensibility, a coherent and autonomous subject" (Marais 36). Therefore, Frieda decides to find her luck elsewhere, namely in England.

She returns to South Africa, however, because she is "tired of being stared at by the English" (Wicomb 111). Later it becomes clear that she still does not care about South Africa as a country. Frieda states: "I hate it" (174). This goes to show that Frieda retains the difficult relationship she has with South African society. Furthermore, her relationship with her family has worsened now that she has lived abroad. She is the "naughty girl", and her aunt warns her to not "come here with disrespectful foreign ways" (166). Moreover, her aunt states that "blood is thicker than water so you jus [*sic*] do your duty" (168), insinuating that Frieda should stay home with her family, and here once more insinuating that she should marry. This comes up several times. Her aunt states that Frieda should look after herself, because "you won't get a husband if you let yourself go like this" (167) and her aunt wonders who will marry her (164). This once again shows how deeply rooted this gender stereotype is of the woman that must marry.

Her own mother feels that children are a poor investment, especially since they use their English "just to be disrespectful to their elders" (171). With this Frieda's mother means that there is no difference between a casual and respectful "you", as there is in the Afrikaans language. She seems to find it regrettable that her daughter, to whom she taught the English language herself, has grown up as much as she has. Her mother strove to rise above her own ancestry by speaking English, but was not able to do it in the same regard as Frieda has. It seems that Frieda can do nothing right, not in the respect of gender – she is not married – and not in the respect of race, since she no longer belongs with the coloured people, nor does she fully belong to any other group.

Conclusion

In *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* by Zoë Wicomb race and gender clearly intersect. Frieda Shenton is discriminated against both because of the colour of her skin and her gender. Frieda does not conform to gender stereotypes – she does not marry, does not get any children, does not settle down – and therefore her family finds her strange. Moreover, due to the specific situation of South Africa, namely that Apartheid has created a struggle between community and striving for upward mobility, the question of race becomes very complicated. The Shentons downplay their Khoikhoi ancestry because they are ashamed of it, and instead emphasise their English ancestry. Therefore, speaking the English language is important to the Shentons, and it not only makes them "superior" to the black people, but it also distinguishes them from their own race, since most coloured people speak Afrikaans. Thus, the English language is a tool to gain prestige. However, this not only distinguishes Frieda from the other "Coloureds", it also leaves her lonely. The Apartheid's racial segregation, in this case, causes an identity crisis to arise.

Thus, both gender and racial stereotypes cause problems for Frieda. There are some specific scenes which show the intersectionality of gender and race. For example, the story "You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town" shows a white naivety of Michael, who cannot understand why Frieda does not want to go into exile with him, and it shows the gender stereotype of the mother, since Michael finds it self-evident that Frieda loves children and would become a mother at some point.

Thus, the intersectionality of race and gender, as Wicomb portrays it, makes for a very complex situation. Frieda is troubled by both racial and gender stereotypes, and it causes her to feel fractured and alone. Due to the situation in South Africa, she does not belong in any designated group, and she does not have the freedom, nor the power, to create a new group where she would fit in.

Chapter IV: Alice Walker's *Meridian*

One of the major black female authors on the subjects of the Civil Rights Movement, Black Feminism, and the intersectionality of race and gender is Alice Walker, who is best known for her novel *The Color Purple*. However, her second novel *Meridian*, which she wrote just before *The Color Purple*, is about the workings of the Civil Rights Movement, and portrays the life of a young black woman called Meridian Hill. While the main character of the novel is Meridian herself, and while she narrates most of the story, her two friends, Truman and Lynne, also narrate several chapters. Meridian and Truman are black, while Lynne is white. Therefore, since all three are represented in this novel, an interesting and a more complete picture may be drawn. The story itself mostly takes place in the South of the US, in the states Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, between the 1950s and 1970s. However, some scenes also take place in the more liberal North, such as New York City, which once again creates a contrast.

Marriage and Motherhood

The intersectionality of race and gender is clear in several instances of the novel; an example is the pregnancies of Meridian and her mother, Gertrude Hill. Both Meridian and her mother get pregnant in their teens. Both are the victims of a culture where sex education is a taboo, and both are victims of a racial stereotype, namely that of the sexual black temptress. This becomes clear in Meridian's situation. She describes, for example, how Daxter, an acquaintance of hers, was after her "since she was twelve", and how he paid her so he could feel her up (Walker 62). Daxter's assistant is also after her, and while she does not enjoy either man, she lives with it, presumably because this is what is expected of her. The same happens with Eddie, who ends up being her child's father. They had a relationship for two years, in which Eddie promised to marry Meridian "if things went wrong" (56). This indicates

that using protection was not common, perhaps because sex education was such a taboo subject.

