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I confirm to have conceived and written this thesis in English all by myself. Quotations from other authors and any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are all clearly marked within the text and acknowledged in the bibliographical references.

Wien, 2011

In memory of my beloved grandmother
Franziska Pöschl

Many thanks to my friends and family for their love and support.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The history of South Africa is characterised by colonialism and the system of Apartheid, and in further consequence, by the dominance of European powers and the simultaneous oppression of the nation's indigenous population. During the second half of the twentieth century in particular, the African people in the country were deprived of their land, their political rights and their education and employment opportunities. They needed to endure miserable living conditions and more often than not, became the victims of various forms of violence, including torture, rape, murder or permanent imprisonment.

During the 1990s, the system of Apartheid and its segregation policies were abolished, but the horrors of the past did not dissolve. On the one hand, South Africa still faces a number of economical and social problems, which can be traced back to the country's history. These comprise, for instance, the continuous inequality of wealth, living conditions or education and occupation opportunities as well as the ongoing separation and rivalry between persons and groups of different ethnicity. On the other hand, the population of South Africa could not simply forget about the atrocities of the past, but instead, colonialism and Apartheid resulted in a collective trauma of the nation. More precisely, it can be assumed that both the South African community and its individual members suffer from various traumata originating in the country's history of suppression and segregation.¹

These individual and collective traumata are in turn processed in the literature of the nation, so that content and form of the contemporary South African novel are frequently reminiscent of traumatic experience.² The present thesis examines in how far the concept of trauma determines the inner and outer structure of the narratives and in how far it acts on the essential narrative elements, such as time, space, characters, themes, motifs, point-of view or language. In addition, it will be investigated in how far this reflection of traumatic experience serves to fulfil a particular function and more precisely, in how far the contemporary South African novel may contribute to the healing of the nation's trauma. What is more, the representation

¹ While it can be assumed that the whole South African nation is traumatised by the country's past, it is of course important to note, that the distinct traumata of various persons or groups show considerable differences in their size, shape or quality. A black or African woman, for example, who was raped or lost her husband in the course of Apartheid, will naturally suffer from different trauma than a white or European man, who only witnessed the violence done to the Africans or was even a perpetrator of Apartheid himself. The collective trauma of the South African community, thus, exists in various forms and degrees, depending on the individual fates of the victims.

² Of course, it is important to note that the entirety of South African novels cannot be reduced to one particular content and form, but that instead, the country's literature comprises a great variety of novels written by authors from different cultural backgrounds. South Africa itself is a nation which is characterised by difference and multiculturalism, so that not acknowledging the diversity of the numerous novels would mean a devaluation and underestimation of the whole genre and the literary production of the country. However, this paper concentrates on similarities and common features of South African novels and thus takes account of those novels, which integrate trauma into their narrative structure.

of the concept of trauma into the structure of a narrative is not exclusively a characteristic of the South African novel, but is also widely used in other examples of postcolonial and trauma literature. The present thesis will thus also explore the relation and crucial similarities between the contemporary South African novel, postcolonial literature and trauma narration.

The relevance of the present thesis can be traced back to the fact that African literatures in English have mostly been neglected in both literary discourse and postcolonial studies so far. Thus, the genre of the novel is still predominantly associated with the literary production of Europe, Great Britain and the United States, while postcolonial studies of the present time concentrate primarily on Canadian, Australian and Anglo-Indian literature. The fundamental aim of this thesis is thus to give voice to mainly unexplored postcolonial literature, namely the contemporary South African novel. In addition, this thesis adopts an interdisciplinary approach and thus aims to investigate the relations between narratology, trauma theory and psychology as well as postcolonial theory.³

Since history and politics are crucial categories for the analysis of the contemporary South African novel, this thesis opens with an overview on the events during colonialism, the period of Apartheid and the years after the abolition of segregation policies in South Africa. In further consequence, the concept of trauma will be explored in detail and in particular in the context of the South African nation. Thereby, individual, collective and transgenerational trauma will be analysed and current points of discussion in trauma theory will be addressed. Subsequently, special emphasis will be laid on trauma recovery and the healing potential of narration. After this, the thesis will focus on the examination of the contemporary South African novel. Particular attention will thereby be paid to its most crucial characteristics in relation to trauma and to its connection with other examples of postcolonial and trauma literature.

Finally, these theoretical considerations will be applied to three contemporary South African novels, namely Joanne Fedler's *The Dreamcloth*, Patricia Schonstein's *A Quilt of Dreams* and Anne Schuster's *Foolish Delusions*. All of these novels were published within the last seven years and are thus just as topical and urgent as the problems and traumata discussed in these novels.

³ Cf. Mempel 2009: 2/3.

2. SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY

2.1. The relevance of history for the contemporary South African novel

An important and prominent feature of most South African novels is their reference to history and politics. For instance, historical and political events as well as documents or other authentic texts of the past are often embedded into the plot structure of the narrative. Historical characters frequently play a role or even act as protagonists in the novels on any number of occasions. In addition, the time structure of South African literature regularly emphasizes the importance of the past – or history – for the present and the future. And on top of this, the notion of place is a crucial issue in the majority of these stories as it is often tied to the loss of land or the loss of home in relation to colonialism and the policy of Apartheid, that is history and politics.

In any case, this presence of history in most South African novels arises from the impact of historical and political events on the individual and the community. From the seventeenth century onwards, but especially during the regime of Apartheid, every aspect of life in South Africa, such as education, occupation, housing and living conditions or the possibility of relationships, was related to the laws of racial segregation and inequality. Therefore, not only the public space but also the people's personal and private lives were inherently related to history and politics. (Booker 23/24; Clark and Worger 45)

It follows that personal stories, such as are frequently told in South African novels, cannot be separated from these categories, but are instead fundamentally attached to them. Catharina Loader supports this contention by pointing out that “[e]ven a brief look at some South African [...] novels [...] illustrates clearly how large public events became dramatically alive in the stories. [...] The overwhelming presence of history in South African literature is [...] undeniable” (Loader in Loader and Niederle 21). In addition, Ewald Mengel also refers to the historical and political quality of South African literature by declaring that the South African novel is mostly “a ‘reflector’ of historical conditions and actual political circumstances” (Mengel 2).

At this point, it is important to note that literature does certainly not depict reality or history in the same way as historiography does. The latter usually attempts to inform about certain historical truths and therefore aims to give an equally reliable and objective picture of reality. In contrast, literature – as any piece of art – is always a distortion or interpretation of reality and does not necessarily or exclusively display historical truth or approved facts, but rather

provides a certain version or extract of history. Hence, South African novels are certainly not one to one copies of historical reality, but rather interpretations of this reality.⁴

This matter of fact, however, does neither decrease the historical quality of the novels nor their actual contribution to historiography. Instead, it is assumed in this thesis that history always consists of several experiences rather than one certain truth.⁵ As a consequence, literature – even when it mixes facts with fiction or depicts a limited view of history – may be historical and display historical truths.⁶

Angela Stachelberger, among others, also comments on the fact that many South African novels refer explicitly and implicitly to history and politics. According to her considerations, these categories are not only embedded into the narrative because they play a decisive role in South Africa's community, but also because South African literature has a certain collective value. Hence, it "appears to function as collective memory" (3) by which history can at the same time be recorded and digested. As a consequence, the integration of history and politics serves the documentation of history and thereby prevents forgetting. At the same time, it does not only answer the purpose of remembering the historical events, but also of digesting and becoming able to speak about them. (Stachelberger 3-5)

The notion that South African literature may function as collective memory of the nation is connected to the healing potential of literature and will be discussed in another part of this thesis. For the moment, it is important to note that South African novels are in principle political and by the same token historical.⁷ One could even go so far as to say that history and politics do not only play a decisive role in South African novels, but are indeed the categories upon which most of these stories are modelled.

In this regard, South African novels are representative of postcolonial literature. As the designation of 'post-colonialism' already indicates, the colonial experience shapes the following time period and can self-evidently not be separated from it. The employment of the past, respectively history and politics, is thus a decisive element of post-colonialism and postcolonial literature. (Wisker 109)

What follows from the proceeding considerations is that postcolonial literature, and with it the contemporary South African novel, requires to be read implicitly with regard to history and politics since they are vital and defining elements of postcolonial novels.

⁴ Cf. LaCapra 10/11; Hodgkin and Radstone 2; Mengel 10/11.

⁵ Cf. Petzold 6.

⁶ The extent to which South African novels relate to or display history naturally differs from one story to another. While some novels may depict concrete historical events (e.g. the funeral of the 'Cradock Four' in *A Quilt of Dreams*), other novels may present history only in the background of their stories.

⁷ Cf. Wisker 109.

2.2. Colonialism and Apartheid

2.2.1. The beginning of colonisation

The colonisation of South Africa has its beginnings in 1652, when the Dutchman Jan van Riebeck established the Dutch East India Company at the Cape of Good Hope. The company functioned as refreshment station for ships travelling between Europe and Asia and was based on the importation of African and Asian slaves. Due to its success, the Dutchmen soon settled permanently in South Africa and sought to expand their territory by the violent expulsion of the indigenous people from their land. (Clark and Worger 11; Killam 105/106)

In the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, German, French and British settlers also immigrated to South Africa, and the latter took control of the Cape in 1806. As a consequence of this immigration process, the people of African, Asian and European heritage mixed and intermingled to a new group, which would later be called ‘coloureds’.⁸ In addition, the influx of European people resulted in the early creation of a racial hierarchy of society, ranging from the white or European settlers at the top to the black and coloured slaves at the bottom. (Clark and Worger 12; Killam 105/106)

Severe tensions between the Dutch and the British settlers arose as early as the 1830s, when slavery was prohibited throughout the British Empire. The Dutch businessmen were not yet willing to abandon slavery and started their ‘Great Trek’ away from the British territories and into the African areas, with the intention of increasing their possession of land and continuing the practice of slavery. They established two independent Dutch states named the Orange Free State and the South African Republic. Thus, by the 1860s, the major population groups of South Africa already lived in separate areas, namely two British colonies, two Dutch colonies and several African kingdoms. (Clark and Worger 12-14)

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 and the discovery of gold in 1886 marked the beginning of an industrial revolution in South Africa. It led to large-scale immigration of European settlers on the one hand, and further repression and exploitation of the black, Asian and coloured population on the other. The British conquered the African kingdoms and forced Africans to work in their mines or in the cities for very low wages. In turn, African women and children were often left behind in the poverty of the rural areas. (Clark and Worger 14)

However, the discovery of diamonds and gold also led to increasing tensions between the Dutch (also called ‘Boer’) people and the British settlers. Their competition for the supremacy

⁸ Clark and Worger define ‘coloureds’ as “population group that emerged [...] as a result of contact between Africans, Malaysians and Europeans. Despite partial European heritage, subjected to most apartheid legal restrictions” (155).

over the mineral wealth led to the outbreak of the South African War from 1899 to 1902. The British people finally won the battle, but the Dutch and the British – as well as the African population – needed to accept substantial losses of men. (Clark and Worger 14-16)

The end of the war was confirmed in the peace agreement between the Dutch and the British in 1902. It was decided that the two Boer republics were to be incorporated into the British Empire, but conversely granted self-government. The peace between the two nations consequently led to the strengthening of white supremacy, and simultaneously, to greater discrimination of the African population. The latter resulted in the establishment of separate living areas, limitations of the right to vote and the initial instalment of the pass laws⁹. (Clark and Worger 16)

The African, Asian and coloured population naturally attempted to resist the domination of the whites by establishing a number of political bodies, for instance the South African Native Congress (1898), the Natal Native Congress (1900) and the African Political Organization (1902). Unfortunately however, these organisations could not prohibit the further discrimination of their groups. To the contrary, white fears of future rebellion of these groups were even enhanced, and presumably contributed to the formation of the Union of South Africa. (Clark and Worger 18)

2.2.2. Lawful segregation

The Union of South Africa was formed by the European settlers in 1910 and promoted the segregation of races in accordance with white supremacy. During the first half of the twentieth century, a series of laws was passed, which granted privileges to the white population of South Africa to the detriment of the black and most of the coloured and Asian population. The laws concerned and controlled all aspects of life, including ownership of land, travel, housing and living areas, occupation and education opportunities, and the right to vote, which was limited to white males only. (Clark and Worger 20/21; Killam 106)

The Mines and Works Act, for instance, was passed in 1911 and restricted African employment to unskilled and low paid occupations, thereby supporting the exploitation of the black workers. It was followed by restrictions of Africans to negotiate the conditions of their employment (Industrial Conciliation Act, 1924) as well as the expansion of the already

⁹ The 'pass laws' forced the South African population to carry passes in order to identify themselves at any time. Thereby they served to control the travel and period of residence of the African, Asian and coloured population. (Clark and Worger 21)

introduced pass system to increase the control of the black workers by the South African government. (Clark and Worger 21/22)

African ownership of land as well as housing conditions were settled with the Native's Land Act in 1913 and the Natives (Urban Areas) Act in 1923. Thereby, people of African heritage were limited to possess only about 7% of the country, the land itself often being in an impoverished state. Unless they could prove to be working there, African people were also prohibited from remaining in the cities, and were expelled to townships and rural areas in comparably poor condition. (Clark and Worger 21/22)

The passing of the segregation policies led to increasing resistance of the Africans, frequently in the form of protests, strikes and boycotts as well as the formation of political organisations contesting the South African government. One of these organisations was the SANNC (South African Native National Congress) established in 1912. It was renamed ANC (African National Congress) in 1923 and played a major role in the political opposition of the Apartheid regime throughout the twentieth century. (Clark and Worger 22/23; Killam 106)

2.2.3. Apartheid

The African resistance, however, could not prevent the enactment of the Apartheid regime in 1948, when the National Party (NP) came to control the government. As from now, racial segregation under white supremacy, as it was already enforced since 1910, was performed even more systematically and became institutionalised and designated in a series of laws. (Clark and Worger 23; Butler 1)

The term 'Apartheid' had already been coined in the 1930s and initially referred to the importance of the Afrikaner (or Dutch) cultural identity in contrast to those of other English-speaking Europeans in South Africa. From 1948 onwards, 'Apartheid' became "the name given to a policy of separating people by race, with regard to where they lived, where they went to school, where they worked, and where they died" (Clark and Worger 3/4).

In 1950, the passing of the Population Registration Act enabled the classification of all South African people into the categories 'white', 'coloured' or 'native' (later called 'Bantu'). Indians were included as 'Asians' in 1959 only, as the NP refused to acknowledge them as permanent inhabitants of South Africa beforehand. As a consequence of the Population Registration Act, the legal rights of every person were based on his or her skin colour. Thereby the white population was granted privileges to the detriment of the African, coloured and Asian population. Furthermore, the intermingling of races was outlawed by the passing of

the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in 1949 and the Immorality Act in 1950. (Clark and Worger 46/47; Killam 106)

The Group Areas Act, also passed in 1950, additionally enforced the geographical and physical separation of races. In this way, every group of people was assigned to certain territories, whereby the whites were granted considerably larger areas and more fruitful land. (Clark and Worger 48) The strict expulsion of the people from certain regions was supported by the Bantu Resettlement Act in 1954. With the passing of this policy, people of African heritage could be forced to undergo removal and dislocation. According to Clark and Worger about 3.5 million people were consequently compelled to move from their land between the 1950s and the 1980s. (64/65) The imperative separation of races also led to the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act in 1953, whereby public facilities were likewise differentiated by ethnicity. (Clark and Worger 48)

In 1952, the Reinforcement of the Pass Laws granted greater governmental control and repression of the Africans. As they were not allowed to stay in the cities for longer than seventy-two hours, unless working for a white person, they were forced to prove their identity at any time. If they could not assign a reason for their stay in the urban area, or else could not identify themselves, the African people could immediately be punished or detained. (Clark and Worger 46; Killam 106)

A massive damage in the long-term was brought about with the passing of the Bantu Education Act in 1953 and the Extension of University Education Act in 1959. Thereby, education opportunities were distinguished by race. Whereas African people were granted only to receive poor education allowing them to work in unskilled jobs, the white population was permitted to higher education and skilled jobs. (Clark and Worger 48-51)

The distinctions in occupation opportunities naturally resulted in different standards of living. According to Clark and Worger, the white per capita income during Apartheid was approximately ten times that of Africans. This difference in wealth also affected the mortality rates of the population groups, so that the mortality rate for black and coloured infants, for instance, was thirteen times higher than those for whites. (Clark and Worger 63; Killam 106)

The African population attempted to fight the enactment of the Apartheid laws and organised protests against the government from 1949 onwards.