Meridian's mother, Gertrude, was already married to Meridian's father before she got pregnant, but instead of being happy, she felt that her "frail independence gave way to the pressures of motherhood and she learned – much to her horror and amazement – that she was not even allowed to be resentful that she was 'caught'" (42). Gertrude had to quit her job as teacher so she could take care of the children, and she never made it a secret that she regretted having children. Therefore, when Gertrude asks Meridian if she has ever stolen everything, Meridian knows that the answer is yes, because she stole her "mother's serenity" and shattered "her mother's emerging self" (43).

Meridian experiences the same thing as her mother; she gets pregnant at sixteen[7], and she experiences the same "struggle between mobility and maternity" as her mother did (Tucker 2). As a result of her pregnancy, Meridian is expelled from school, and with that her hopes for future academic success shatter. She is baffled by the fact that no-one – not her mother, father, sister etc. – has told her "what to expect from men, from sex" (54). The only thing her mother ever said to her was to "be sweet" (54). Thus, talking about sex, and educating one's children about sex, seems to be a taboo. However, it remains interesting that her mother never educated her own daughter on sex and having children, because Gertrude herself states that she "could never forgive her community, her family, his family, the whole world, for not warning her against children" (41). The fact that Gertrude was negligent in this matter may attest to her naivety; she is unable to see that by speaking up she could change gender stereotypes in the black community, or at least allow for a freer conversation about sex. Moreover, it could be that a certain peer pressure from other women in the black

[7] While her age is not explicitly stated, it may be assumed Meridian is sixteen years old when she gets pregnant, since she several chapters later picks up her child when she is "only seventeen" (Walker 78).

community restrained Gertrude from ever speaking out against having children in public, since this viewpoint was not deemed acceptable.

Thus, this taboo of talking about sex causes Meridian's obliviousness, which results in her pregnancy. Interestingly, Meridian does not like sex, but she takes part in this action willingly, because this is expected of her. In addition, in a relationship Meridian feels safe, "because she was afraid of men" (57). Therefore, sex does not mean pleasure, "but a sanctuary in which her mind was freed of any consideration for all the other males in the universe who might want anything of her" (57). In other words, sex and a relationship bring her safety, and she only puts up with it because the men she is with expect her to have sex with them.

Perhaps due to the slavery history of the US, black people, and especially black women, were taught to accept less than what they deserve. For example, Meridian has been taught that her husband, Eddie, is good for her, because "[h]e did not 'cheat' and 'beat' her both, which meant he was 'good' to her, according to her mother, his mother, the other women in the neighbourhood and in fact just about everyone she knew" (61). This phrasing does, however, suggest he does both, but just not at the same time. This mentality shows that black women do not believe they deserve a husband who does not beat them or cheat on them. Looking at the history of the US, it could be that the white community is partially to blame for this mentality, since they often did not think highly of black people – black people were often considered to be stupid and violent – and this caused a self-fulfilling prophecy; because they believed it, and thus acted the way white people expected them to[8]. For example, they believed black men were violent savages. Moreover, there were not many other options for black women, since they did not have many other prospects. Meridian is able to get away from her husband by going to college, but this also means leaving her child behind.

[8] James Baldwin says as much, as can be seen on page 16 of this thesis.

In a chapter ironically called “The Happy Mother”, Meridian describes how she thinks of different “ways to murder [her son]”, because Eddie Jr. feels like “a ball and chain” (64). Now that she has a son, she finally knows what “slavery is like” (65). It seems radical to compare motherhood to slavery. However, like a slave, Meridian no longer has any prospects, and thus becomes a “[victim] of entrapment” (Tucker 4). It is when she is trapped that she recognises the importance of education. Meridian found school “dreary” before, but only there did she experience the “quicksilver flash of learning” that she never experienced when she was married (67-68). Instead, she reads magazines, which tell her that “Woman was a mindless body, a sex creature, something to hang false hair and nails on” (68). Some of the magazines she reads are directed at African Americans, such as *Sepia, Jet* and *Tan*, others are filled with white women, such as *True Confessions* and *Real Romances*. Thus, both from the white and the black community comes the message that women were sexual and superficial creatures. Due to self-fulfilling prophecy, Meridian acts as a shallow wife and mother.

Only after a house is blown up by firebombs, in which three black children die, does Meridian become aware “of the past and present of the larger world” (70). Therefore, Meridian joins the Movement, and later decides she cannot participate actively in the Movement with a child. At this point Meridian is a single mother. She has left Eddie, and he assumes “naturally, that the baby would remain with her (this was, after all, how such arrangements had *always* gone)” (68), which once again shows the gender stereotype of the “mother”: only the mother is responsible for her child, while the husband is excused from duty.

Her mother is appalled at the fact that Meridian wants to give her child up for adoption, because she should want her child, “[u]nless you're some kind of monster. And no daughter of mine is a monster, surely” (88). Her mother finds her selfish, and Meridian “ought to hang [her] head in shame”. Moreover, her actions do not belong in the “clean, upright

Christian home" of her mother (88). Once again, Christianity seems to play a big role when it comes to gender stereotypes. As a Christian, Meridian should not leave her child behind. The fact that Gertrude is very religious is probably one of the reasons why she never gave up Meridian.

The Civil Rights Movement

About the Civil Rights Movement Alice Walker wrote: "If the Civil Rights Movement is 'dead,' and if it gave us nothing else, it gave us each other forever" (qtd. in Hendrickson 111). In other words, the Movement has brought the black community closer together. Meridian also comes to this conclusion near the end of the novel, but before she can come to this conclusion, she has to overcome many obstacles, many of which include gender and racial stereotypes.

First of all, it is interesting to see how black girls amongst each other seem to believe in different race and class stereotypes about their fellow black women. In the very first chapter of the book Meridian's peers at Saxon College want to inaugurate Meridian into the Civil Rights Movement. This is ten years before the story ends, and therefore is must take place in the 1960s. They look down upon Meridian's "decidedly unrevolutionary past" (18). In other words, they look down upon people who are uneducated, passive, and blind to racism.

Moreover, the girls expect Meridian to kill for the Movement. Danielson writes that in the late 1960s "[c]ommitment to the Movement [had] shifted from a willingness to die for social justice to a willingness to kill for it" (319). However, Meridian is not sure she will be able to kill, and thus she is called "a drag" by her peers, and "[e]veryone [turns] away" from her. Moreover, she is immediately expelled from the group, which becomes clear when Meridian's friend Anne-Marion asks "[w]hat will you do? Where will you go?" (19).

Meridian feels guilty for her inability to kill, just like Walker herself, who felt anguish because she was not violent enough (Hendrickson 116). Thus, the fact that these girls want Meridian to kill, shows also that they want to do away the stay-at-home female supporter stereotype, since they want black women to fight as equally hard against racism as black men.

Meridian's friends thus believe a black woman should be strong, should stand up for herself, and should be willing to kill. Walker herself was part of the Civil Rights Movement when she was young, and she also believed that violence was "the only way to bring about change" (qtd. in Hendrickson 117). However, this perspective of black women does not coincide with the stereotypes I found in the articles for the theoretical framework, where it was revealed that black men expected black women to stay at home and care for the children. Instead, in *Meridian* women are expected to fight on an equal level with men. It therefore seems that within the black community there existed different stereotypes. On the on hand there were men who believed women should be stay-at-home mothers. On the other hand, there are characters like Truman, a black male friend of Meridian, who finds it normal that Meridian fights as well. It seems that the articles from the theoretical framework talk about a general view, while the group Meridian finds herself in, may be a more radical group within the Movement with differing opinions.

A second aspect is Meridian's illness, which seems to be the result of her guilt. She feels guilty about leaving her child behind, about her inability to kill for the Movement, and about the abortion she had when she got pregnant from Truman[9]. The illness starts with a temporary blindness, and it develops into paralysis, odd dreams, and fainting. According to Tucker, Meridian "must experience a vision that will both liberate her from her immobilizing illness and prepare her for her role as a different kind of revolutionary – one who is an artist

[9] Truman is unware of both the pregnancy and the abortion. When she found out she was pregnant, he had just left her for Lynne, a white girl.

and seer" (7). While this sounds quite vague, Tucker does make a point here. Meridian cannot be the revolutionary others want her to be – she cannot kill after all – however, she can be a different kind of revolutionary, namely one that walks "behind the real revolutionaries" (221). Meridian will operate from the shadows, and she will sing songs to the soldiers,

> [f]or it is the song of the people, transformed by the experiences of each generation, that holds them together, and if any part of it is lost the people suffer and are without soul. If I can only do that, my role will not have been a useless one after all. (221)

Thus, instead of actively fighting and killing for the Movement, Meridian will make sure a sense of community and optimism is upheld. Like Walker herself, Meridian is thus concerned for "the spiritual survival, the survival *whole* of my people", because, according to Martin Luther King, "in using violence a people risk [losing their soul]" (qtd. in Hendrickson 115). To be able to save the collective soul of a whole community, Meridian travels around, educating people on the importance of voting, even though many believe, now that the Movement has somewhat disappeared, that the vote amounts to "nothing" (Walker 209).