The Defiance Campaign in 1952, for example, resulted in a worker's strike of thousands of people. Unfortunately however, many of these people were consequently arrested and the leaders of the campaign were banned. In addition, the government passed the Public Safety Act in 1953, which allowed the government to declare a state of emergency, and thereby

suspend all laws, whenever public safety was ‘believed’ to be threatened. Also, it ensured that every accused person – mostly arrested at demonstrations or protest marches against the government – was initially presumed guilty and needed to prove his or her innocence in order to avoid punishment or detention. (Clark and Worger 55/56)

The protests continued in the 1960s with a demonstration in Sharpeville and a march of about thirty thousand Africans on the Houses of Parliament in Cape Town. In response to the march, the government declared a state of emergency, arrested about eighteen thousand of the protesters and systematically marginalized and fragmented the political opposition: the political organisations ANC and PAC¹⁰ were outlawed (Unlawful Organizations Act, 1960) and their leaders, and many members, were banned and arrested – among them the later President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. (Clark and Worger 57-62)

Nevertheless, African resistance persisted during the 1970s and 1980s. The political opposition, such as ANC, PAC and the Black Conscious Movement, mostly went underground and continued their resistance against the government. The organisations increased steadily in numbers and arranged work and school boycotts, marches and demonstrations. Most of these protests however, were met with increasing violence by the government. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, thousands of people rebelling against the regime were killed, wounded, imprisoned and tortured. (Clark and Worger 75-86; Killam 107) In 1985, the government declared another state of emergency and thereby reinforced the arrestment of political protesters, the censoring of radio, newspaper and television as well as the deployment of police and troops in the African townships. (Clark and Worger 92/93)

2.2.4. The end of Apartheid

The policies of Apartheid aroused not only the resistance of the political opposition in South Africa, but also led to worldwide criticism and the condemnation of the South African government. From the 1970s onwards, many countries all over the world decided to withdraw their investments in South Africa and imposed extensive economic and political sanctions onto the state. As the economy of South Africa impended to collapse and political opposition in the country grew stronger, the regime of Apartheid was about to come to an end. (Clark and Worger 94-96; Killam 107)

In 1989, P.W. Botha, State President and current leader of the National Party, resigned after negotiations with Nelson Mandela and was replaced by F.W. de Klerk. The new State

¹⁰ ‘PAC’ stands for the political organisation ‘Pan-Africanist Congress’, which was established in 1959. (Clark and Worger 156)

President took first actions to abolish the regime in 1990. He released most political prisoners, unbanned ANC, PAC and other thirty-two organisations and repealed the majority of laws established under the system of Apartheid. (Clark and Worger 102-105)

The years from 1990 to 1994 marked a time of political transition and unrest. While thousands of Africans were still killed and tortured in protests and rebellions, F.W. de Klerk negotiated with the ANC and other groups. (Clark and Worger 105-108)

In 1994 after all, the first open national election took place and Nelson Mandela, who was also released from imprisonment in 1990, became the first President of the 'new' South Africa. (Clark and Worger 108-110)

2.3. Post-Apartheid

Following the first open national election in 1994, the South African government adopted a new constitution for the state in 1996. In contrast to the years before 1990, the constitution promoted equality before the law among all people of South Africa, regardless of their "race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth" (Clark and Worger 113).

In consequence, the primary aim of the government was the levelling of living conditions for all South Africans, as they have been both separate and unequal for decades. These conditions included terms of housing, education and job opportunities, access to public facilities and standards of healthcare. (Clark and Worger 113)

The government's main successes included a partial redistribution of land as well as the widening of people's access to clean running water, electricity and sanitation. This in turn brought a considerable improvement of living conditions in South Africa, most notably for the black, coloured and Asian (or 'Indian') population. (Clark and Worger 114-116; Butler 164)

Furthermore, the government established schools and universities accessible for all ethnicities and succeeded in the enhancement of employment, in particular of the African population. By the means of affirmative action¹¹ and other strategies, an African working middle class was established and could finally escape poverty. (Clark and Worger 114-116; Butler 164)

In addition to these economic and social accomplishments, the government also aimed at the reworking of the country's past and the reconciliation of its people. Accordingly, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 1995. The commission consisted of

¹¹ 'Affirmative action' refers to "positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business from which they have been historically excluded." In the context of South Africa, affirmative action usually refers to policies advantaging the recruitment of black (or coloured) workers. (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/affirmative-action/>, 18.04.2011)

members of all ethnicities and was designed to listen to the stories of both victims and perpetrators of the Apartheid regime. The basic aims of the TRC were threefold: at first, the commission was established to promote the documentation of history and thereby prevent forgetting. Secondly, it should give rise to forgiveness among the different groups and lead to the strengthening of a united South African population. At last, the commission was also established to consider the future of the state and make recommendations concerning reparations. (Butler 45)

In the course of two and a half years, about twenty-two thousand victims told their stories about violence, cruelty, murder and rape. Roughly eight thousand perpetrators of the regime also bore testimony to the past and sought amnesty for their deeds. The TRC achieved successes in many of its aims and contributed in particular to the documentation of South Africa's history. (Clark and Worger 117; Stachelberger 16; Butler 45)¹²

The accomplishments of the new South African government cannot be overemphasized. Despite its developments however, the country still faces a number of economic and social problems, often related to the racial division and segregation of the past. (Butler 1)

Notwithstanding the achievements in the equation of living standards, for instance, the actual living conditions of South Africa's population still vary greatly and usually work to the advantage of the white population. In many instances, the whites continued to live in the more developed and wealthy environments even after the end of Apartheid, whereas the black, coloured and Asian/Indian population often remained in the impoverished and rural areas. In addition, job opportunities and income per capita still vary widely between people of different ethnicities. Although affirmative action and other strategies achieved an increase of employment of the African population and succeeded in the establishment of a black middle class, many of the poor remained impoverished even after the abolition of the Apartheid regime. This is due to the differences in education and skills of the South African people, which could not be levelled within a generation. Many Africans have not obtained the skills to perform well-paid jobs, and remain unemployed or working in unskilled jobs. (Clark and Worger 116/117; Stachelberger 19; Butler 45)

The continuing poverty and unemployment among many African, coloured or Asian people in turn leads to an increasing emergence of crime and violence. In particular, in the impoverished areas of the cities, murder, rape, child abuse, car-jacking and robbery belong to the daily fare and eminently affect women and children. (Clark and Worger 116f; Butler 141)

¹² However, it must also be noted that the work of the TRC was often criticised. For example, it was argued that the commission failed to indict the political system of Apartheid as such and that it left thousands of crimes unpunished. (Cf. Sabathy 42)

The greatest threat to the South African population however, is posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. According to estimations of 2008, more than 10% of South Africa's population suffer from HIV or AIDS.¹³ The consequences for the people in South Africa include a considerably high mortality rate among children and grown-ups, the loss of parents for many children and a weak economy due to absences and failures at work. (Clark and Worger 116/117; Stachelberger 19; Butler 40)

The above examples illustrate the extent to which Apartheid still influences present-day South Africa. Besides these economic and social aspects however, the legacy of Apartheid is most apparent in the psychological state of the nation. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission certainly helped to work through South Africa's past and to document the stories of many wounded individuals. However, the commission could naturally not heal all the sufferings originating from the events of the past. In fact, the TRC has even been attacked for settling the differences between stories of whites, blacks, coloureds or Asians, which often had a different quality concerning discrimination and the use of violence. In addition, the commission's contribution to forgiveness between the races was considerably reduced as many institutional executors of Apartheid avoided admission of and reflection upon their own culpability. (Stachelberger 19; Butler 45)

Despite the work of the TRC, the regime of Apartheid – with all its inequalities and cruelties – is thus still very much present in the memories and minds of South Africa's people. The atrocities of the twentieth century, such as oppression, poverty, violence, imprisonment, murder and torture, could not simply be forgotten or cured. Hence, racism and considerable tensions between different ethnicities in South Africa remain and influence the daily life and structure of social relationships. (Butler 1; Mengel 3; Loader and Niederle 10) As Anthony Butler puts it, "South Africa remains a long way from Archbishop Tutu's vision of a rainbow nation comfortable with and strengthened by its own diversity" (32).

In addition to the tensions between the races, many South African people cannot simply leave the past behind and advance into their future. Instead, they are continually persecuted by their country's past. In the opening ceremony of the first hearing of the TRC in 1995, Desmond Tutu chairing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission declared that

We are charged to unearth the truth about our dark past; to lay the ghosts of that past so that they will not return to haunt us. And that we will thereby contribute to the healing of a *traumatised* and *wounded* people – for all of us in South Africa are wounded people – and in this manner promote national unity and reconciliation. [Emphasis added] (87)

¹³ Data from <http://www.avert.org/safricastats.htm>, 18.04.2011

Following this statement, it can be concluded that South Africa's population suffers from both individual and collective traumata originating in the time of Apartheid and the unequal segregation of the races. An important medium, in which these traumata become apparent, is South African literature. Trauma is a decisive and crucial element in many South African stories and often determines the narrative structure of the novels. It influences, for example, the choice of characters, the portrayal of time and space, the internal and external structure of the books and the themes and symbols used in the novels. (Mengel 2/3)

By implication, the underlying assumption of this thesis is that trauma originating in the history of South Africa influences and determines the narrative structure of South African literature in many different ways. It is the primary aim of this thesis to investigate and explain methods by which trauma is integrated into the narrative structure of South African literature. Previously however, it is important to examine the concept of trauma in regard to its meaning, its characteristics and symptoms, its consequences for the individual and the community as well as its chances at healing.

3. TRAUMA THEORY

3.1. Defining trauma

The term 'trauma' has its origins in the Greek language and can be translated with 'wound'. In its original sense, trauma was used in the field of medicine and referred to a 'wound of the body'. Not until the theories of Sigmund Freud, the term altered its meaning and from there on denoted primarily a 'wound of the mind.' (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 3; Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 5) However, trauma usually concerns both the body and the mind as it does not only affect the victim's memory and ability to remember, but also manifests itself in a number of bodily reactions. The double effect of trauma on the body as well as the mind will become clearer in the subsequent discussion of the symptoms of trauma.

In the aftermath of the Vietnam War in the 1970s and 1980s, the concept attracted increasing interest among scholars of different fields and led to the beginnings of trauma research and theory. Trauma was consequently termed 'post-traumatic stress disorder' (in short 'PTSD') in the field of psychiatry and was explicitly described in the *Diagnostics and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)*.¹⁴ The distinction between 'trauma' and 'PTSD' is rather indefinite, but while the latter usually refers to the exact psychiatric definition, 'trauma' is a rather universal term and often subject to interpretation. (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 8; Whitehead 4)

¹⁴ See Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 8.

In general, trauma refers to a disorder of the mind, and most often the body, resulting from traumatic, in particular horrifying and life-threatening, experience (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 5). Its concrete nature and characteristics have been discussed rather differently since the 1980s. One feature, however, is indicated in nearly all publications on trauma, namely the fact that the experience of trauma cannot be integrated into the victim's consciousness.

One of the most prominent scholars to review this phenomenon is Cathy Caruth. In her works *Trauma* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Caruth describes the "unassimilated nature" of trauma and explains that the traumatic event is experienced "too soon, too unexpectedly" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4) to become fully known or understood by the victim. On the contrary, the experience cannot be assimilated and integrated into the victim's consciousness, but remains only in the unconsciousness of the person (*Unclaimed Experience* 4; *Trauma* 100).

Ruth Leys (2000) as well as van der Kolk and his colleagues (2007) follow Caruth's assumptions as they speak of a disorder or disruption of the victim's memory originating in the traumatic experience. Hereby, both publications adopt and explain the concept of 'dissociation', which means that the mind of the victim splits in the course of the traumatic experience and the trauma isolates itself from the ordinary mechanisms of memory. Therefore, the traumatic events cannot be remembered in the same way as ordinary events, but are instead dissociated from the person's autobiographical memory. (Leys 2; van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 7-9) The fundamental nature of trauma is therefore related to the impossibility of the mind to integrate the traumatic experience into the victim's ordinary consciousness.¹⁵

Apart from this consensus on the disintegration of the traumatic experience however, scholars occupying themselves with trauma have often presented conflicting views of the concept. One major point of disagreement, for instance, is the question whether trauma results exclusively from exposure to a single traumatic event or whether it may also originate in a permanent or repeated situation of danger. The acknowledgement of trauma in the field of psychiatry, for example, usually requires exact concurrence with the definition of PTSD in the DSM-IV. Thereafter, trauma originates in a certain 'traumatic event' to which the mental disorder can be traced back. (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 8) Many scholars during the 1980s and 1990s have adopted this definition of trauma and argued for the need of a specific traumatic event.¹⁶ However, numerous trauma researchers have also distanced themselves from this narrow and event-centred definition. Particularly in regard to the Holocaust and other systems of mass

¹⁵ Cf. also Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 15; Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 1.

¹⁶ Cf. for example Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 18/19.

suppression, these scholars consider a broader interpretation of the concept. Thereafter, trauma does not necessarily originate from the single exposure to a distinct event, but may also result from permanent or repeated exposure to traumatising events. (Shepherd and Robins 229/230; Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 8)

This broader definition of trauma is adopted for the purpose of this thesis as the traumatisation of South Africa's population can barely be sufficiently described by reducing it to the experience of single traumatic events. During the regime of Apartheid, a great number of persons certainly became victims of such events, including rape, murder, torture, child abuse and other forms of violence. However, many others have not been direct victims of such experiences, but suffered nonetheless as they were daily witnesses of the named cruelties. The system of Apartheid was marked by permanent and repeated instances of violence and these concerned the majority of the population and constituted a large part of daily life. Hence, many people may have developed a trauma even without being the victim of a certain traumatising event.

This notion is connected to the discussion whether the concept of trauma can only relate to an individual or whether it may also refer to a collective or community. Especially in the beginnings of trauma research, PTSD – in its psychiatric definition – was exclusively tied to an individual person. Only later, the notion of collective trauma was brought up for discussion. Nowadays, the terms collective, communal or cultural trauma can be found in a number of publications¹⁷, but it is not clear in how far “one can draw conclusions about collective trauma from the analysis of individual (psychological) trauma” (Sarat, Davidovitch and Alberstein 6).¹⁸ The subsequent discussion will further comment on the concept of collective trauma. For now, it is sufficient to note that this thesis assumes both individual and collective traumatisation as useful and vital concepts to investigate South Africa's community and in particular the literature of the country.

Another crucial point in the theoretical debate is the question whether trauma is inherently endless or instead, can be healed and worked through.¹⁹ This issue again is related to the discussion whether trauma is ‘unspeakable’ or else, can be transformed into a narrative. Cathy Caruth, for instance, has prominently argued that traumatic experience cannot be spoken as trauma is essentially characterised by the lack of the victim's memory. Since the experience can never be fully known or understood, it also resists being told to another person. The

¹⁷ Cf. for instance Audergon 16; Craps and Buelens 4; Volkan 14/15; Alexander 54.

¹⁸ Cf. also Shepherd and Robins 229/230; Alexander 43; Granofsky 5.

¹⁹ Cf. Mengel 4.

impossibility to speak about trauma simultaneously implies its endlessness: if it cannot be spoken, it cannot be healed. (*Trauma* 153)

In contrast to Caruth, Judith Herman (1997) has argued that recovery of trauma is possible with certain qualifications. Following her assumptions, victims need to be encouraged to remember the traumatic events and to mourn their losses in order to re-gain control over their experiences. (155) However, she also notes that while recovery of trauma is feasible, the absolute resolution of trauma can never be fully achieved. Herman thus contradicts Caruth in terms of the imperative impossibility of speaking about trauma, but at the same time supports her notion of the endlessness of trauma. (211)

As opposed to Caruth and Herman, many other scholars have argued against the infinity of trauma and commented on ways of healing. Susan Brison, for example, considers that the resolution of trauma can be achieved by the means of narration and involves a “remaking of the self” (Brison in Bal, Crewe and Spitzer 39). Thereby, Brison explains that the victim of a traumatic experience may transform his or her traumatic memory into a narrative and may consequently re-gain control over his or her experiences. (Brison in Bal, Crewe and Spitzer 39-43; Brison 70-72)

This process of transforming traumatic (or ‘hot’) into narrative (or ‘cool’) memory is also part of the Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET), which was developed by Maggie Schauer and her colleagues (2005). In the course of this therapy, victims are encouraged to remember and narrate their traumatic experiences in order to gain more power and control over them. (2/3)

At last, Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe (2007) have also adopted the model of translating traumatic into narrative memory and argue against the impossibility of speaking about trauma. Following their considerations, language certainly has its limitations, but still

speech is necessary to re-capture the traumatic event [...] [and] to restore the victim’s sense of self and to help him or her regain control over a self shattered by the trauma. Reconstructing the trauma into narrative form is one of the most crucial processes in the journey towards the victim’s healing. (25/26)

The present diploma thesis naturally follows this argumentation and assumes that trauma is not inherently unspeakable, but instead needs to be told. The transformation of traumatic into narrative memory is a prerequisite for the healing of traumatised individuals as well as communities. Certainly, this transformation is a complex process and thus leaves traces in the narration itself. One of the fundamental aims of this thesis is therefore to examine in how far trauma is integrated into the narrative structure of South African stories or put differently, in how far the transformation of traumatic into narrative memory manifests itself in these stories. The contention that trauma can be narrated – and therefore potentially healed – consequently forms the basis of this thesis and will be explained in further detail in the subsequent analysis.