At this point Meridian's relationship to the Movement crosses with her maternal instinct. Tucker makes quite an interesting point regarding Meridian's motherhood. While Meridian is not the mother people expect her to be, she is maternal in a different manner. Tucker writes that in Native American mythology the "Thought Woman or Spider Woman" is a figure who is concerned "with essential *processes* of creation" (15). In other words, she is the maker and keeper of culture, a role that Meridian has taken on. Thus, Meridian is not a typical mother, but she is a mother on a larger scale: the mother of a people, "singing the songs of each generation in order that her people will remain a people" (Tucker 15).

Interracial Relationships

Suzanne Jones writes that the "1960s' civil rights movement brought black and white women together in the South as equals for the first time" (144). In *Meridian* this also becomes clear. Meridian and Lynne, a white girl who left her family behind to marry Truman, become quite good friends, especially near the end of the book. While Meridian is the main character, several chapters are written from Lynne's perspective, which gives a nice insight into the thoughts of a white woman in a black community. The great thing about Walker's writing style is that she portrays a very complex picture; Lynne has a romantic view concerning the black community. She believes "the black people of the South were Art" (Walker 136), but Walker also portrays Lynne as an inherently good woman, who wants to help in the fight against racism.

Interesting is the fact that while Lynne has stereotypical views, Meridian also has stereotypical views of white people. Meridian is in love with Truman, but he instead chooses for Lynne, the white girl. According to Jones, "Meridian's inability to understand the attraction her boyfriend Truman feels for Lynne originates from the black woman's feeling of sexual superiority over the white woman" (145). This sentiment is also supported by Toni Morrison, one of the most famous black female authors, who states that "black women have always considered themselves superior to white women [...] in terms of their ability to function healthily in the world" (qtd. in Jones 143). Interestingly, this is once again a view not expressed by the sources from my theoretical framework. However, Meridian says as much in the novel. She states that "white women were considered sexless, contemptible and ridiculous by all" (Walker 109). The fact that Truman traded her for Lynne makes her feel "ashamed, as if she were less", a statement that shows how badly she actually thinks of white women (108).

Therefore, Meridian imposes sexual and racial stereotypes on Lynne, who in the end does not conform to these stereotypes, just like Meridian does not conform to stereotypes

either. Meridian learned these gender and racial stereotypes from her mother and grandmother. Her grandmother, for example, had strong opinions concerning white women:

> 1. She had never known a white woman she liked after the age of twelve. 2. White women were useless except as baby machines which would continue to produce little white people who would grow up to oppress her. 3. Without servants all of them would live in pigsties[10]. (110)

However, since Lynne does not conform to any of these stereotypes, Meridian has to adjust her view of white women. As Jones writes, "Walker shows how race can separate women", but in the end gender brings these two women together (146). Jones here refers to the scene where both Meridian and Lynne finally put the racial stereotypes aside, and start to come together over the loss of Lynne and Truman's child[11]. Jones writes that "they begin to relate to one another as women, rather than as white or black" (146).

The relationship between Lynne and Truman shows how difficult it is to overcome racial stereotypes, and how easy one returns to believing these stereotypes. According to Evans, "interracial sex became ... widespread" after the Freedom Summer of 1964, when many white women joined the Movement (qtd. in Hendrickson 119). Hendrickson, however, writes that Truman initially was interested in Lynne because white women had always been forbidden to black men, and therefore his involvement with Lynne "is an act of defiance

[10] This view pertains to white women of the South; Meridian's family originates from the South, and her grandmother most likely worked for a Southern white family.

[11] Truman and Lynne had a mixed-race child called Camara, but she was attacked, and died in the hospital. This happened after Truman and Lynne had ended their relationship. It is implied that Camara was attacked by white people, because Truman afterwards breaks up with his current white girlfriend, and flees to Meridian, who is black, and therefore safer.

against the white man" (121). This may be true, since Truman's intentions are never revealed. However, he does end up loving Lynne; they marry and even have a child together.

However, after their common friend Tommy Odds is shot by white men, and as a result loses the lower half of his arm, Tommy's opinion of white people changes drastically, and Truman is influenced by Tommy. Tommy states that "[a]ll white people are motherfuckers", and he wants to destroy them; he could "watch their babies being torn limb from limb and [he] wouldn't lift a finger" (Walker 140). Moreover, Lynne, once his close friend, is now a "white bitch" (139). Truman's love for Lynne cannot survive this kind of hatred, and Truman starts to wonder whether it is "possible to be guilty of a color" (140). His conclusion is that Lynne is guilty on two counts, "of being with them [i.e. their group of black friends], and of being, period" (142). Thus, the fact that she exists within their community, and the fact that she, the white female, exists at all, makes her guilty of the crime committed against Tommy.