For reasons of clarity and comprehensibility, it is worthwhile to summarise the assumptions on the nature of trauma underlying this thesis. As has been explained, trauma evokes a disorder of memory as it cannot be integrated into the victim's consciousness. It may result from exposure to a distinct traumatic event or else, from permanent or repeated exposure to such events. Trauma concerns both the individual and the community. Despite the limitations of language to convey traumatic experiences, they also need to be told. Only then, can the experience possibly be re-integrated into one's consciousness and the victim of the trauma can be healed. The definition of trauma, which serves this rather open and broad interpretation of the concept, and is adopted in this thesis, is taken over from Gobodo-Madikizela's and van der Merwe's publication *Narrating our Healing*. Thereafter, trauma can be described as the "loss of control, loss of one's identity, loss of the ability to remember, and loss of a language to describe the horrific events." (vii)²⁰

3.2. Symptoms and characteristics of individual trauma

Numerous scholars working in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, medicine and even literary studies have commented on and described the symptoms of trauma. Although these descriptions differ from each other, as some experts emphasise certain characteristics, or else, neglect some features, many symptoms of trauma are widely acknowledged and have repeatedly been discussed by a majority of professionals. These approved characteristics of trauma will be addressed in the subsequent overview, but not in order to simply repeat what others have been said before. Instead, it is important to recall these most prominent features of trauma as they are frequently reflected in the South African novel. For instance, the traumatisation of certain characters may be emphasised precisely because they have some of these symptoms. Another example is that the narrative structure of the novel may imitate these characteristics.²¹ The already mentioned disorder of memory, for example, may be mimicked by a disorder of the plot structure. In consequence, the following overview of the symptoms of trauma is primarily intended for the subsequent analysis of certain South African novels in relation to trauma.

3.2.1. Dissociation and self-repetition

It has already been shortly explained that one fundamental characteristic of trauma is the disorder of memory or the act of dissociation. Recapitulating, this means that the traumatic events are stored differently than ordinary memories in the mind of the individual. The

²⁰ Cf. also Bryant-Davis 94; J. Herman 188.

²¹ Cf. Whitehead 3.

traumatic incidents are not integrated into the victim's autobiographical memory, but are instead dissociated and remain only in the subconscious of the individual. (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 15)²²

However, these traumatic memories in the unconsciousness of the victim cannot be permanently repressed. Instead, another essential characteristic of trauma is its inherent self-repetition. That means that the repressed experiences begin to persecute the victims and necessarily repeat themselves. They mostly assume the shape of flashbacks, nightmares, hallucinations or other intrusive phenomena, through which the traumatic events are involuntarily re-experienced or re-lived. (Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe vii)²³

The involuntariness of the re-experiencing is also significant of trauma. The victim typically feels powerless or helpless in the very moment of the traumatic experience, and this lack of control repeats itself by the means of intrusion. The traumatised individual cannot influence or prohibit the re-experiencing of trauma, but is, as many scholars have termed it, 'haunted' by the experience. (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 6; Brison 69; van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 136)

The lack of control over the victim's own past is in turn connected to the incomprehensibility of trauma. Since the traumatic experience is not integrated into one's ordinary memory, and can thus not be consciously remembered, the victim lacks understanding of his or her own past and cannot identify the origin of the re-experiencing of trauma. (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 64; Shepherd and Robins 224)

What has often been presented as paradoxical here is that despite the lack of memory on the side of the victim, the repetitive intrusions of trauma are usually particularly explicit and vivid. For the traumatised individual, the intrusions evoke the feeling as if the traumatic experiences "were continually recurring in the present" (J. Herman 37). This phenomenon has often been termed 'immediacy' of the traumatic intrusions. Since the flashbacks, nightmares or other re-enactments of trauma are so particularly vivid, the victim cannot consciously differentiate between the re-experiencing and the trauma itself. (J. Herman 37-39; Brison 69/70)²⁴

Correspondingly, victims of trauma commonly react with a similar emotional intensity to the flashbacks, nightmares and intrusions as to the traumatic incidents themselves. The re-experiencing of trauma is almost as painful as the actual traumatising events. Some scholars²⁵

²² Cf. also Leys 2; van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 7; Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe vii.

²³ Cf. also Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 57/5; J. Herman 37; Leys 2.

²⁴ Cf. also Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 1; van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 8.

²⁵ Cf. for example Caruth 63 and Brison 69.

have thus claimed that the self-repetitions of trauma are also re-traumatising for the individual. (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 14)²⁶

At last, self-repetition is characteristic of another phenomenon of trauma, namely the disorder of time. As the traumatic events cannot be integrated into the past of the individual, they repeat themselves in the present. It has already been said that the victim can frequently not differentiate between the traumatic experience and its self-repetitions. Thus, the traumatised individual cannot differentiate between the past and the present. Instead, past and present intermingle and produce a disorder of time. (Shepherd and Robins 224)

3.2.2. Anxiety, constriction and loss of self

The experience of traumatic events is usually accompanied by the humiliation and overpowering of the victim, which in turn result in feelings of powerlessness, shame, guilt, inferiority, fear and anxiety. The logical consequence of these emotions is an altered perception of oneself and the world. On any number of occasions, victims of trauma lose their basic trust in the security of the world and develop a sense of permanent danger. In addition, however, victims also lose trust in themselves as the experience of trauma dissociates the individual from his or her past and leaves the victim powerless. He or she is unable to remember or recall the traumatic events, and thus “lose[s] personal sense of significance, competence, and inner worth” (Van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 197). Briefly speaking, victims of trauma experience a loss of the self.²⁷ According to Judith Herman, this loss of self is particularly intense for “people subjected to prolonged, repeated trauma” (86) and is thus especially relevant for the examination of trauma in relation to South Africa’s community (Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe vii).²⁸

In any case, the post-traumatic loss of self bears further consequences for the victim’s behaviour and his or her course of life. Numerous scholars have commented on the symptom of emotional numbing or constriction in the aftermath of trauma. The basic assumption is thereby that the powerlessness, which is experienced in any traumatising situation, results in the consequent numbing or passivity of the victim. As the traumatised person experiences a

²⁶ Cf. also J. Herman 37-39; Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe vii.

²⁷ In an extreme case, victims of trauma may not only feel that they have lost a part of themselves, but in fact that this part has even died. As a consequence, they may develop the wish to die (J. Herman 49).

²⁸ Cf. also J. Herman 51-53; van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 13-15; Brison in Bal, Crewe and Spitzer 40-44.

lack of control over the events but also over his or her own memory, the victim adopts a state of surrender and indifference (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 9).²⁹

A related symptom of trauma is called avoidance. This means that traumatised persons usually evade situations, places and people who remind them of the traumatising events and may potentially evoke a flashback or nightmare (J. Herman 56; Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 9; van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 12). In the context of South Africa, avoidance is a particularly interesting phenomenon as it is connected to the abandonment of the country. During and after the time of colonialism and Apartheid, numerous South Africans have left their home country and it can be assumed, that many of them moved away to avoid being reminded of the atrocities and cruelties inflicted on South Africa's population.

The emotional numbing and constriction of the individual as well as the act of avoidance, in turn lead to a restriction of the individual's life. On the one hand, the victim loses interest and strength to engage in activities which he or she has formerly enjoyed or valued important. The person's everyday activities and interactions are therefore limited and concern in particular the ability and willingness to make plans for the future. Susan Brison as well as Schauer and her colleagues, have argued in this respect that victims of trauma experience a "sense of foreshortened future" (Brison 39/40; Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 9).³⁰

On the other hand, emotional numbing of the traumatised person naturally leads to a withdrawal and alteration of relationships. As the victim experiences a loss of self and his or her basic trust, and develops feelings of anxiety, he or she usually withdraws from relationships and social interaction. In turn, this retreat leads to the person's social isolation. The victim continually dissociates himself or herself from the community and may even abandon close relationships to his or her family. As Judith Herman puts it: "In the aftermath of traumatic events, survivors doubt both others and themselves" (53).³¹

3.2.3. Hyperarousal

At last, another important symptom of trauma is a generally increased level of arousal. As victims of traumatic experiences commonly feel intense emotions of fear and anxiety, their readiness to face danger at any time coincidentally grows. Hyperarousal, according to Judith Herman, "reflects the persistent expectation of danger" (35) and means that victims of trauma frequently have a heightened startle response, overreact even in the face of small provocations

²⁹ Cf. also J. Herman 42/43; van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 13; Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 26.

³⁰ Cf. also van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth; Bryant-Davis 4.

³¹ Cf. J. Herman 51-53; Brison 40; Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 184.

and often suffer from restlessness. As a bodily reaction, it consequently forms a contrast to the psychological symptoms of constriction and numbing. More often than not, it also leads to further consequences such as distractability and sleeping disorders. (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 9)³²

In addition, hyperarousal potentially increases one's level of aggression and may thus lead to the victims' violent behaviour against themselves and others. As a consequence, victims of trauma may overreact, threaten and harm others or else, develop self-destructive behaviour such as eating disorders or alcoholism. (Van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 184; Bryant-Davis 4)

Recapitulating the mentioned symptoms of trauma, it can be assumed that trauma concerns both the body and the mind of the victim. More often than not, the disruptions in the mind of the individual have a profound effect on the bodily reactions of the same person (Brison in Bal, Crewe and Spitzer 42; Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 1).

3.3. Collective and transgenerational trauma

Since the beginnings of trauma research in the 1970s and 1980s, trauma has mostly been examined from an individual psychological perspective. Especially in regard to colonialism and forms of political mass oppression such as Apartheid, however, it is necessary to explore trauma in collective or communal terms as well. As explained above, this thesis follows the assumption that trauma does not only refer to certain individuals, but may also concern whole communities and even nations. (Audergon 16; Craps and Buelens 4; Mengel 2)

It has also been previously mentioned that the relation between individual and collective trauma has led to frequent disagreement among scholars and experts in the field of trauma research. More precisely, it is rather unclear, in how far the symptoms and characteristics of individual trauma can be transferred onto collective traumatisation (Craps and Buelens 4; Sarat, Davidovitch and Alberstein 6).

One such attempt, which seems to be particularly valid, has been presented by Arlene Audergon in her publication *The War Hotel*. Here, the author juxtaposes and compares the effects of traumatisation on individuals and communities.³³

In accordance with individual trauma, Audergon notes, for example, that collective trauma originates in the experience of an event or a series of events that threaten social values

³² Cf. J. Herman 35; Brison 39/40; van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 13.

³³ The following information has been obtained from Audergon's 'chart of the symptoms of PTSD in individuals and signs of communal and collective trauma', published in: Audergon 281-284.

concerning human rights and impose danger on social welfare and survival. In addition, these events are met with helplessness and horror by the group in question, which in turn reflects the reactions of individuals towards traumatic events.

Another related characteristic of collective trauma, which Audergon presents, is repetition or re-experiencing. According to her considerations, this re-experiencing occurs mostly through the repetition of negative feelings towards the suppressive group and involves outrage, distress and thirst for revenge. These emotions in turn lead to repetitious cycles of violence and tensions between the group of victims and the former suppressors. In addition, the pain of the traumatic experience also potentially repeats itself whenever members of the victimised group are reminded of the atrocities.

Furthermore, individual and collective trauma, in the understanding of Audergon, share the post-traumatic symptom of avoidance. Thus, not only individuals attempt to avoid reminders of the traumatic situations, but even whole groups may lack responsiveness to the events and try to ignore their past. The avoidance of the group's past however, consequently leads to repressed emotions and the inability to make plans for the future. In the context of South Africa, this collective symptom of avoidance may surface in the neglect of employment with the country's history and the unwillingness of some people to accept responsibility for the past.

Correspondingly to the hypervigilance of the traumatised individual, Audergon also observes a group or community agitation which surfaces in a heightened vigilance and sensitivity between conflicting groups as well as an increasing number of violent outbursts. On top of it, Audergon contrasts the post-traumatic distress of social and occupational functioning of the individual with the impairment of economic, political, legal and group functioning of the community in question. (Audergon 281-284)

With this comparison, Arlene Audergon supports and strengthens the assumption that one can draw conclusions and transfer a great number of symptoms from the individual to the community – even if these features may deviate in their concrete representations.

Another useful description of collective trauma has been provided by Vamik Volkan, who explicitly associates his model with the situation of the South African population.³⁴ Volkan detects five psychological phenomena that occur in the aftermath of collective trauma.

Firstly, he explains that the members of a traumatised group share a common “sense of shame, humiliation, dehumanization and guilt” resulting from their experiences. (14/15)

³⁴ Source: Volkan, Vamik. *The next chapter: consequences of societal trauma*. (see bibliography)

In the second place, Volkan states that as a consequence of this humiliation, traumatised groups frequently have an issue with being assertive and expressing their emotions. Since they felt helpless during the traumatic experience itself, they remain restrained even after the end of the experience. As a result however, the aggression felt by the victimised groups may turn inwards and lead to what Volkan calls “social sadism”, that is “direct rage [...] *between* the members of the victimized group” (17). This phenomenon, in turn, is reflected in South Africa’s statistics of murder, rape, car stealing and robbery, in particular among the African population. (17/18) Another consequence of the group’s inability to be assertive is that the victimised group increasingly envies and develops negative feelings towards the former suppressors, who were and are still able to assert themselves. These tensions may then result in outbursts of rage towards the previously privileged group. (18)

As a third phenomenon, Volkan denotes an “identification with the oppressor” (17) and declares that the formerly victimised community often classes the individual members of the privileged group as consistent oppressive system, even after the end of suppression. In response to this characteristic, the previously repressed community does not acknowledge authorities of the other group – even if they show no more tendencies of suppressing the other community – and may misuse its newly gained freedom for illegal activities. (17)

Fourthly, Volkan notes a “shared difficulty or even inability to mourn losses” (23). Hence, the members of the formerly victimised group are frequently overwhelmed by their pain endured under the regime as well as by the sudden change of society in contrast to the continuity of their pain. Collective trauma and its inherent loss deprive victims of the ability to grasp and acknowledge the depth of their losses. Volkan explains that, “[b]ecause of the continuation of shame, humiliation, dehumanization, guilt, helpless rage and identification with the oppressor, their mourning process becomes complicated and unending” (23).

These four characteristics of collective trauma result in another, particularly important phenomenon, which Volkan terms the “transgenerational transmission of trauma” (14/15). The concept of transgenerational trauma has been discussed and analysed by a number of scholars³⁵ and refers to the fact that trauma can be transferred from one generation to another, if it is not resolved by the actual victims of the traumatic experience. (Volkan 28/29)

The phenomenon of transgenerational trauma consequently points to another major characteristic of collective and likewise individual trauma, namely its relative persistency. Hence, trauma usually lasts for a longer period and may even continue to operate on individuals and communities long after the end of the suppressive regime (Audergon 20;

³⁵ Cf. for example Whitehead 14; Edwards 14; J. Herman 188.

Volkan 15). Its resolution is considerably aggravated if the everyday reality of the victimised group continues to bear traces of the former oppressive regime. Issues such as “continuing poverty, inexperience in the democratic way of life, corruptions in the new political system, and international manipulations” (Volkan 15) thus complicate the resolution and healing of individual and collective trauma.

Some scholars have even argued that trauma, especially in its collective form, is indelible and poses a constant and recurrent struggle to the community in question. Jeffrey C. Alexander, for instance, points out that

cultural traumas can never be solved and never go away. Over time the repeated and relived cultural activity yields a reservoir of hundreds of different renditions of the memory – some dead, some latent, some still active, some “hot,” but in all events many that are available for resuscitation. This produces a fascinating type of cultural accumulation – a non-ending, always-expanding repository consisting of multiple precipitates (both negative and positive) of a continuous and pulsating process of remembering, coping, negotiating, and engaging in conflict. (54)

What is important to note here, however, is that the concrete shape of the traumatisation may change over time, so that the trauma experienced by subsequent generations may differ from the trauma of those who experienced the traumatic events directly. (LaCapra ix)

The relative persistency of collective trauma naturally bears consequences for the community in question and these successions are in turn related to individual traumatisation. Just as the individual experiences a loss of personal identity in the aftermath of trauma, the community experiences a distortion of its culture and a disruption of its collective identity. (Alexander 38-43)

Culture, in the understanding of Mary de Young³⁶, refers to

a context of symbols and meanings that people create and recreate for themselves during the process of social interaction. Culture is represented externally in artifacts, roles, rituals and institutions, and internally as values, beliefs, attitudes, identities, stock of knowledge and world view. (De Young, online publication)

These symbols and meanings, which constitute culture, are in turn meaningful for the community and function as guidelines which the members of the particular group can hold on to. The experience of collective trauma however, shatters both the external and the internal representations of culture and thus leads to the collective loss of meaning. With the destruction of its values and beliefs as well as the roles and rituals of the community concerned, its members are left disempowered, disoriented and unable to make plans for the future. (De Young, online publication; Alexander 38)

In addition, collective trauma and the consequent distortion of culture naturally lead to a disruption of the collective identity of the group in question. As mentioned above, the

³⁶ Source: De Young, Mary. *The interpretation of cultures*. (see bibliography)

traumatisation causes a loss of meaning as well as a loss of cultural memory, which are fundamental conditions for the formation of identity. In the aftermath of trauma, the group – and in consequence its individual members – struggles to identify itself as a community. In the case of repressive regimes such as Apartheid, this also means that the formerly oppressive and the victimised groups remain separated even long after the end of the traumatic experiences. (Nelson 108; Alexander 43; Volkan 29)

With regards to South Africa, the continual segregation of different ethnicities has resulted in considerable problems to form a national identity. Despite the end of Apartheid in the 1990s and the following attempts to negotiate between the different races in South Africa, the population of the nation is still deeply divided and has troubles in considering itself as a nation. (Butler 32; Mengel 3; Loader and Niederle 10)³⁷

In order to recreate culture and collective identity, the group or society concerned needs to face its own past and attempt to work through the traumatisation. It has already been declared that some scholars assume it impossible to resolve collective trauma and have commented on its inherent indelibility.³⁸ Another perspective however, is that collective trauma can be relieved and ultimately healed by the same means as individual trauma, namely the telling of the traumatic experiences. Following this assumption, the traumatised group needs to face its past and tell the stories of what has happened. It needs to restore its cultural memory and narrate the events that remained unspoken. The community also needs to consider personal and collective responsibility. At last, it needs to acknowledge that a traumatisation has occurred. (Audergon 27)

As previously mentioned, the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa was such an attempt to work through the past. It was primarily founded to listen to the stories of both victims and perpetrators of the system of Apartheid in order to restore collective or cultural memory and heal the nation's collective traumatisation. (Audergon 27; Shepherd and Robins 226)

Trauma literature, that is literature concerning itself with trauma and integrating the concept into its narrative structure³⁹, may be regarded as another such attempt of resolving trauma by the means of narration. The traumatic experience is integrated into the structure of a story and thereby into the consciousness of the group in question. In many respects, the South African

³⁷ It is valid to note here, however, that collective trauma does not only have a separating function, but may also create bonds between people, in particular between those who shared the same sufferings and traumatic experiences. Thus, a victimised group may develop a sense of belonging via the common experience of violence and horror. (Audergon 23/24; Erikson in Caruth, *Trauma* 194)

³⁸ Cf. for example Alexander 54.

³⁹ Cf. Granofsky 5.

novel can be regarded as such trauma literature.⁴⁰ It is therefore useful to examine the relation between narration and healing in greater detail in order to detect literature's potential of healing the South African nation.

3.4. Trauma and healing/Trauma and narration

It has already been mentioned that there are conflicting views on the question whether trauma can be worked through or healed, or else, whether it is unending and indelible. As stated above, the present thesis follows the first assumption and adopts the view that trauma can potentially be healed by the means of narration. This telling of traumatic experiences may take place in the course of therapy⁴¹, but it may also occur in the production of literature or another form of art. It is furthermore assumed that many South African novels either point towards the potential of literature to heal trauma, or else can even be regarded as such attempts to work through traumatic experiences.

At a first glance, the concepts of trauma and narration seem to contradict each other as trauma is fundamentally characterised by its disintegration into the victim's autobiographical memory. Hence, it causes a shattering of the person's ongoing life narrative and of the relations between the past, the present and the future. It remains outside any temporal order in the sequence of life and therefore resists being narrated. (J. Herman 37/38; Brison in Bal 40/41) In addition, it has also been mentioned previously that trauma is accompanied by the powerlessness of the victim and causes a loss of meaning, memory, sense of time and ultimately, the loss of language. (Brison 71; Gobodo-Madikizela 6/7) Therefore, trauma or traumatic memory has often been described as being "unspeakable" (J. Herman 1).

In the course of trauma research however, numerous scholars have commented on the need of transforming or translating traumatic into narrative memory by the means of language. As previously mentioned, the basic idea is that the victim attempts to find words to describe his or her traumatic experiences and progressively regains control over them. The process of narration helps to re-establish memory and to bring order into the traumatic events, until they can be re-integrated into the life narrative of the victim. (Brison 71/72)⁴²

Thereby, it can be argued that it is precisely the structural demand of the narrative which helps to regain control over one's memories. In contrast to the disorganisation of traumatic experiences, the concept of narration always implies a certain structure, temporal order and

⁴⁰ The relationship and similarities between trauma literature and the South African novel will be discussed in the subsequent analysis. Cf. also Mengel 2/3.

⁴¹ For example, Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) developed by Schauer, Neuner and Elbert (see bibliography).

⁴² Cf. also J. Herman 175; Gobodo-Madikizela vii & 25; Kopf 55; Mengel 5.

coherence of the events being told. Thus, structuring the traumatic experiences after these principles of narration helps to re-develop an autobiographical narrative and to re-integrate the traumatic experiences in the victim's life narrative. (Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 6/7)⁴³ Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe support this contention by pointing out that

[t]urning trauma into literary narrative means turning chaos into structure. A narrative has a topic, and normally keeps to that point; the plot of the story usually creates a causal link between different events; characters act according to their identities, and their actions show some kind of continuity; and patterns are created and repeated to indicate central themes. In all these ways, the shattering effect of the trauma is transformed by the author into (relative) coherence and unity (60).

In turn, the narration of one's traumatic experiences leads to the re-empowerment of the victim. Whereas the experience of trauma is characterised by the powerlessness of the individual – as he or she cannot control the intrusive self-repetition of the traumatic events – the conscious recalling of the traumatic events implies that the victim slowly regains control over the experiences. (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 2)⁴⁴ At the same time, the re-attaining of one's control and memory results in the “remaking of the self” (Brison 71/72), that is the recreation of one's personal identity. The previously shattered autobiographical memory is restored and the victim can relate to his or her past again. (Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 5 & 28; Almog in Sarat, Davidovitch and Alberstein 290; Brison 71/72)

What is important to note however, is that the act of transforming traumatic into narrative memory is certainly not a straightforward development, but can rather be regarded as “a highly complex process marked by the paradoxical relationship between language, memory, and trauma” (Kopf 43). As a consequence, initial narrations of traumatic experiences are usually not fully coherent and logical, but are instead marked by fragmentation, contradiction, incoherence and emotional toning. Indeed, the memories of the traumatic experiences progressively assume shape, but it may take considerable time and effort until they can be integrated into the victim's life narrative again. (Almog in Sarat, Davidovitch and Alberstein 298/299)⁴⁵

In addition, the transformation of traumatic into narrative memory and the consequent healing of trauma cannot be achieved by the victim of the traumatic experience alone. Numerous scholars have therefore emphasised the relational aspect of trauma narration. Martina Kopf, for instance, explains that in the process of narration “active listening and witnessing are of as much importance as the act of narrating itself. [...] it is also significant [...] to the integration

⁴³ Cf. also Mengel 6/7; Brison in Bal 40/41; Trimbacher 23-25; Shepherd and Robins 224/225.

⁴⁴ Cf. also J. Herman 197; Brison in Bal 40/41; Brison 71; Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 25; Trimbacher 18/19.

⁴⁵ Cf. also J. Herman 1; Brison in Bal 47; Schauer 14; Kopf 43; Mengel 6/7.

and transformation of traumatic memory.” (43) Thus, trauma does not only need to be told, but it also needs to be listened to and acknowledged by others. The recipients of the narration “perform an act of memory that is potentially healing” (Bal, Crewe and Spitzer x) and are therefore crucial for the recovery of the traumatised individual. In any case, the listeners of the narration should be aware of the structure of trauma and its consequences for the difficulty of narration. If they meet these requirements, experts in the field of trauma research speak about so-called “empathic listeners” (Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 27) or, in the case of literature, emphatic readers.⁴⁶

In the first place, the narration of traumatic experiences serves to support the recovery or healing of the traumatised individual. However, this thesis also follows the assumption that trauma narration has a potential healing effect on the community in question. Concerning this, Judith Herman was one of the first to discuss the public value of trauma narration. According to her considerations, the narration of trauma is more or less synonymous with the concept of testimony and thus has both a private and a public – in the sense of political and judicial – value. In consequence, testimony serves to extend the individual experience to the community. (J. Herman 181)

Following this theory, other scholars have furthermore explained that the victim of trauma is always inherently related to a certain community. The treatment and potential healing of an individual person thus logically bears consequences for the collective development as well. (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 4; Almog in Sarat, Davidovitch and Alberstein 290; Edwards 136) This is especially the case with trauma narration in the course of literature and art, as, according to Martina Kopf, “literature and art contribute to the social recognition of personal suffering and traumatic reality” (56). Literature and other forms of art are therefore ideal fields in which personal and collective identity can be re-established and formed. (Kopf 55/56)⁴⁷

In the context of South African literature, trauma narration thus has a potential healing effect on the South African community. The integration of trauma into many South African novels serves to transfer the working through trauma on a collective level and to contribute to the recovery of the nation. The production of trauma literature in South Africa adds to the awareness and acknowledgement of trauma originating in colonialism and the system of Apartheid. If the South African community consequently becomes aware and deals with its

⁴⁶ Cf. Kopf 43 & 51-55; Bal, Crewe and Spitzer x; Almog in Sarat, Davidovitch and Alberstein 292/293; Trimbacher 21; J. Herman 61 & 70.

⁴⁷ Cf. Petzold 13/14; Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 59; Bal, Crewe and Spitzer x.

post-traumatic state of consciousness, it may potentially find ways to heal or at least relieve its collective trauma. (Mengel 2/3)

4. THE CONTEMPORARY SOUTH AFRICAN NOVEL

4.1. The contemporary South African novel in literary discourse

The contemporary South African novel, as it is discussed in this thesis, is associated with at least two other genres of literature, namely trauma literature and postcolonial literature.

Trauma literature, according to Granofsky, is literature which uses the means of symbolism to point from the portrayal of individual traumatic experiences towards collective traumatic experiences. (Granofsky 5/6) In many respects, the contemporary South African novel accords with this definition. First and foremost, it often tells the stories of traumatised individuals, while it simultaneously points towards a certain traumatised community. Furthermore, the South African novel and trauma literature share many characteristics regarding their narrative structures, that is plot, characters, time, space, causality, perspective, themes, motifs, narrative mode, etc.

At this point, it is important to reaffirm that the totality of contemporary South African novels can of course not be reduced to one distinctive content and form, but that instead, the country's literature is rich in variety and comprises a number of different narrations. In fact, simply reducing all South African novels to trauma literature would certainly imply an underestimation of the whole genre. However, this thesis is concerned with those contemporary South African novels, which deal symbolically with individual and collective traumatisation and thus fit into the genre of trauma literature. To put it another way, it is certainly crucial to note that not *all* South African novels can be regarded as trauma literature, but a great number of novels can indeed be associated with this genre, and those are discussed in the present thesis.

Postcolonial literature, on the other hand, is literature that usually originates in postcolonial nations or societies and more often than not, deals with the experience of colonialism and its consequences for the country and its population. (Wisker 109) Hence, the South African novel is associated with postcolonial literature since it commonly deals with history and politics, and thus the experience and repercussions of colonialism.

Moreover, since the experience of colonialism was usually related to suppression, withdrawal of land, violence and the loss of beloved ones, it was often accompanied by the experience of individual and collective trauma. In many respects, trauma literature and postcolonial

literature are thus closely connected with each other and share a number of common characteristics.

The following analysis concentrates on the characteristics of those contemporary South African novels which can basically be associated with both trauma literature and postcolonial literature. More precisely, it will be explored in how far individual and collective traumata, as well as the experience of colonialism, have left their imprint on the narrative structure of these novels.

4.2. Characteristics of the contemporary South African novel

4.2.1. Disruption of time

A significant feature, which links the contemporary South African novel to trauma literature, is the disruption of time or achronology. In other words, many South African novels are not linear and follow a certain time structure from the past to the present, but that, instead, different levels of time alternate and intermingle. Whitehead terms this phenomenon the operation of “co-present time perspectives” (3). The chronological order of time is distorted and the narration moves both forwards and backwards in time. (Erll and Nünning 335/336; Whitehead 3; Granofsky 16/17) For example, scenes of the past, present and future may be narrated on a rotating basis in order to emphasise their relation to each other. Alternatively, the plot may be told from the present point of view, but may be interrupted by scenes from the past, and vice versa.

Hereby, the most important narrative techniques are called flashback (also called ‘analepsis’ or ‘retrospection’) and flashforward (or ‘prolepsis’). In a flashback, a certain episode from the past interrupts the narration in the present, whereas a flashforward allows a glimpse into the future (Erll and Nünning 335/336; Hawthorn 125).⁴⁸

The disruption of time signals the integration of trauma into the narrative structure of the contemporary South African novel, as it mimics a concrete symptom of trauma. As has previously been explained, trauma causes a disruption of autobiographical memory and sense of time. The victim thus experiences an abyss in his or her ongoing life narratives and has difficulties to relate to the past. Instead, the past begins to haunt the victim and is re-experienced via nightmares, flashbacks, hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. In the contemporary South African novel, this disruption of memory and sense of time is consequently mimicked by the disruption of chronology and linearity. (Erll and Nünning 336)

⁴⁸ Cf. also D. Herman 57; Keen 103.

The imitation or mimicking of trauma symptoms is an important characteristic of trauma literature in general and the contemporary South African novel in particular. (Granofsky 18; Whitehead 3) Besides flashback and flashforward, the narrative technique of repetition is another example of this imitation on the level of time as it self-evidently mimics the self-repetition of the traumatic experience. (Whitehead 86) Repetition in the novel may concern the repetitive narration of whole episodes or scenes, but may also involve the repetition of certain motifs, themes or other patterns of narration. (Hawthorn 132; D. Herman 59)

4.2.2. Disruption of causality and coherence

As previously mentioned, trauma narration is usually characterised by fragmentation, incoherence and contradiction. Since the victim's memory is disrupted by the traumatic experience, he or she cannot remember or is uncertain about the events leading to the traumatisation. Hence, his or her post-traumatic narration remains incomplete and contradictory. (Brison in Bal 47; Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 14; J. Herman 1) The contemporary South African novel, as well trauma literature in general, adopts this phenomenon into its narrative structure by applying a variety of narrative techniques.

Ellipsis, gaps and other omissions in the South African novel, for example, point towards the disruption of the victim's memory. Hence, the plot of the novel often contains 'black holes', which are events that cannot be remembered and are left out in the narration of the story. (Whitehead 84; Bal, Crewe and Spitzer ix; Mengel 9) Sometimes, these gaps may be filled in the course of the narrative as the traumatic events are progressively remembered. This narrative technique may then point towards the recovery of trauma and the re-living of the traumatic experience. (Almog in Sarat, Davidovitch and Alberstein 298/299) In other instances however, these gaps may not be closed so that secrets and aporias remain within the narration and point towards the continuous forgetting or repressing of the traumatic experience. (Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 66) Open endings are a specific form of omission in the South African novels. They indicate that closure, in the sense of complete recovery of the trauma, has not yet been achieved and that the future is still indefinite. (Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 22)

Fragmentation in the South African novel may either be the result of the actual traumata of the authors, or it may be constructed to imitate trauma narration and to serve what Judith Herman calls "the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy" (1). It has been explained that trauma is paradoxical in the sense that it defies language, but at the same time demands

narration. The fragmentation of the South African novel consequently responds to this central dialectic of trauma.

Another literary technique which adds to the disruption of causality and coherence in the contemporary South African novel is the use of ambivalence. That means that certain elements of the story are not left out, but are presented in ambivalent and even contradictory terms. The truth about certain things is left open, which in turn resembles the experience of trauma. (Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 66; J. Herman 1; Almog in Sarat, Davidovitch and Alberstein 298/299)

What is more however, is that paradox and contradiction may also point towards the disruption of culture and consequently relate the South African novel to postcolonial literature. It has previously been explained that the experience of colonialism causes a loss of cultural identity for the suppressed group. As culture is disrupted, meaning is simultaneously lost. This loss of identity and meaning has led to the frequently contradictory character of postcolonial literature. It can therefore be assumed that South African authors also use paradox and contradiction to point towards the disrupted culture of the nation. (Edwards 153)

4.2.3. Questioning of place and identity

Another frequent characteristic of the South African novel which it shares with both trauma literature and postcolonial literature, is the questioning of place and identity. More precisely, the South African novel is frequently engaged with the exploration of the self and others “within a certain historical and multi-cultural sphere” (Loader in Loader and Niederle 22) as well as with the relationship between the self and place. (Stachelberger 73; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 8)

In regard to post-colonialism, the search for a self and a place to belong to, is indicative of the “post-colonial crisis of identity” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 8), which occurs in the aftermath of the colonial experience. Many of those, who were suppressed by the colonisers, have undergone forced dislocation and resettlement. They were expelled from their former homes and territories and thereby simultaneously experienced displacement from their land, language, culture and religion. As a consequence, they also endured a loss of self, or of their personal, communal and cultural identity. (Wisker 100; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 8)

The loss of self and the search for a relation between the self and place is therefore an important theme in postcolonial literature and in the South African novel. On any number of occasions, the characters in the South African novel have lost the relationship to their selves and their home, and struggle to identify a place to belong to. In this respect, some scholars

have commented on the postcolonial concept of the ‘hybrid subject’, which is situated in between cultures and possesses only a fragile identity. (Edwards 139-141)

In addition to this presentation of confused identities, the post-traumatic (or postcolonial) distortion of self and place may be represented in the novel by the consequent challenging of place. For example, many South African novels present a spatial disorder or portray a deranged and dangerous world. (Granofsky 16-18; Loader and Niederle 22-25; Erll and Nünning 340) Aside from that, the questioning of self and identity also surfaces in a number of common themes of the South African novel, as for example migration, immigration, Diaspora, relocation, exile and homecoming. (Edwards 150; Mengel 8; Loader and Niederle 32)

4.2.4. Multiple perspectives

The South African novel is also characterised by the frequent use of multiple focalisations or, as Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe denote it, a “polyphony of voices” (60). That means that the stories of South African novels are often narrated from different or multiple perspectives and that more than one person appears as the narrator of the story. In this respect, the multiple focalisations may either alternate between different characters, or else between an omniscient narrator and certain characters. (Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 60; Erll and Nünning 338)

Multiple perspectives further connect the South African novel to trauma literature, since the reasons for this narrative technique are related to trauma and trauma research. At first, trauma leads to a disruption of individual as well as cultural memory. The multiple perspectives may therefore be used to give voice to a number of people with different experiences instead of the singular experience of an individual person. Hence, the polyphony of voices serves to reconstruct communal experience and thus potentially restores cultural memory. (Erll and Nünning 338) Secondly, multiple focalisations may be used to facilitate the confrontation with the traumatic experience for the readership, as the polyphony enables “a wide variety of possible identifications” (Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 60). Hence, the readers of the South African novel often have several opportunities to identify with a character and therefore to work through their trauma.