After the attack, not only Tommy and Truman start seeing Lynne in a different light. Even though she is just a woman, people are afraid of her (146). Lynne is white, and to the black community, white "was a route to Death" and they could feel "her power over them in their bones" (146). This statement shows that one violent act can change the careful peace that was built between Lynne and the black community.

Lynne herself is blind towards the changing situation, and this shows when Tommy rapes her; she seems baffled and cannot understand why one of her best friends would do something like that. According to Hendrickson, Tommy "rapes Lynne because, as a white woman, she is a symbol of the power white men have over him" (123). In a way, he sees the act of rape as a victory against white men. This becomes clear when he points "to her body as if it were conquered territory" (173).

Lynne is raped because she is "a white woman without friends", and thus the perfect target (Walker 177). She has no friends who would believe she was raped. Meridian refuses to believe Lynne, because it reminds her of the "lynchings and the way white women have always lied about black men raping them" (164). In addition, Altuna Jones, another friend of Lynne, does not believe she has been raped, because "it was not possible to rape a woman without killing her" (175). Lynne's husband, Truman, also "chose not to believe her" (177). Thus, Tommy's rape of Lynne is based both on racial and gender stereotypes; race because she is raped due to her skin colour, and gender because she is a woman, which means she is weaker. In addition, Tommy knows she will stay quiet because as a white woman no-one in the black community will believe her.

Lynne's rape also causes both Lynne and Tommy to revert to stereotypes. Tommy brings other friends of his and Lynne's over, and Lynne, for the first time, thinks "that black features were grossly different – more sullen and cruel – than white" (Walker 174). Moreover, "[s]he imagined their gleaming teeth, with sharp, pointed edges" (174), which is a very racist cliché, as she herself also recognises. Tommy already saw Lynne in a stereotypical manner – to him she was the white oppressor – but he starts to see her in a different stereotypical view after the rape. Jones writes that by not making Tommy responsible for his actions, she becomes the white liberal who feels sorry for him because he is black, "and the stereotypical white woman who secretly desires a dark-skinned lover", since she does not fight back (Jones 147).

Conclusion

Thus, Meridian does not conform to the gender and racial stereotypes often inflicted on black women. Instead, she performs the role of mother and revolutionary in other, and original, ways. This does not mean that Meridian does not come across stereotypes.

Meridian does conform to stereotypes in her younger years, but later in her life she finds her own authentic path. As a woman of colour she has few prospects in life, and when she gets pregnant she is expelled from school, her future prospects have been decreased solely to motherhood and the life of a married woman. She is taught to be obedient, and serve her husband. The moment she chooses her own happiness, she is thought to be a monster by her mother. However, even though she leaves her own child behind, she is maternal on a larger scale. She is maternal towards her people, and suffers for them, and lives so she can help them remember why they fight, and why it is important they keep fighting against racism. This also makes her different from the standard revolutionaries. Meridian is not able to kill for the Movement, so instead she will support the soldiers by singing the songs of the past to them. In this manner she becomes free of racial and gender stereotypes.

Another important example of the intersectionality of race and gender is the relationship between Meridian, Lynne, and Truman. Walker portrays this relationship between two black people and one white woman as extremely complex. Walker shows that both Meridian and Lynne are prejudiced and believe in racial clichés; Meridian because she believes white women are stupid and sexless, and Lynne because she believes black people are Art. Moreover, Meridian is forced to admit that black men, just like white men, are capable of rape. This recognition is the only thing that saves the friendship between Meridian and Lynne.

The relationship between these three people is also heavily influenced by America's historical context. For example, Lynne feels she cannot tell anybody she has been raped, because white women in the past unjustly accused black men of rape, so people in the black community will not believe her. In addition, Truman is coerced by Tommy, and the hate crime committed against Tommy, to hate Lynne, even though he loves her. The relationship between Meridian and Lynne is also complex, because Meridian is prejudiced against white

women, but she finds Lynne does not conform to the stereotypes her mother and grandmother taught her.

Thus, Walker shows that racial and gender stereotypes are ingrained in the black community, and also that these stereotypes are heavily influenced by historical context. Moreover, Walker does not only write about white prejudice, but also about black prejudice. Alice Walker seems to suggest that real friendships and relationships between black and white people are only possible when both sides can see past the stereotypes.

Conclusion

I started this thesis with my research question: Do black female authors in South Africa and the United States write differently on the subject of the intersectionality of race and gender, and in what way are these differences caused by historical contexts? This question I wanted to answer by analysing the history of the US and South Africa, as well as the books *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* by Zoë Wicomb and *Meridian* by Alice Walker.

The Influence of Historical Context

In my introduction I already wrote about the possible differences between South Africa and the US, and in fact there were such differences to be found. The US has a more extensive history regarding the slave trade of black people, while the history of slavery in South Africa is somewhat more complicated, since it started with Asians. Moreover, both histories prove to be incredibly complex.

This complexity is also portrayed by Wicomb and Walker. Wicomb shows in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town* how Frieda, a coloured girl, is taught by her family that she is superior to black people, because she is whiter, and because she has, according to Apartheid laws, more rights than black people. Moreover, she is taught to speak English, because this is the language of the white ladies and gentlemen, and thus, by speaking this language, Frieda and her family hope to attain a better status in life. In other words, they try to pass for white people as much as they can.

Walker shows the complexity through the narrative of Meridian, who finds herself an outcast, just like Frieda. Meridian does not belong with her family, because she cannot conform to the expectations of her community, namely that she should be a stay-at-home and mother and a passive wife. She joins the Civil Rights Movement, but here she also finds she

does not belong, because they expect her to kill for the Movement, which she cannot do. Through Meridian, Walker shows how difficult it is for someone to fight against racial and gender stereotypes, since one then immediately becomes an outcast.

Besides the complexity of the situations in South Africa and the US, both authors also show how deeply Christian beliefs, which entered society when European colonialists settled, are imbedded in both societies. In the theoretical framework it became clear that Christian beliefs, concerning marriage, and stereotypes enforced and spread by Christianity, concerning the obedient wife and mother, also influenced society. Wicomb shows this through Frieda, who later in life focuses on her education, while her family is worried she will never find a man, marry, and become a mother. These are not only Christian habits, but also white habits, and perhaps because Frieda, but especially her family, want to be white, they also want to conform to these white and Christian habits.

Also in *Meridian* marriage and motherhood play a very important role, especially in establishing gender stereotypes, such as the image of the dedicated mother. When Meridian gets pregnant, her lover at the time, Eddie, marries her, because that is the Christian and respectable thing to do. When Meridian decides to join the Civil Rights Movement, she leaves Eddie, who leaves the child with her, because that is how things "had *always* gone" (Walker 68). Meridian decides she wants to give the child up for adoption, and this is, according to her mother, something only a "monster" would do, and adoption does not belong in a "clean, upright *Christian* home" (88). Thus, Christian beliefs and habits influence Meridian's mother and her community.

Portrayal of Racial and Gender Stereotypes

Consequently, the intersectionality of race and gender is closely connected to the historical context of a country. While writing this thesis, I also learned that, even though the history of

the US and South Africa unfurled in different ways, the situation of black and coloured people is similar in some ways. For example, black people in both the US and South Africa still deal with racial stereotypes, such as that of the violent savage, and gender stereotypes, such as the sexual temptress when talking about black women. Moreover, the black feminist movement in both countries experienced some difficulties, both from the outside, i.e. the white community, and from the inside, i.e. the black community. In both countries white women, for example, did not believe black women suffered duo to gender inequality, but because of racism, and therefore did not belong in the feminist movement. The black community made it hard for women to fight for gender equality, because (especially) black men believed racism had to be defeated first, and they needed their wives at home to take care of them and their children.

Thus, while the histories differ, both countries ended up with somewhat similar racial and gender stereotypes. For black women this means being seen as the lesser sex, the sexual temptress who cannot be raped, weak, mother, and wife. Both Frieda and Meridian do not enjoy sex, but they do give their consent every time. It is expected of them, and especially Frieda seems to constantly give in to sex, even though she is somewhat afraid of men. This can be seen in the train scene, where a white guard shoves a black or coloured man into her room, and it is implied they had sex. She is, after all, a coloured woman, and it is believed by both black and white men that black and coloured women are sexual creatures. Meridian does not enjoy sex either, but she feels safe once she has a lover, because it protects her from other men. This shows the implications of being a black woman; their status of the sexual temptress causes both black and white men to think black women are always in for sex.

One difference between Wicomb and Walker is the manner in which they portray the prejudiced black woman. Frieda and Meridian's prejudice are inherently connected to the historical context of the countries they live in. Frieda is prejudiced, because she also has a low opinion of black people; she is coloured, and therefore has more rights than black people.

Frieda has this drive to be more white; she is taught English, goes to a mostly white school, and has a relationship with a white man named Michael. This indicates that she thinks relatively highly of white people, because she wants to be one herself. This is connected to South Africa's Apartheid past and society, because the white minority had the most rights. Thus, by passing as white, coloured people could try to avoid the restrictions of Apartheid. Black people in the US did not have this option, since coloureds are also considered to be black, and it is therefore harder to attain the status of a white person. Frieda thus looks down upon black people, and coloured people who cannot pass as white, and she looks up to white people.