A phenomenon, which is related to the multiple focalisations of the South African novel, is the occurrence of several plot lines. As the novel frequently has a number of narrators, they may also narrate different events and act in alternate settings, times or cultural environments.

As has already been explained, the plot of the South African novel is thus often incoherent and jumps between various times and places.

However, it is also interesting to note that the presence of several plot lines may not necessarily result from multiple focalisations. In regard to trauma research, an important symptom of trauma is dissociation or the splitting of the mind. Several plot lines may thus also occur, if the story has only one narrator, but his or her mind ‘dissociates’ and jumps between different narrations. The division of the plot thus further relates the South African novel to trauma literature. (Bal, Crewe and Spitzer ix)

At last, another aspect that is related to multiple perspectives, is intertextuality. Trauma literature, and also the South African novel, frequently incorporate others sources, authors and materials. Selected texts thus add to the narrative by presenting another text-independent voice. These texts may have different purposes, such as highlighting important points, adding another perspective or opinion to a certain topic or contrasting the narrative. (Whitehead 84)

The South African novel, in particular, often incorporates texts, which are indicative of the South African culture and its narrative resources. Such texts include for example poems from oral tradition or proverbs, which frequently precede, interrupt or follow the plot of the novels. (Irele 11 & 159)

4.2.5. Language variation

In colonial times, people of different ethnicities and consequently speaking different languages, came to live next to each other. Sometimes the various languages thus intermingled and were spoken alternately. In other cases, they remained separate and became important markers to signify certain cultural groups. In South Africa, for example, English and Afrikaans were usually identified as languages of the European colonisers, whereas African languages were spoken by the indigenous population. The different ethnicities were thus not only separated by race, but also by the means of language.

Since the language of the colonisers was hereby usually considered more valuable, it was frequently imposed on the suppressed population and used in public services and discourse. Nowadays, Afrikaans and English are therefore often negatively connoted by the African population. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 50; Stachelberger 10)

As a matter of course, language is an important marker of culture and is thus highly indicative of cultural identity. In postcolonial literature in general, and in the South African novel in particular, one can often observe a variation of language so that different languages occur next

to each other. The language variance is hereby indicative of the colonial experience. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 50)

The variation of language involves a number of narrative techniques. For example, “selective lexical fidelity” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 63) implies that some words are not translated, but presented in the original language. These words point directly towards the cultural distinctiveness of different groups. They may also be used to highlight a certain culture and its presence in the plot of the narration. (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 51f) Another technique are so-called parenthetical translations, which means that a word is given in the original language, but is immediately translated in an inserted bracket. These translations, according to Ashcroft and his colleagues, signify “the continual reality of cultural distance” (60) between groups living in the same society or nation.

By contrast, intermingling of language, which also occurred in the course of colonialism, is usually represented by the means of syntactic fusion, interlanguage or codeswitching. (Cf. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 61-71)

4.2.6. Symbolism, the supernatural and magical realism

The present analysis has already shown that symbolism is a very important characteristic of the South African novel. Thus, achronology in the novel is, for example, indicative of the post-traumatic disorder of memory of the victim, the questioning of identity is symbolical for the loss of the self and the disruption of causality also points towards the traumatic experience. Language variation is symbolical for the colonial experience and the multiple focalisations of many South African novels symbolises the cultural differences in colonial environments.

A specific example of symbolism in the South African novel and other trauma literature is the incorporation of supernatural and fantastic elements. These are used to signal the victim’s distortion of consciousness and his or her consequently disrupted view on reality or else, to symbolise the persecution of the victim by the traumatic experience. (Whitehead 84) In the South African novel, as well as in trauma literature in general, the literary style of magical realism is hereby of particular importance. Within this sort of narration, fantastic and supernatural elements are integrated into an otherwise realistic plot and setting as if they were likewise part of reality. Thus, imagination and reality intermingle and the categories of space, time and causality are further challenged. Magical realism and symbolism are used to signal

the disruption of ordinary reality and the confusion of the traumatised individual or community. (Irele 159; Hawthorn 64)⁴⁹

Within magical realism and the employment of the supernatural and fantastic, the motifs of ghosts and haunting are of particular significance and appear very frequently in the South African novel and trauma literature in general. More precisely, protagonists in the contemporary South African novel are often haunted by ghosts. On the one hand, this motif may represent the persecution of the victims by their own past, that is their own traumatic experience. On the other hand, however, the motifs of haunting and ghosts may also point towards older, unresolved traumatic experiences and thus symbolise transgenerational transmission and the continued existence of trauma. Structurally speaking, both motifs contribute to the disorder of time in the South African novel, since they signal that the past continues to haunt the present. (Whitehead 6 & 14)

The motifs of ghosts and haunting, however, are also indicative of postcolonial literature. Hereby, the ghosts similarly embody “the devastating effects of colonization and slavery” (Edwards 119), that is the consequences of colonialism (or the past) for the postcolonial society or nation (that is, the present). Ghosts in postcolonial novels frequently return to collect certain unpaid debts, or in other words, shortcomings that resulted from colonial dominance and territorial occupation. In addition, ghosts may be used to symbolise the “unspeakable things unspoken” (Edwards 119) and thus enable to represent what cannot be represented. (Edwards 119-121)

In regard to South Africa, it has already been explained, that the nation is still significantly marked by the country’s past.⁵⁰ The frequent use of the motifs of ghosts and haunting in the South African novel is thus a direct translation of the actual ghosts and spirits which continue to haunt South Africa’s economy, politics and matters of society.

4.2.7. Themes of the contemporary South African novel

As has been thoroughly explained, trauma is an important concept in many South African novels and surfaces in a great number of themes, which further relate the novel to trauma literature. Inner conflicts of the characters and mental experiences such as powerlessness, fear and the feeling of guilt, for example, are frequent themes of the South African novel and relate directly to the traumatic experience. (Loader and Niederle 25, 34, 37; Whitehead 82/83) Since the body is also disrupted by the experience of trauma, bodily phenomena, such as

⁴⁹ Cf. also Brashear 195; Loader and Niederle 37.

⁵⁰ Cf. e.g. Butler 1; Clark and Worker 116/117.

birth, growth, sexuality or death also play a significant role in many South African novels. (Granofsky 14)

In addition, survival is an important and significant theme of the South African novel. As has been explained, trauma is a life-threatening experience, which cannot be fully grasped in the moment of its occurrence. Cathy Caruth has therefore argued that trauma is essentially an enigma of survival. In her publication *Unclaimed Experience*, she explains that psychological trauma cannot simply be traced to the violence and cruelty of the experience, but indeed to the very act of surviving this experience. It is precisely the survival of the victim, which enables the re-experiencing and thus the whole occurrence of trauma. (62) Being a survivor is thus an important theme of the South African novel and trauma literature in general. (Granofsky 13) In regard to the collective experience of traumatic events, being a survivor may also implicate that others have not survived and thus point to a certain loss, which is in turn one of the most central characteristics of trauma. Loss – of a beloved person, of the self, or of a home – is generally one of the most important themes in the South African novel. (Mengel 8)

Various forms of violence, which potentially lead to the occurrence of individual and communal traumatisations, can also be found in nearly all South African novels and include events such as rape, murder, incest, child abuse or torture. (Mengel 8) Furthermore, it has already been explained that history and politics belong to the most fundamental themes of the South African novel. This employment with the past is also indicative of trauma literature and even more, of postcolonial literature. (Loader and Niederle 21; Stachelberger 44) Important themes of the South African novel, which relate to the experience of colonialism, as well as to Apartheid and the experience of trauma, are thus for example oppression, ideology, power or racism. (Stachelberger 6 & 44)

4.2.8. Form and narrative mode

The previous analysis has already pointed towards a number of characteristics which determine the form of the contemporary South African novel. Fragmentation, incoherence or achronology, for instance, shape the stories to a large extent. However, there are also certain subgenres of the novel, which are characteristic for South African literature.

Most importantly, autobiographies and the so-called “Bildungsroman” (or novel of education) are very frequent forms of the South African novel. Since they usually follow an individual’s life from childhood to adulthood, they are valid sources to explore the past as well as the present, and also to offer possibilities for the future. Hence, they are useful genres, in which identity can be re-shaped and re-defined. In many instances, these novels thus indicate a

development of the individual in question and thereby represent post-traumatic and personal growth. (Irele 195-197)

Diaries, memoirs and testimonies are also very important subgenres of the novel. These are especially convenient forms to tell the stories of an individual from a subjective perspective and to convey the inner conflicts and feelings of the victim. More often than not, these forms of the South African novel are accompanied by an emotional or confessional mode and a subjective point of view that is limited to the perspective of a certain character. (Mengel 8/9; Almog in Sarat, Davidovitch and Alberstein 299)

4.3. Brief Summary

Generally speaking, many South African novels imitate the experience of trauma and consequently present a disruption of the essential elements of the narrative structure of novels, such as time, space, causality or number. The challenging of linear narrative is thus a basic characteristic of these South African novels and associates them with both trauma and postcolonial literature. (Whitehead 6; Granofsky 16/17)

Trauma is an important theme in the majority of South African novels and often addressed by the means of symbolism. Thus, the disruption of structural elements of the novel commonly mimics the experience of trauma. At the same time, symbolism is used to refer from individual towards communal experience. (Granofsky 5/6 & 18; Whitehead 3)

In addition, the thematic structure of the South African novel is mostly determined by the experience of colonialism and Apartheid and thus includes themes such as suppression, violence and the disruption of identity and place. (Stachelberger 44; Loader and Niederle 21)

As has previously been explained, the South African novel thus functions as collective memory. It serves to document the history of the country, to explore and restore South Africa's past and thereby to support the population with the processing of the traumatising events. (Stachelberger 3-5; Erll and Nünning 338)

5. THE DREAMCLOTH

5.1. Plot overview

Joanne Fedler's novel *The Dreamcloth* (2005) is a Family Saga, which tells the stories of three consecutive generations of a Jewish South African family and mainly deals with the theme of the Jewish Diaspora in South Africa. The plot covers a time span from the 1920s to 1994, but the temporal structure of the novel is by no means chronological. Rather, it alternates between the past and the present and more precisely, between three different levels

of time. Moreover, the novel consists of several narrative strands and jumps between different settings, characters and perspectives. The main plot or frame narrative, which constitutes the beginning and the ending of the novel, follows the story of Mia, a Jewish South African woman, who emigrated from South Africa in 1983, but returns home after the end of Apartheid.

The narration begins in the year 1994. Mia works as a journalist in Bosnia, when, one day in February, she receives a telephone call from a man named Asher. He asks her to visit him, explaining that he is seriously ill, and Mia travels to Tel Aviv to nurse him until his death. Before he dies, Asher gives Mia a beautiful cloth made of different patterns, which is referred to as 'the Dreamcloth'. Afterwards, the young woman books a one-way flight to the city of her birth, Johannesburg. Back in her home country, Mia aims to explore her own and her family's past in order to find herself and a place to belong. Her identity can be described as shattered or insecure since Mia suffers from transgenerational trauma and is haunted by a ghost. It is the ghost of her grandmother, Maya, which is symbolically evidenced by a white birthmark in Mia's hair.

A second strand of the narrative thus focuses on the story of Maya, her husband Yankel and her secret lover Rochel. Maya is a Jewish lesbian woman, who lives in Kovno, Lithuania, and passionately writes poetry. She is oppressed by the traditional structures of her family and the Jewish community she grows up in, and thus needs to hide her sexual inclinations and is forced into a marriage with the Jewish man Yankel. One day, Maya comes to know the poor Jewish seamstress Rochel, who lives alone with her son Asher and fabricates beautiful, little cloths, in which she seeks to sew in her dreams. She immediately falls in love with Rochel and has a secret affair with her. Being together, the two women, who have felt lonely throughout their lifetime, suddenly experience love and happiness. They escape their solitude by sharing their most intimate passions, namely Rochel's handcraft and Maya's poetry.

When Rochel's house is burnt down by a madman by the end of the 1930s, Maya persuades Yankel to admit the seamstress and her son into their home. At about the same time, the Holocaust increasingly gains currency in Lithuania and as a consequence Yankel emigrates to South Africa soon after Rochel has moved in. He aims to find a job and a place to live in Johannesburg and to get Maya to join him as soon as he can provide for her. In turn, the two women gain three years together in Kovno and the seamstress eventually creates the Dreamcloth. It is a particular beautiful cloth of different colours and textures, which contains the dreams and wishes of Rochel. After three years, Maya receives a letter from her husband,

including a one-way ticket to Johannesburg. Now she needs to leave Kovno, but promises Rochel to get her and her son to South Africa as soon as possible.

After their separation, Rochel initially finds comfort in the poetry of Maya, but a few years later, her memories begin to fade away and she loses every hope that she will see her lover again. When Maya finally reports having given birth to two sons, Rochel decides to commit suicide. She hangs herself and is found by her son Asher, who is traumatised by this discovery and stops to speak for many years. In his adulthood, Asher blames Maya for the death of his mother and seeks to take revenge on her family. Maya, on the other side, is also heart-broken when she comes to South Africa. She sinks into nostalgia, becomes passive and numb and eventually loses her gift of writing. At first, Yankel is concerned about her, but in the course of time, he becomes angry with his wife and even rapes her. Maya consequently gives birth to two sons named Shmooley and Issey, but afterwards she completely shuts herself away. When she finally hears about Rochel's death, she weeps for eight days and then dies, leaving behind her guilt-ridden husband and her two sorrowful sons. Before she dies, she gives the Dreamcloth to her younger son, Issey.

The third narrative strand deals with Mia's childhood in the 1960s and 1970s. Issey has married Fran, a rather unfeeling woman, who was raped by her uncle in her early childhood and consequently lost any hope for her future. They settle in Emmarentia, a suburb of Johannesburg, and Fran soon becomes pregnant, but when she suffers a miscarriage, she becomes even more distant and emotionally cold. She finds herself pregnant again and gives birth to Mia, but she cannot love her child and treats her carelessly.

Mia is born with a birthmark and weeps for the first weeks of her life since she carries the trauma of Maya within her. She only stops crying when Issey reads poetry to her. At the age of four, Mia learns to read and begins writing poetry herself. She establishes an intimate relationship with her father as they bond through their common love of art. Another important caregiver of Mia is her nanny, the black woman Sarafina, who lives in the maid's room beneath the family's house. Mia's best friend is the girl Grace, whom she gets to know in primary school.

In April 1975, Issey receives a letter from a stranger named Asher, who claims to be an old friend of the family and wants to visit them in South Africa. In fact, Asher is of course the son of Rochel and actually seeks to take revenge on Maya and her relatives. He is convinced that Maya is to blame for Rochel's suicide and thus plans to destroy Maya's – and Mia's – family. Issey and Fran welcome Asher, and soon he becomes their friend and moves nearby. Henceforth, he often joins the family for dinner and during one of these meals, Issey shows

the Dreamcloth to Asher. Mia and her mother simultaneously fall in love with Rochel's son, and before long Asher initiates an affair with Fran in order to get the family apart.

Issey eventually begins to distrust the stranger and suspects him to be an Israeli spy. At the same time, he realises that he has lost both his daughter and his wife to Asher, and thus he slowly becomes depressive. After a harsh argument between the two men, Asher disappears and takes the Dreamcloth with him. Both Mia and Fran now blame Issey for Asher's departure and as a consequence, he has a nervous breakdown and shortly afterwards, commits suicide. Shaken by the death of her father, Mia moves away from her mother and starts to travel through the world and work as a journalist.

When she comes back to South Africa in 1994, she meets Fran, her grandfather Yankel, her ex-lover Bloke and her friends Grace and Henri. Mia slowly manages to discover her past and more importantly, she starts to make sense of it. Her ghost gradually wrestles free and Mia's trauma is simultaneously relieved. The book ends at Emmarentia Dam, where Mia and Grace meet again after years and years. Mia gives her friend the Dreamcloth, which she received from Asher at his deathbed, as she is now ready to move on with her life.

5.2. The structure of the novel

5.2.1. Intertextuality

The Dreamcloth is divided into six parts, of which each is preceded by several poems, proverbs and citations. Many of these stem from Jewish sources such as the Hebrew bible or are popular Yiddish proverbs. Thus, they emphasise an important subplot of the novel, namely the Jewish persecution in the course of the Holocaust and the consequences of the Diaspora. These themes will be discussed in the subsequent analysis, as they are associated with the experience of collective trauma and the loss of (Jewish) identity.