Meridian is prejudiced in a different manner, because she believes in certain racial and gender stereotypes herself. For example, she believes white women are stupid and sexless. When she befriends Lynne, Meridian is forced to see that Lynne does not conform to these stereotypes. Moreover, when Lynne is raped by a black man, Meridian is once again forced to adjust her views; at first she does not believe that black men are capable of the same horrendous acts as white men, but in the end she must accept that some black men are indeed capable of these acts. However, Walker also shows how easy it is to disrupt this realistic understanding of the other. When Lynne is raped, for example, Tommy, her rapist, starts seeing her as the stereotypical white woman who wants to have sex with the black man, and the white woman who feels sorry for black men.

However, not all racial and gender stereotypes are portrayed by Walker and Wicomb in the way the articles in the theoretical framework portray them. For example, Walker shows that within the Civil Rights Movement there existed a small but radical group of people who believed women had to fight and kill, just like men. This is an opposite view from that which critics such as bell hooks and Audre Lorde portray, who both write that black men, for example, wanted their wives to stay at home to "breed warriors for the revolution" (hooks 5).

Moreover, Lorde writes that black women who fought for gender equality were often seen as traitors (10). In addition, Walker also dares to talk about a white woman being raped by a black man, which was considered to be somewhat of a controversial subject, since white women in the past often falsely claimed that they were raped by black men.

In Conclusion

Thus, it can be ascertained that the portrayal of the intersectionality of race and gender in the texts of Zoë Wicomb and Alice Walker is heavily influenced by the historical context of the US and South Africa. Since the stories are influenced by the history of their country of origin, they also portray a somewhat different intersectionality of race and gender. The racial and gender stereotypes seem to be relatively the same, but the difference can be found in the way these stereotypes manifest themselves. Coloured people in South Africa have a strong drive to be white due to a romantic view of the white person, as seen in *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*, but in *Meridian* Walker shows that, as a result of being stereotyped themselves, black people have also formed stereotypes of white people. Black and coloured women prove to be the most discriminated against group, and both Walker and Wicomb portray the complexities of being a black or coloured woman in a segregated country.

Works Cited

Baldwin, James. *The Fire next Time*. New York: Vintage International, 1993. Print.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989.1 (1989): 139-167. *Chicago Unbound*. Web. 15 May 2016.

Danielson, Susan. "Alice Walker's *Meridian*, Feminism, and the 'Movement'." *Women's Studies* 16.3-4 (1989): 317-330.*Taylor & Francis Online*. Web. 10 July 2016.

Eagly, Alice H., and Antonio Mladinic. "Are People Prejudiced Against Women? Some Answers From Research on Attitudes, Gender Stereotypes, and Judgments of Competence." *European Review of Social Psychology* 5.1 (1994): 1-35. *Taylor & Francis Group*. Web. 16 June 2016.

Eagly, Alice H., and Antonio Mladinic. "Gender Stereotypes and Attitudes Toward Women and Men." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*15.4 (1989): 543-558. *ResearchGate*. Web. 23 June 2016.

Fanon, Frantz. "The Negro and Language." *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove, 2008. 8-27. Print.

Fredrickson, George M. *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981. Print.

"Gender." *http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.uu.nl*. Oxford University Press. N.d. Web. 15 June 2016.

Goldenberg, David M. "The Curse of Ham." *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003. 168-77. Print.

"Griqua." *http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.uu.nl*. Oxford University Press. N.d. Web. 2 July

2016.

Guy- Sheftall, Beverly, and Maria K. Mootry Ikerionwu. "Black Women and Feminism: Two Reviews." *Phylon* 44.1 (1983): 84-86. *JSTOR*. Web. 16 June 2016.

Hanretta, Sean. "Women, Marginality and the Zulu State: Women's Institutions and Power in the Early Nineteenth Century." *The Journal of African History* 39.3 (1998): 389-415. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 June 2016.

Hendrickson, Roberta M. "Remembering the Dream: Alice Walker, *Meridian* and the Civil Rights Movement." *MELUS* 24.3 (1999): 111-128. *JSTOR*. Web. 11 July 2016.

hooks, bell. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. London: Pluto, 1982. Print.

hooks, bell. *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.

Ickes, Willem. "Traditional Gender Roles: Do They Make, and Then Break, Our Relationships?" *Journal of Social Issues* 49.3 (1993): 71-85. *ResearchGate*. Web. 23 June 2016.