Furthermore, the citations, poems and proverbs before the particular parts of the novel are directly related to the primary plot of *The Dreamcloth*. They emphasise major themes and issues of the story and seem to reflect upon them. The first part of the novel, for example, is preceded by a citation from the Musaf Service for Rosh Hashana, which is a Jewish prayer for the Jewish New Year. It reads as follows: "*I have dreamed a dream and I do not know what it is*" (TD 11). This prayer refers to Mia's recurring nightmare about a "needle in her hand" and "her hand full of blood" (TD 55) and, by implication, to Maya's feelings of guilt for Rochel's death. When Maya leaves Kovno, she promises to send for Rochel and Asher, but South Africa closes its borders and she never accomplishes to bring them to Johannesburg. Hence, when she hears about the suicide of her beloved seamstress, she is plagued by feelings of

guilt: “If we had brought her here, with us, she wouldn’t be dead...” (TD 321). Maya’s ghost lives on in her granddaughter and thus her feelings of guilt, which are indicative of her trauma, continue to burden the girl and evoke Mia’s recurring nightmares. The needle, thereby, symbolically refers to Rochel and the bloody hands reflect upon Maya’s feelings of guilt. However, Mia cannot understand the origin and meaning of her dream, or in other words, she does *not know what it is*. The saying of the Musaf Service, hence, relates to the transgenerational trauma, which Mia inherits from her grandmother Maya.

In the context of South Africa, trauma is often related to the loss of one’s home and thus to the themes of emigration, exile and homecoming. Remarkably, these themes are reflected upon in a poem by the South African writer Mongane Wally Serote. It precedes the sixth part of the novel and reads as follows:

i can say
 one day the sky will weep
 i can say one day
 this flower
 will stand in the bright sun
 this flower will have no petals
 one day

 ah
 africa
 is this not your child come home
 (TD 327)

The poem deals with the theme of homecoming and thereby relates to the plot of the novel. Mia leaves South Africa in the 1980s and only returns back home in 1994. It is significant that this poem precedes the last part of the novel, instead of an earlier one, since the character Mia apparently develops in the course of the story and undergoes post-traumatic growth. She only finds back to herself and can slowly *come home* towards the very end of the novel.

What this all amounts to is that all of the fifteen proverbs, citations and poems preceding the six parts of the novel relate to the novel’s plot structure and its themes. As a matter of course, they are examples of intertextuality, which is, as mentioned previously, a significant theme of trauma literature (Whitehead 84) and the contemporary South African novel in general. (Irele 11 & 159)

5.2.2. The form of the chapters

The Dreamcloth does not only consist of six separate parts, but is also further subdivided into several chapters, which alternate between different strands of the narrative. These chapters basically fall into two main groups, namely those which deal with Mia, Issey and Fran, and those which narrate the lives of Maya, Yankel and Rochel.

The chapters referring to Mia and her parents are preceded by a handwritten description of place and date and, by implication, imitate the form of a diary or journal entry. The primary characteristic of diaries is that they usually contain the most inner thoughts, feelings and secrets of the person writing it. The particular form of the chapters thus emphasises the personal and confessional tone of the narration. Although the story is almost exclusively told from an authorial perspective in the third person singular, the outer form of the chapters suggests that it is told from a subjective point of view and more precisely, a certain character. In addition, the form of a diary relates to trauma and the healing potential of narration, since the writing of such a journal may be a first attempt to reflect upon those things of which one cannot speak. Hereby, the diary basically acts as empathic listener. The novel's imitation of the form of a diary may thus imply that a particular form even enables the narration of trauma in the first place.

The other chapters, those which refer primarily to Maya and also to Rochel and Yankel, do not have the form of diary entries, but are preceded by Yiddish vocabulary. Similarly to the poems, proverbs and citations preceding the distinct parts of the novel, the vocabulary points towards important themes of the novel, as for instance *aheym tsu kummen* (i.e. *to come home*, TD 29), *der kholem* (i.e. *dream*, TD 73) or *fray tsu zine* (i.e. *to be free*, TD 137). In most cases, the Yiddish vocabulary also relates directly to the subsequent narration. For example, the vocabulary *tsu benken* (i.e. *to remember*, TD 283) is immediately followed by a reflection on remembering: "Only those cursed with memory suffer [...]" (TD 283). A probable reason for the use of this vocabulary in the novel is that these words symbolically hint at the Jewish culture. As they only precede Maya's chapters – and not Mia's – it can be assumed that the Jewish background and heritage still constitutes a large part of Maya's identity, whereas Mia can no longer relate to it.

5.3. Disruption of time, space and causality

5.3.1. Alternation of time and space by chapter

It has previously been mentioned that the plot of *The Dreamcloth* alternates between several strands of the narrative, and thereby, between multiple levels of time and spatial settings. More precisely, it can be distinguished between three different points of time and places in the novel.

The first narrative strand is set in the period between the 1920s and the 1940s and tells the story of Maya and Yankel, who initially live in Lithuania, and after that immigrate to South Africa. This part of the narration basically deals with events from the distant past. The second

strand primarily narrates Mia's childhood in the 1960s and 1970s and plays in Johannesburg. It covers the more recent past, in which Apartheid dominated the political and social life in South Africa. The third narrative strand, by contrast, is set in the recent present of South Africa and more precisely in the year 1994. It is of course striking that this date correlates with the year of the first democratic national election in South Africa and thus symbolically refers to the end of Apartheid.

As the plot alternates between these different time levels and settings, past and present are simultaneously interrelated and intermingle with each other. It can be assumed that past and present are told at the same moment, precisely, to emphasise their inherent relation with each other and to signal the importance of the past for the present. In addition, the occurrence of the past in the present points towards the post-traumatic state of mind, since the experience of trauma usually involves the intrusion of past events in the present time.

5.3.2. Disruption of time and causality within the chapters

The category of time in *The Dreamcloth* not only alternates from one chapter to another, but is also disrupted within the respective chapters of the novel. In other words, the temporal structure of the novel is utterly achronological even within the particular chapters and is characterised by the use of narrative techniques such as flashback and foreshadowing. In turn, these techniques disrupt the causality of the plot and produce a great number of gaps, omissions and black holes in the narration. Most of these gaps are filled in the course of the narrative, but others remain riddles and are subject to interpretation.

Flashbacks and retrospection are consistently used throughout the narration and frequently provide insight into aspects of the story which have not yet been told, or reveal certain information about the several characters. For example, in the fifth part of the novel, Mia and Fran go shopping with each other and later have lunch at their house. This narration plays in the year 1994, but is interrupted by a flashback about Fran's childhood, the rape by her uncle Max, her first pregnancy and her loss of hope. Thus, the present is interrupted by the past:

"Let's go home for a lovely Greek salad, shall we?"

Mia looked at her watch. "Okay, just a quick lunch, I have to meet Henri later."

It was clear to Fran, the way suddenly letters on a page become meaningful as reading, that a kind of rhapsody awaited her. In her childhood [...], Fran could feel the life inside her tiny as yet unripe ova taking root, growing sturdy, and reaching out into a dazzling mirage ahead. [...] Fran's mother, Olive, had not wanted any more children. Fran was 'quite enough, thank you.' Her father Bertie, a dentist, had been a kind, ineffectual, effete-looking man, baffled by fatherhood and quite awkward in it. [...]

"Don't you want to know what I did all that time while I was away?" Mia asked Fran. They were sitting at the outdoor table [...] [Emphasis added] (TD 290-293).

In some instances, the flashback in the novel is unmarked and simply interrupts the linear flow of the narrative, as in the example above, but in other cases, it is marked as a certain memory, which involuntarily disrupts a particular character. In this case, the flashback symbolises the painful re-living of a traumatic experience. In the first part of the novel, for instance, Mia nurses Asher before his death and he gives her the Dreamcloth. This small piece of art evokes memories in Mia, which are so sorrowful that she sinks to her knees:

“I can’t take it to the grave,” he said, his voice barely a whisper. She held the dreamcloth to her face, buried her cheeks in its soft folds, as remembering broke over her in shudders. *“Touch the finger of a dead man,” he used to smile, holding out his index finger [...] her father watched them from the corners of his red-veined eyes, afraid.* “Oh Daaaadddy, daaaaaddy,” escaped from her lip as she cradled her head in her hands, her arms on her knees, her knees on the floor, and rocked, while Asher watched [Emphasis added] (TD 23).

In contrast to these flashbacks, the narration also moves forward in time and allows small insights into the future. In most cases, this foreshowing merely alludes to certain events in the future, which are then resolved in a much later part of the narration. A good example of foreshadowing is the following allusion, which is the first hint towards Rochel’s and Maya’s love story: “Only with *her* by her side, was home the wooden doorframe they crossed each day [...]” [Emphasis added] (TD 32). At the first reading of this passage, it is not clear, who is referred to as ‘her’, since the story of the two women falling in love has not yet been told. The sentence thus foreshadows to the events in the future.

Another example can be found at the very beginning of the novel, when the narration tells about Mia’s childhood: “If you say a word over and over too many times, it unfits itself. Estranges from its mooring. She has played these word games as a child. Nervous Breakdown. Nerv. Ous. Brea. Kdown. Ner. Vous. Br. Ache. Down” (TD 15). At this point in the narration, it is not clear why Mia would play with the words “nervous breakdown” or to whom these words refer. Only in the fifth part of the novel this allusion is resolved, as Fran informs her daughter about Issey’s breakdown. Then, Mia sits down and thinks about the meaning of these words: “She held the words in a small space in her head. Nervous. Breakdown. They had come easily off her mother’s tongue. Rolling the words round and round in her mouth like a sourball, Mia repeated, ‘Nervous Breakdown. Ner. Vous. Break. Down. Nerv. Ous. Br. Ache. Down’ (TD 271).

These are only a few examples out of many more in the novel. *The Dreamcloth* is full of flashbacks, gaps, black holes, allusions and hints towards the future. The narrative structure of the novel is thus fundamentally achronological and bears a resemblance to other examples of trauma literature. The disruption of the temporal, chronological and causal structure of the novel points towards the disruption of memory and sense of time in the course of a traumatic

experience. (Erll and Nünning 335/336)⁵¹ In addition, allusions and black holes serve to create suspense. At the night of the Passover table in April 1977, for example, it is told that Grace “was silent” since she came from the toilet, whereas “[o]nly Asher had a smile” (TD 235). The reader however is not yet informed about Grace’s rape by Asher and thus potentially becomes curious to what these statements refer to.

5.3.3. Repetition

As mentioned in the previous analysis, self-repetition is one of the most important symptoms of trauma. The novel imitates this characteristic in its narrative structure by using the narrative technique of repetition. For example, certain episodes in *The Dreamcloth* are repeatedly narrated and consequently reveal new insights or another perspective of a character. Most strikingly, the love story of Maya and Rochel is repeated three times in the novel and narrates the episode from Maya’s (TD 101f), Rochel’s (153f) and Yankel’s (313f) perspective. The category of point of view will be discussed in greater detail in the following discussion.

In addition, repetition also operates on the sentence level of the novel. The question “[w]hat can you really tell from afar” (TD 278) is, for instance, repeated four times in the novel⁵² and is associated with two important themes of the book. First of all, it relates to the pain of separation, as Maya asks this question in a letter to Rochel in order to express her longing to be close to the seamstress. (Cf. TD 310) Secondly, the question points towards the porosity of what might be taken as reality. Grace sees Fran and Asher together at the Dam, but as she tells Mia about them, she denies that the woman is her mother and calls Grace a liar by claiming that she could not tell anything from afar. Afterwards the girls separate from each other and abandon their friendship. (TD 344/345)

Repetition further operates on the word level of the story, as in some passages, certain words are repeated several times. After Mia’s nightmare, for example, it is narrated how she sneaks into the sleeping room of her parents, seeking to gain some comfort from them: “She would just stand by the door and wait. Stand stand stand. Phut-phut-phut-phut-phut. She would just go and stand over him and see if he was already sleeping. Wait Wait Wait. *Issey, dad, Issey, it’s me. I’ll just touch your big old shoulder and whisper wake up.* Touch touch touch” (TD 55). At last, repetition operates on many symbols, motifs and themes of the novel, which reoccur throughout the narration. These will be discussed in a later part of this analysis.

⁵¹ Cf. also Whitehead 3; Granofsky 16/17.

⁵² TD 278, 310, 343, 345.

5.4. Point of view and narrative mode

Although *The Dreamcloth* is continuously narrated by an unidentified narrator in the third person singular, the narrative perspective of the novel is neither objective nor is it unemotional. To the contrary, the point of view clearly alternates between multiple focalisations, or in other words, between the perspectives and voices of several characters. More often than not, the novel also incorporates large passages of free indirect speech, which add to the emotional tone of the narration:

She had not asked for it – this gift, this curse, like the monthly blood she woke to, reminding her that she carried dying inside her. She did not choose her love affairs. [...] Choice. What was choice? Live or die.

From where came this *meshuagas*, this madness to scrounge for paper, such precious parchment, a pen, some ink, a candle by which to write? [...] She longed to sit down at a table. Perhaps not even a table, perhaps just the humbleness of a chair, a bench, a place against which to press her lower back to take the responsibility from her legs, her tired feet (TD 73).

Although this passage is narrated from a third person singular point of view, it clearly uses the character voice of Maya and reveals her deepest feelings. In general, the most part of *The Dreamcloth* alternates between the viewpoints of Mia and Maya, but also contains other voices, such as the perspective of Rachel: “And then this stranger spoke a handful of words that caused a great upset in her belly, as if she had been spun around on a maypole. ‘Your heart and my heart are very old friends.’ [...] Rachel swallowed a stone of unspoken things, and nodded her head” (TD 155). It can thus be assumed, that the multiple viewpoints and focalisations as well as the employment of free indirect speech serve to present a number of voices, which tell of different experiences in relation to trauma.

In addition, the mixing of the third person omniscient narration with character voice, figural focalisation and free indirect speech strengthens the personal and confessional tone of the narration. In a way, it imitates the non-literary narration of traumatic experience, which is also highly emotional, ambiguous and personal in character. The novel thus integrates the discourse of trauma into its narrative structure by mimicking the non-literary narration of traumatic experiences.

Interestingly, the intermingling of authorial narration and figural focalisation is even highlighted in a certain passage of the novel, in which the ordinary course of authorial narration is interrupted by free indirect speech:

Issey had removed one from its envelope, opened it, turned it one way and then another. They were all in Yiddish.

Stupid fucking asshole

Endangering this family

Just leave with him if that's what you want

That night the shouting had started. By the next morning, the drawers in Issey's studio had all been overturned. And the horrible terrible unbearable thing had happened: the dreamcloth was gone.

Dreamcloth gone

Asher was gone too. His flat was empty [...].

Asher gone

Later Uncle Shmooley had come by. His voice carried from the lounge up the staircase to the top chair, where Mia sat, [...] (TD 273/274).

The interruptions, written in italics, are presumably diary entries of Mia, who sits with a notebook in her garden after Asher has left. Thus, the words of Mia are intimately interwoven with the words of the narrator or in other words, the perspective of Mia is integrated into the point of view of the narrative.

To the same extent that the narration is not objective, the narrator of *The Dreamcloth* is also an unreliable one, who occasionally comments on certain aspects of the narration:

The Cape was the halfway point between the Netherlands and Indonesia, the 'spice oasis' (*wasn't that a phrase to please a poet?*). There sailors, bleeding and thirsting for anything that grew on a tree or from the soil, rested and buried their friends whose journeys ended far from home. [...] A person is not meant to be at sea for so long, *isn't that so?* [...] Soon, those with a hunger for, *how do they name it?*, 'colonization' (*not to do with the matters of the relieving of one's bowels, one should confuse the possible confusion*) became greedy for land [Emphasis added] (TD 30).

By means of these meta-fictional comments, the ordinary structure of the narrative mode is interrupted or distorted, which is in turn, a technique of mimicking the symptoms of trauma. What is more, however, is that some of these comments also reveal insights about the role of art – and thus also literature – in relation to trauma: "The artist reads past, present and future all in one moment" (TD 184). While trauma disrupts the victim's sense of time and renders it impossible to connect one's past, present and future, art, and consequently literature, may serve to re-late the different time levels. *The Dreamcloth* itself is an example of art, in which past, present and future are re-connected with each other.

What adds to the impression that the novel imitates the narration of trauma, is that the narrator of the novel occasionally addresses the reader, who operates as empathic listener:

Perhaps you, a passing stranger with good intentions, might ask – it would be a fair question – why she wrote at all, when this page be buried and hidden from the eyes of others. [...] Would you, a passing stranger, want your ears to hear such things? Would you not seek the counsel of the Rabbi to ask for a blessing to cure such peculiarities? You would be tempted; you are only human (TD 75).

In summary, it can be stated that *The Dreamcloth* by its very form and narrative mode imitates post-traumatic narration and is directed at an empathic listener. Thereby, the novel emphasises the healing potential of literature, which may serve as an adequate medium to express traumatic experiences.

5.5. Narrative style: magical realism

The Dreamcloth includes a number of fantastic and supernatural elements, of which the most important are the motifs of ghosts and haunting. The novel thus adapts a narrative technique

which is typical for trauma literature, postcolonial literature and even the South African novel itself, namely magical realism. (Whitehead 6; Edwards 119-121; Irele 3/4)

As has previously been explained, magical realism means the “incursion of fantastic elements into an otherwise realistic plot and setting” (Hawthorn 64) or in other words, the intermingling of reality and imagination. (Cf. Loader and Niederle 37) This definition is applicable to the novel, not only because Mia is said to be haunted by a ghost, but also because even other characters can see or sense this ghost. It does not only exist in Mia’s imagination, but has a concrete presence in the realistic setting of the story: “[...] ‘Spook’s still with you.’ It was a statement, not a question. Henri could feel her, just as she always could – Mia’s invisible Siamese twin, hovering, watching” (TD 90).

As the novel clearly indicates, this ghost, living on in Mia and determining her thoughts, actions and writing, is her grandmother Maya. After the separation with Rochel, Maya loses her talent for words and stops writing poetry. She cannot express the pain about this separation and instead, falls silent. The unspoken memories however do not dissolve after her death, but are instead transferred onto her granddaughter Mia:

For those years she was forced apart from Rochel, she [Maya] was bloated with the tension of it, struggling with all her might to suppress, sublimate, forget. Some dust will not settle. An explosion is sometimes the only way out. She was a poet. Not that that was an excuse. But the irresistible impulse, the same that pushed her to write, drove her to slide into someone else’s life and make it her own. [...] It was the passion that finally broke her; an urgent need to speak, to claim what she was forced to leave in Kovno. [...] the pain in her chest folded her heart into itself too soon. And there was still so much that had to be written. [...] the wordache became you could say, unbearable. Swirling in the eye of the storm that longs to break onto the white page, she was dizzy with the need to touch the living. This is why she had to haunt her (TD 329/339).

Thus, as a consequence of Maya’s need to speak and to re-claim her experiences, Mia is haunted by the ghost of her grandmother. The feelings and thoughts of Maya determine her own emotional life, as Mia, for example, has a dislike for her grandfather Yankel, who initiated the separation of Maya and Rochel and also, raped his wife. What is more, Mia inherits Maya’s talent for language and her need of writing. Her poetry is a direct expression of Maya’s words, or put differently, reveals the “unspeakable things unspoken” (Edwards 119) by her grandmother: “[...] when the ghost woke up at insane hours, she wrote furiously, using up three full diaries [...]” (TD 20).

The words of her grandmother, which come to her mind and demand creation, as well as the presence of the ghost itself, are painful for Mia. While her father Issey considers Mia’s talent for writing as a gift, the girl herself regards it as a curse inflicted on her: “[...] a ‘gift’ was confusing to Mia. A gift was a delight, a happy surprise. But her ‘gift’ of words pushed her thoughts into dark spaces, inside cupboards, under beds, behind doors, where she dreaded the

finding, like dipping her hand into a nightmare. ‘But it hurts sometimes, Dad,’ she said” (TD 183).

By implication, the motifs of ghosts and haunting in *The Dreamcloth* are symbolical for the concept of transgenerational trauma and thus refer to both individual and collective experience. (Cf. Whitehead 14) In terms of individual experience, trauma may be transferred from one person to another as in the case of Maya and Mia. What is more common however, is that whole generations are haunted by the ghosts of their past. South Africa’s social and political life, for instance, is still very much influenced by the country’s history and as a result of colonialism and Apartheid, the society is still deeply divided. Thus, the traumatic experiences of the past could not be overcome and continue to haunt the present population of South Africa. The motifs of ghosts and haunting in *The Dreamcloth* relate to this collective experience of transgenerational trauma and emphasise that South Africa is still haunted by the ghosts and spirits of its past, demanding narration. The concept of transgenerational trauma consequently serves to explore the legacy of trauma and the lives of those born after the traumatic events. What is more, is that the concept of transgenerational trauma in the novel also points towards the experience of many Jews who endured persecution and the Diaspora during the Holocaust. This theme will be discussed in the subsequent analysis.

For now, it is important to acknowledge that magical realism and the use of haunting and ghosts are typical characteristics of trauma literature and postcolonial literature. In both cases, victims of traumatic and/or colonial experiences usually have difficulties to relate to their experiences and to put them into words. The ghost as narrative motif in the novel, however, enables the victims of trauma or colonialism to finally speak out and narrate their experiences. Thus, the ghost functions as a symbol by which the traumatic and/or colonial experience can be indirectly accessed. (Cf. Edwards 119-121; Whitehead 6)

The motif of the Dreamcloth is another example of magical realism in the novel since it naturally takes some imagination to consider that abstract dreams and wishes can be weaved into a cloth just like any concrete textures and materials. The novel however narrates this circumstance as a matter of course and thus mixes imagination with reality. The Dreamcloth as a motif in the novel will be discussed in greater detail in the following analysis.

5.6. Trauma and the characters

There is no doubt that the characters of *The Dreamcloth* suffer traumata resulting from different origins and experiences. To the contrary, it is particularly striking that almost *all* characters seem to hold some form of trauma. It can thus be assumed that this presentation of

various traumatised individuals serves several purposes. On the one hand, it enables the novelist to explore different forms of trauma and thereby discover various possibilities of traumatic experience. In turn, it serves to reconstruct the past from different angles and perspectives and may ultimately lead to the restoration of cultural memory. (Cf. Erll and Nünning 338) On the other hand, however, the presentation of several traumatised characters provides the reader with a variety of possible identifications. Conversely, identification may help to access one's own traumatic experiences and to work through them. (Cf. Gobodo-Madikizela and van der Merwe 60) What is more, the fact that almost all characters of the novel are traumatised clearly points towards collective traumatising and, by implication, to the South African experience of colonialism and Apartheid.

5.6.1. Mia

Beyond any question, Mia is a traumatised character who has a number of post-traumatic symptoms. First of all, Mia suffers from repetitive nightmares about a needle in her hands and her hands full of blood, which, as previously explained, relates to the guilt feelings of Maya for the death of Rochel. Mia however does not understand the origin of her nightmare. For her, the dream represents what Cathy Caruth calls an 'unclaimed experience' of her past and is thus indicative of trauma. (Cf. Caruth 1996, 4f)

In addition, one of Mia's most noticeable characteristics is her restlessness or her need to flee, which is also hinting at trauma. (Cf. TD 263) Mia is described as a gypsy, always escaping from her past and unable to stay in a certain place. Her work as a journalist suits these attributes, since it provides her with the opportunity to travel from one place to another and to never stay for long. Mia suffers from this restlessness and longs to find a home, but at the same time she does not manage to find this place to stay and describes herself as homeless. (Cf. TD 22)

What is also indicative of Mia's trauma is her emotional numbing towards men. Mia inherits the ghost of her grandmother Maya, who could not live her lesbian inclinations. Instead, she was forced into a marriage with Yankel and pressed to play the role of his obedient wife. The character Maya is thus representative of female suppression in the twentieth century. As a consequence, Mia, who carries the trauma of Maya within her, avoids affectionate relationships to men and seeks not to let them come close to her: "Girl-love was so different to the carnal connection she had to men that was bodily, that stopped at precisely the moment of orgasm and never beyond" (TD 90).

As has been explained, Mia's trauma is symbolically illustrated by the motif of the ghost, who does not stop to haunt her throughout the story and continuously inflicts pain on her. Further hints towards Mia's traumatised state are thus both the persistency and the involuntariness of her re-experiencing: "Lacing her sticky fingers in her hair, dark but for the sheath of her white birthmark, she cupped her hands over her skull to hold the ghost still. It wrestled free. *Settle*, she thought, *just settle down. I'm trying to figure it out*" (TD 13).

At last, Mia's trauma figures in her indirectly communicated death wish. Her first word at the age of ten months is "dead" (TD 45) and refers to Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem *Mariana*, which Issey reads to Mia to stop her from crying:

[...] She said 'I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead...' (TD 44)

The poem is about a woman moaning about the separation from her lover and her consequent loneliness and death wish. It is about the loss of a beloved one and thus reminiscent of traumatic experience. Mia's first word refers to this poem and is thus symbolical for her inherent traumatised state.

The origin of Mia's trauma is manifold and comprises at least two major components. Hereby, the most obvious source of her suffering is the transgenerational trauma, which Mia inherits from her grandmother Maya and which will be discussed in the following. What is important to note at this point, however, is that the author uses the narrative technique of symbolism to illustrate Mia's transgenerational trauma in a number of ways.

First of all, Mia is named after her grandmother Maya and as a result, their souls are intimately connected. This is not merely an assumption, but remarkably a statement in the novel itself. The narration comments on the importance of naming through the declarations of Rabbi Goldenbaum and thus confirms the close relation between Mia and Maya:

"When a child bears the name of an ancestor, there is a link, a very important bond that is created between the two souls. [...] A name [...] is the root of who you are. [...] A name houses the soul of the object or person it represents. [...] A name has a resonance, spiritually, both in this world, and in *olam habah*" (i.e. 'The world to come', in Hebrew) (TD 134).

What is particularly interesting here, is the fact that these considerations seem not only to stand in context of the story, but also point towards a certain interpretation of the novel, namely that Mia's name connects her to the ghost and the trauma of her grandmother. They can thus be considered as meta-fictional comments.

To relieve Mia's suffering and to reduce the power of her ghost, the Rabbi suggests "some shock therapy Jewish input" for Mia and advises that she should get "a nice Jewish name" (TD 135). It is noteworthy, that his suggestion is the name Rachel and that he tells Mia the following: "It is your true identity – the part of you that has been missing" (TD 135). Without

a doubt, Rachel is another version of the name Rochel and thus refers to the lover of Maya. In regard to the Rabbi's latter statement, Mia's identity thus comprises both the soul of her grandmother and the one of the seamstress Rochel.

In the second place, it has already been argued that the motif of the ghost itself symbolises Mia's transgenerational trauma. The ghost, in turn, is visually manifested in Mia's appearance by the symbol of a birthmark: her hair is principally black, tough and curly, but she also has a streak of white, thin hair. Maya herself has left this mark as a trace on Mia's skull and as the narration reveals, she also tried to pose this birthmark on Fran's first child and thereby caused the baby's death or Fran's miscarriage: "Her first touch was too eager, too rough. She never intended to squeeze, so that its little skull caved in, and all was lost. The next time she left just a fingerprint" (TD 331).

A third embodiment of Mia's traumatised state is her inherent gift for language and writing: "She spoke her first words at ten months and could rhyme by the age of two. By four she was reading, without anyone ever showing her the ABC. Such a natural with language, perhaps she too would be a poet like his mother? In her, he [Issey] saw a passion passed from one generation to the next" (TD 63). What can be assumed from this quotation, is that Mia inherits Maya's talent for the writing of poetry, and what is more, she inherits the words and the language of Maya. Her poetry carries on Maya's writing and expresses the grief and sorrow of her grandmother. As a consequence, Mia does not regard her gift as something positive, but rather describes it as a curse. (Cf. TD 183) The urge to write is painful for her and thus another hint towards her transgenerational trauma.

In the fourth place, Mia's antipathy towards Yankel is another symbol of her inherent transgenerational trauma. Mia despises Yankel from birth onwards, and her grandfather, in turn, senses that her aversion is connected to his past with Maya: "From the moment she was placed in Zaide Yankel's arms, Mia began a howl, the likes of which Zaide Yankel claimed he had only ever heard in Kovno [...] It was a sound that instilled in Zaide Yankel a horror for the past he had made such efforts to leave behind" (TD 42). As Mia inherits the trauma of Maya, she cannot stand being near to her grandfather. She dislikes him from the moment of her birth and even wishes that he should die. (Cf. TD 307)

The second origin of Mia's transgenerational trauma is her Jewish heritage as the narration claims that Jews are chosen to suffer. (Cf. TD 41) In the course and aftermath of the Holocaust, numerous Jews were persecuted, incarcerated, killed and forced to escape from their home countries. Thus they often lost the connection to their roots, their culture, their language and their personal or communal identity. During the twentieth century, Jews

scattered all over the world, but instead of settling somewhere, they often did not find a place, which they could call their 'home': "What does a Jew know from home? Some call them the Chosen People, but God surely does not love a nation he condemns to such nomadic circumstances" (TD 31). In regard to the Holocaust and the consequent Jewish Diaspora one can thus speak of a collective trauma and uprooting of the Jewish community.

As regards the particular circumstances of Jews immigrating to South Africa, Rabbi Goldenbaum explicitly illustrates their situation. Once again, his considerations in the form of direct speech seem not only to relate to the plot of *The Dreamcloth*, but point towards the political and social reality of Jews coming to live in South Africa. Thus, they can be described as meta-fictional. Goldenbaum explains:

I have a theory about South African Jews. I call it 'Destabilized and Detribalized' – it's my own name for what in layman's terms can be called confused identity. Or multiple identities. Don't forget that our ancestors left Eastern Europe, escaping pogroms and anti-Semitism, scattered into the diaspora, and settled wherever they were allowed to stay. South Africa allowed them in. Not all countries were so generous. And here, we hoped to find acceptance. But what happened when we got here? We found that we had little in common with the *schwarztes* [blacks] who hate us because we're white and have a work ethic and contribute to the economy. And on the other hand we had little in common with the Afrikaners who hate us because they think we're all communists. [...] Scapegoats, in the diaspora, lost from the fold, unable to find our way back again. That's the fate of Jews in South Africa (TD 132/133).

This statement exemplifies that Jews migrating from Europe to South Africa have often experienced a double form of oppression: on the one hand, the Holocaust in Europe demanded racial segregation to the detriment of the Jewish people, so that they were forced to flee from their home countries. On the other hand, however, those Jews that immigrated to South Africa found themselves in a segregated nation again and often experienced difficulties to integrate themselves in society as they held a position between the white and the black population and could not affiliate with any of the groups. In addition, Jews in South Africa often struggled to establish their own group identity as they were cut off from the Jewish community in Europe, but simultaneously found it difficult to regard themselves as South Africans. Their personal and collective identity was thus shattered in the course of the Diaspora and led to the collective traumatising of the Jewish people. In many cases, this collective trauma was also transferred to the following generations and still concerns the Jewish population of present-day South Africa. (Cf. Sakinofsky 1/2)

The character Mia embodies these circumstances and symbolically represents the traumatised Jewish community: "Perhaps her Jewish blood was made of nomadic DNA and she carried leaving inside her like a genetic deformity" (TD 27). As has previously been mentioned, Mia suffers from permanent restlessness and struggles to settle in a place. She neither feels at home in South Africa nor in any other place of the world. This restlessness and absence of a home, as well as Mia's difficulties to relate to her cultural roots, are in turn indicative of her

inheritance of the transgenerational and collective Jewish trauma of the Holocaust and the Diaspora. (Cf. Loader in Loader and Niederle 22; Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 8; Edwards 139-14)

Mia's trauma is aggravated by the relationship to her mother. After her first pregnancy resulting in a miscarriage, Fran does not want any more children. She cloisters herself away from her family, and after giving birth to Mia, cannot devote any love to her daughter: "She had arrived, unwanted, like a disease in her mother's life" (TD 298). The young girl Mia, however, struggles with her inherent transgenerational trauma and with the flashbacks and nightmares, of which she cannot make sense. She seeks to speak to someone, who listens to her traumatic memories and consoles her. Again and again, Mia turns to Fran to get some comfort, but her mother only pushes her away: "*But Mum, I'm scared all on my own. Sleep doesn't want me back. Holding is what wants me, mom, holding. Mom, Mom, don't send me back there.*" (TD 56) Thus, even after many years, Mia cannot relate to her mother, but feels weak and unwell in her presence:

Time passed has not released the unbearable fragility of decency that strung them together as a mother and child. Fran could unplug her soul with an inadvertent gesture, a smile unforthcoming, a thing so misplaced, and Mia felt the leak even then, her body weakening. There was no real forgiveness between them and even seven years apart had not dislodged the cube of frozen tears that caught her throat when she had to be Fran's little girl (TD 92).

At last, the loss of her father Issey also contributes to Mia's trauma. When Asher leaves the family, Mia blames her father and even tells him that she hates him. Afterwards Issey has a nervous breakdown, of which he does not fully recover any more and finally, he commits suicide. Mia cannot absorb this loss and consequently leaves the country.

Throughout her lifetime, Mia's way to cope with her trauma is the employment with and the creation of art. Even as a baby, she already has a sense for poetry and only stops crying when her father Issey reads it to her. (Cf. TD 43) In her early childhood then, Mia gets hold of the poems of her grandmother and consequently begins to produce poetry herself. In addition, another example of her coping through art is the Dreamcloth, which consoles Mia whenever she wakes up from a nightmare.

Apart from the writing of poetry, Mia also creates art by carving little figures of different materials:

In each place, she made her flying figures. Some from driftwood, bequests from the ocean, others from scrap metal she found in the gutters. Not one figure was identical to any other, as if infinity lent itself to this task she had begun in a childhood many lifetimes ago. Some were voluptuous, bosomed, bellied females with tiny wing buds, others were long-bearded skeletal males with penises as long as their outstretched wings, others were blunted, androgynous, with coppery, spiked feathers, arching towards the sun. She always left them behind, a token that she was once there (TD 25).

The fact that these figures all differ from each other or that none is *identical to any other* raises the suspicion that Mia's figures symbolise humanity, and more precisely the Jewish population. Almost all of them have wings so that they can "fly away, leave a place behind, make it small with a distance" (TD 95) and thus symbolically represent the uprootedness and restlessness of the Jewish population. In other words, Mia's figures are reminiscent of the Jewish collective trauma.

For Mia herself, the creation of these figures enables her to leave a trace in the world. As she is always on the run and never stays in a place for long, she can hardly ever relate to a spot and feels as if she was homeless. Thus, whenever Mia abandons a location, she leaves a figure behind to signal that once she had been there. The figures thus anchor her in a place, even if she cannot settle there herself.