"Intersectionality." *http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.uu.nl*. Oxford University Press. N.d. Web. 16 June 2016.

Jacobs, Johan U. "Playing in the Dark/Playing in the Light: Coloured Identity in the Novels of Zoë Wicomb." *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa* 20.1 (2011): 1-15. *Taylor & Francis Group*. Web. 2 July 2016.

Jones, Suzanne W. "Dismantling Stereotypes: Interracial Friendships in *Meridian* and *A Mother and Two Daughters*." *The Female Traditions in Southern Literature: Essays on Southern Women Writers*. Ed. Carol Manning. Champaign: University Press of Illinois, 1993. 140-57. *UR Scholarship Repository*. Web. 10 July 2016.

Keegan, Timothy J. *Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order*. Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 1996. Print.

Lorde, Audre. "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference." *Words of Fire:*

An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought. By Beverly Guy-Sheftall. New York: New, 1995. 284-291. Print.

Marais, Sue. "Getting Lost in Cape Town: Spatial and Temporal Dislocation in the South African Short Story Cycle." *English in Africa* 22.2 (1995): 29-43. *JSTOR*. Web. 2 July 2016.

Marx, Anthony W. *Making Race and Nation: A Comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.

Nfah-Abbenyi, Juliana Makuchi. *Gender in African Women's Writing: Identity, Sexuality, and Difference*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997. Print.

Pinto, Samantha. "Intimate Migrations: Narrating "Third World Women" in the Short Fiction of Bessie Head, Zoë Wicomb, and Pauline Melville." *Difficult Diasporas: The Transnational Feminist Aesthetic of the Black Atlantic*. New York: New York University Press, 2013. 142-74. *JSTOR*. Web. 2 July 2016.

"Race." *http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.uu.nl*. Oxford University Press. N.d. Web. 15 June 2016.

"Racism." *http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.uu.nl*. Oxford University Press. N.d. Web. 15 June 2016.

Romany, Celina. "Black Women and Gender Equality in a New South Africa: Human Rights Law and the Intersection of Race and Gender." *Brooklyn Journal of International Law* 21.3 (1995): 857-98. *Heinonline*. Web. 1 July 2016.

Ross, Robert. "Oppression, Sexuality and Slavery At the Cape of Good Hope." *Historical Reflections* 6.2 (1979): 421-33. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 June 2016.

Schearing, Linda S., et al. *Eve and Adam Jewish, Christian and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. Print.

Seidman, Gay W. ""No Freedom without the Women": Mobilization and Gender in South Africa, 1970-1992." *Signs* 18.2 (1993): 291-320.*JSTOR*. Web. 28 June 2016.

Sully, Pamela. "Rape, Race, and Colonial Culture: The Sexual Politics of Identity in the

Nineteenth-Century Cape Colony, South Africa." *The American Historical Review* 100.2 (1995): 335-59. *JSTOR*. Web. 28 June 2016.

Tucker, Lindsey. "Walking the Red Road: Mobility, Maternity and Native American Myth in Alice Walker's *Meridian*." *Women's Studies* 19.1 (1991): 1-17. *EBSCO*. Web. 11 July 2016.

Unterhalter, Elaine. "Women in Struggle: South Africa." *Third World Quarterly* 5.4 (1983): 886-93. *JSTOR*. Web. 28 June 2016.

Varga, Christine A. "How Gender Roles Influence Sexual and Reproductive Health among South African Adolescents." *Studies in Family Planning*34.3 (2003): 160-72. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 July 2016.

Walker, Alice. *Meridian*. London: Phoenix, 2004. Print.

White, Deborah G. "Female Slaves: Sex Roles and Status in the Antebellum Plantation South." *Journal of Family History* 8.3 (1983): 248-61. *ProQuest*. Web. 25 June 2016.

Whittington, Ian. "The Ethics of Waste in Zoë Wicomb's *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*." *Safundi* 14.3 (2013): 327-44. *Taylor & Francis Group*. Web. 2 July 2016.

Wicomb, Zoë. "Shame and Identity: The Case of the Coloured in South Africa." *Writing South Africa: Literature, Apartheid, and Democracy 1970-1995*. By Derek Attridge and Rosemary Jane Jolly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. 91-107. *Google Books*. Web. 2 July 2016.

Wicomb, Zoë. *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*. New York: The Feminist Press, 2000. Print.

Wolpe, Annmarie. ""Where Angels Fear to Tread": Feminism in South Africa." *Theory and Method in South African Human Sciences Research: Advances and Innovations*. Ed. Johann Mouton et al. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 1998. 85-104. Print.

Worden, Nigel. *Slavery in Dutch South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. Print.