It is striking how Mia's art is affected by the arrival of Asher. During his presence, Mia does not have nightmares anymore and as a consequence, her poetry becomes more joyful and she even creates some figures without wings: "With Asher's arrival [...] the pieces she had always felt were lost or missing inside her were all gathered together. She wrote stories about lost things being found and unexpected treasures. She even carved a family of wingless angels, holding hands" (TD 211). A possible interpretation of the alteration in Mia's art is that with the arrival of Asher, Rochel and Maya are reunited as Asher has the genes of Rochel and Mia carries the ghost of Maya within her. This assumption is confirmed by the fact that Mia and Asher, from their first meeting onwards, cherish one another and spend a lot of time with each other. Their togetherness seems to have healing effect on both of them. On the one hand, Asher expresses his feelings to another person – namely Mia – for the first time since his mother's death. On the other hand, Mia no longer suffers from the self-repetition of her dreams and thus her trauma slowly seems to resolve. However, as soon as Asher leaves the family, Mia's trauma reappears and her art soon becomes joyless again.

As regards the recovery from traumatic experience, the novel indicates that trauma can potentially be relieved. In adulthood, Mia spends many years outside of South Africa, always escaping from her unknown past and the trauma that haunts her. She cannot relate to her own Jewish South African identity and thus tries to avoid being reminded of her historical background. However, when she returns back home in 1994, Mia begins to explore her past and progressively starts to make sense of it. One day, her grandfather Yankel confesses to Mia and she finally gains knowledge about the relationship between Maya and Rochel. This is the information that Mia has been missing all her lifetime and slowly Mia's trauma seems to resolve:

For years she had swirled restlessly from place to place, searching for what might make sense of it all. But right here, right in front of this old man, the rage that had coiled in her for decades slowly furled up, smaller and smaller winding into itself and making space for something new. [...] The riddle righted itself. The swirly twirl of a childhood dream, blood on her hands, a piercing shrill cry from a distant place, the knobbly texture of the dreamcloth, and something in her heart shifted, a small motion, like the rounding of a moon on its day of fullness [...] and the world changed. Mia felt the unravelling of a lifetime's bondage as the umbilicus between her and her ghost spun in giddy spirals separating them to different times and places (TD 311/312).

At the very end of the novel, Mia still suffers from nightmares sometimes, but she also gradually recovers from her trauma. During a walk with her former friend Grace, Mia picks up a stone and for the first time in her life, feels “anchored [...] to this place” (TD 348) or in other words, feels the need to settle somewhere instead of escaping forever. By exploring her history, solving the riddles of her past and telling about these experiences, Mia recovers from her trauma and undergoes post-traumatic growth. The novel concludes with an open ending, but simultaneously with a positive outlook and the assumption that trauma can ultimately be relieved. Transferring this idea onto the situation of South Africa, exploring the country's history and telling about the events of the past, may lead to the healing or at least the recovery of the nation.

5.6.2. Maya

Mia's grandmother Maya represents both female and religious oppression.

On the one hand, Maya is oppressed as a woman as she has to show obedience to the traditional structures of her family and the Jewish community she grows up in. She cannot live out her sexual inclinations, but instead, needs to hide her true emotions. Maya is forced into the marriage with Yankel and thereby has to give up the greatest part of herself: “Maya stood under the *chuppah* at the age of eighteen with a stranger at her side. People sang ‘*yismach chatan im kalah*’ – may the bridegroom rejoice in his bride. What of the bride? His rejoicing reviled her. She was not made the way God made Eve, from the rib of Adam, but of some other substance. Being his wife, she was in exile from herself” (TD 31).

On the other hand, Maya is oppressed as a Jew. With the Holocaust in her back, she needs to flee from Europe at the end of the 1930s and, showing obedience to her husband, follows Yankel to Johannesburg. This forced relocation, however, requires her not only to leave her most beloved behind, but also to abandon her Jewish identity and culture. Maya thus represents the uprooted Jewish community escaping from Anti-Semitism in Europe as she cannot settle in South Africa and loses her sense of a self and a home.

During her lifetime in Kovno, Maya copes with her oppression by expressing her feelings in her poetry and later on by sharing this poetry with her lover Rochel. She has a talent for

writing and what is more, she also senses an urge to speak out, to put her feelings into words and to write down, what cannot be said aloud. In her poetry, Maya stretches out in her imagination and formulates her wishes, longings and dreams. Whereas she needs to repress her emotions at all times in her daily life, poetry, for Maya, becomes the place where she can be herself:

And there, between her and the paper, words appeared, rendering a life within her – not the one she manifested in the company of others, but a hidden life that rumbled in the margins of herself. Here she wrote, ‘and so I feel...’ and ‘then I thought’ and perhaps ‘if only...’ speaking from that untouched unchecked voice in her that was not trying to please a father, a brother or a husband, not taking other’s needs into account, not calculating, modifying or holding back. [...] Here, alone, in this private world, she was not the good wife, the obedient daughter, the woman of valour [...] She wrote not to please [...] She wrote the way she dreamed (TD 74/75).

The writing of poetry, however, has another important function for Maya as it does not only enable her to express her feelings, but it also keeps her from being forgotten. Similarly to Mia, who carves figures and leaves them behind in places in order to leave a trace of herself, Maya’s poetry originates in the wish to create something herself, which will remain after she died. This hope reflects Maya’s trauma resulting from her Jewish heritage. She does not want to die and be forgotten as many other Jews in the course of the Holocaust, but instead, she wants to leave a trace in the world: “As long as she put ink to the page, her hidden life was not forgotten, not wiped out in a pogrom, not buried in an unmarked grave [...] She wrote so that she could return to that life. She wrote so that her life might go on” (TD 76).

The relationship to Rochel finally gives Maya a chance not only to put her feelings into words, but also to share them with another person. Their time together, thus, revives Maya and gives her a new purpose in her life. She also gains strength by concerning herself with the art of Rochel and even finds comfort in the cloths of the seamstress: “*You gave me your dreams and so I live on*” (TD 311).

Her double oppression forces Maya to abandon her lover and to emigrate to South Africa: she needs to flee from the Holocaust in Europe and, on the other side, has to follow her husband Yankel. As has been explained above, Maya’s emigration eventually results in a loss that is too grand to sustain: she loses her most beloved and intimate companion, her home and familiar surroundings and also, the connection to her Jewish identity. The forced relocation and separation from Rochel thus constitute a traumatic experience for Maya.

As a result, Maya can no longer express her feelings and the pain inflicted on her. In the aftermath of her trauma, Maya loses her talent for language and progressively falls silent: “Even words, her beloved companions, sat in her mouth uncomfortably like bacon on the tongue of a Jew” (TD 238). Her pain about the separation from Rochel is too big to put it into

words and Maya continuously sickens with grief and sorrow. It is the loss of language, which ultimately destroys Maya's self:

She had not consented to this loss. Everything had been sacrificed. Every sensation, every taste, every sound, every moment that had ever coursed through her body, she had given up in the passage from there to here. But to lose even a world of meaning, where words, her most beloved treasures, could no longer offer comfort – that was more than a person could survive. She had not consented to this loss. (TD 241)

Maya's trauma becomes apparent in a number of post-traumatic symptoms. Not only does she lose her language, but she also becomes numb and completely shuts herself away: "[...] all that could feel remained safe, untouched" (TD 286). In addition, Maya also seems to lose her memory and, after a short time in South Africa, she doubts that the affair with Rochel happened at all: "Pain was the birthright of her people. So how to explain such happiness? Surely it had only been a dream" (TD 283).

Her husband Yankel soon becomes uneasy about his wife's condition and in a rush of arousal and aggression, he rapes Maya. This incident adds to her trauma. She gives birth to Shmooley and Issey, but cannot show affection to any of them. Instead, Maya continuously isolates herself and completely sinks into nostalgia. When she finally hears about Rochel's death, Maya is plagued by feelings of guilt and sorrow. Her trauma gains the upper hand and Maya weeps for eight days before she eventually dies: "And then the wailing began. A piercing cry of one in physical torment [...] a weeping that lasted eight full days [...] she finally joined her lover in rest" (TD 322).

Maya's suffering thus remains unspoken. She dies full of painful memories and cannot even find peace in death. Instead, she continues to exist as a ghost with an "urgent need to speak" (TD 330) and begins to haunt her granddaughter. Maya's trauma, resulting from her oppression as a woman and as a Jew, her forced relocation to South Africa, the separation from Rochel, the rape of her husband, and ultimately the loss of her lover, is transferred onto Mia.

5.6.3. Rochel and Asher

The life of the Jewish seamstress Rochel is characterised by unhappiness. She grows up in poverty, does not learn to read or write, and loses three siblings at a young age. In adulthood, she marries Zalman and gives birth to a boy, but especially after the death of her husband, her son is only a burden for her: "His life was heavier for her to hold than her own" (TD 251). Rochel's life is thus marked by hunger and desperation, as she can hardly provide for herself and her son.

Solely in her dreams does she find some comfort and can shortly escape her miserable situation: “Only in sleep could she be far from the cold, the frostbite, the dizzying hunger. In dreams she danced, sang and laughed until the pain melted away and a kind of glory opened up. She would spend her days waiting for the nights, where she lived the life that she knew was more real than the stark emptiness of her waking hours” (TD 153). Rochel sews, weaves and stitches these dreams into her cloths. Whereas her reality is mostly painful and bleak, her cloths are colourful and mirror Rochel’s hopes and longings. When she finally gets to know Maya and falls in love with her, she can for the first time in her life share her feelings and wishes with another person. The relationship to Maya makes her life less miserable and raises her hope for a better future. In short, their love gives Rochel a reason to live.

After Maya’s emigration to South Africa and the birth of Issey and Shmooley, however, Rochel’s hope simultaneously dissolves. The persecution of Jews in the course of the Holocaust poses a threat to her life and what is more, she has lost her most beloved. The separation from Maya causes an emptiness in her life which Rochel cannot endure. She is traumatised by the loss of her lover and progressively becomes numb: “Sensation was leaving her. She no longer felt the pricks to her fingers while stitching [...] Slowly the numbness moved to her wrists, then up her arms, into her elbows, shoulders, [...]” (TD 161).

Rochel’s trauma ultimately results in the wish to die. She senses that there is nothing to live for any more, in fact not even her son. When she hears about Maya’s motherhood, Rochel finally hangs herself: “There was no more of her life that she could live” (TD 253).

Asher’s trauma originates in the neglect and suicide of his mother. Rochel, who can hardly cope with her own life, does not show much affection for her son and only regards him as a burden. She treats him carelessly and especially after meeting Maya, neglects him and spends all of her time with her lover: “[...] she was so far away, beyond his grasp. [...] He wanted his mama too, but his mama wanted the other woman [...]” (TD 333). Throughout his childhood Asher longs to win his mother’s favour, but as long as Maya lives in Kovno, the seamstress only has eyes for her lover, and when Maya eventually emigrates to South Africa, Rochel becomes numb and even more unapproachable for her son. Finally, Rochel’s suicide represents the ultimate neglect of Asher. Instead of living on to care for him, the seamstress decides that he is not worth the trouble and leaves him behind all on his own.

Asher finds the dead body of Rochel and is traumatised by the sight of her hanged corpse. He loses the memory of his childhood, stops to speak for several years, shuts the door to his feelings and is left with an emptiness inside him: “At her grave, he stood silent, his mouth a

stranger to his face, his voice an empty box, overturned of all it had held and learned” (TD 335). Being an orphan, Asher is initially handed around from one family to another, of which none can offer any consolation to the traumatised boy. Eventually, he is adopted by a Jewish family and after a few years, starts speaking again when he hears that his adopting parents want to emigrate to South Africa. As he joins the Israeli army and becomes a soldier and assassin, Asher also becomes a useful member of society and receives credit from his superiors. The violence and deadness of the job suits him.

At the age of twenty-one, however, his rebuilt life is disrupted as the memory of his childhood suddenly comes back to him: “[...] twenty-one years of repressed memories threw him back into a convulsion and his body released everything held back” (TD 333). Asher’s trauma finally turns into aggression and violence. He vows vengeance, in fact on both Maya’s family and on women in general.

Concerning Maya’s family, Asher can of course not punish Maya herself for taking his mother away from him. Thus, he decides to destroy her family by breeding discord and jealousy among them. He seduces Fran, rapes Sarafina and manages to get Mia and Issey apart: “A happy little family, just waiting to be imploded. The father was a pushover, a limp-cocked artist with a naive trust of people. His wife practically unzipped herself for him. Even the black one did as she was told for two rand. Revenge would be easy” (TD 337).

As regards his revenge on women, Asher is characterised by the love relationship between Maya and his mother. He believes that all women secretly desire another and decides to sentence them for their lies and deceits. He becomes a rapist and persuades, pays and violently forces women to sexual intercourse:

His penis grew thick with the years, and his understanding grew firm – women were his manna from heaven, they gave themselves without asking, and each day there were more. His ejaculations left him rigid, fuelled with a hormone as hardy as battery acid. Of sinew, cynicism, and sinister resolve, he blasted his path through life, with the soft space between a woman’s legs as his target. He never grew tired of the chase or the kill, only the disposal of the corpses, for how women hung on, begging. [...] His cruelty stoked their desire [...] and he feasted on them, a starving castaway. But he knew their secret: that despite their lies, their penetrable design, they desired one another. Their deceit thrilled him at first, until he had emptied his aching rage into them. Then all he desired was oblivion” (TD 337).

The rape of women is Asher’s response to the neglect of his mother and is thus indicative of his trauma. What seems to be particularly striking is his rape of Mia’s friend Grace. Mia is the only one, who evokes affectionate feelings in Asher and for the first time since “the day he found his mother’s body hanging from the rafters” (TD 338), he develops affection for another person. However, when he sees Mia and Grace lovingly playing with each other, he is reminded of Rochel and her lover. He remembers how the longing for his mother was unmet and how she only had eyes for her lover: “The child, how she had outwitted his heart, giggled

with her companion, touched her face with delight. Two girls on the brink of womanhood, oblivious to all else. That streak of white hair admonished him, held him to a sacred core of something unattained, in an age beyond the assassin he had become, to a little boy's need so unmet, so denied" (TD 342). Asher is afraid that he will lose Mia to Grace in the same way as he lost his mother to Maya. To prevent this from happening, Asher rapes Grace in the night of the Passover Table. He is clearly a traumatised character who cannot deal with his traumatic experiences. Instead, his trauma turns into rage and sheer force.

5.6.4. Issey

Mia's father Issey represents the collective trauma of the Jewish people, which has its origin in the experience of the Holocaust. This inherent traumatising is evidenced by his full forename, which is Israel, and refers to the world's only Jewish-majority state.⁵³ As the novel repeatedly emphasises, Jews are chosen to suffer⁵⁴ and the character Issey is essentially an image of this affliction. He co-founds an important sub-discourse of the novel, which is trauma and art or suffering and art. Issey declares that "art comes from suffering [...]. And the work of the artist is to share suffering with others [...]. The artist reads past, present and future all in one moment. And that's like knowing too much. And knowing too much is painful" (TD 183/184). His paintings are thus reminiscent of his transgenerational trauma and express his inherited grief and sorrow. What words cannot hold, Issey paints on his canvases.

Another origin of Issey's traumatising is the loss of his mother. Maya's death brings an emptiness into his and his family's life, which cannot be filled any more. His father Yankel turns into desperation and holds Maya in outsized veneration, while his brother Shmooley develops affection for the dead and the cruel. Issey himself grows up in this "house of grieving men" held together by "muted resentment" and "each lost in a place of too little love" (TD 62). He can barely cope with the mourning of his mother and again, tries to cope with his feelings by the production of art. His choice to become a painter is a direct result of his trauma, as he tries to create something big enough to fill the emptiness in his life:

Mama Maya was bigger and grander in death than in life. She moved amongst them, weaving memory into habit, remembrance into routine. Her death left a hole in the universe, unfillable, unbridgeable. Issey did not dare to stand at its edge to peek in lest he fall and never stop. So he skirted it, held it at bay, a vicarious mourner through his father's superior loss. He watched and grieved. Waited and ached. Soon the ache for his mama mingled with the ache for his lonely father, who was caught in a corner of time that only made sense through Mama Maya's poems about love. Issey sat out the years, waiting for the day when he could make something big enough to fill the cavern in their lives (TD 62/63).

⁵³ The symbolical meaning and importance of naming in the novel have already been discussed in the previous analysis. Cf. 5.6.1.

⁵⁴ Cf. for example TD 41.

During his childhood, the only thing which relieves Issey's suffering and connects him to his mother, is another work of art, namely the Dreamcloth. Maya bequeathes the cloth to Issey at her deathbed, and it becomes a transitional object⁵⁵ for him, relating himself to his mother: "He knew that there was nothing, not anything at all, that meant more to his mama than the little square of patchwork detail she had bequeathed to him. And so he loved her blindly through it and let her love him back" (TD 62). In his adulthood, the birth of his daughter brings an end to Issey's loneliness. Mia carries the ghost of his mother inside her and thus takes the place of Maya in his life. When he shares his art with her or listens to her poetry, Issey is steeped in happiness and delight.

However, the arrival of Asher takes everything from Issey. His wife Fran instantly falls for the Israeli soldier and she is soon unfaithful to her husband. Before long, his daughter Mia is also fond of Asher and progressively favours the stranger over her own father. When Asher finally leaves the family, he also takes the Dreamcloth with him and thus Issey even loses the relation to his mother Maya. In short, Issey experiences the ultimate loss and consequently suffers from trauma. He is said to have endured a nervous breakdown and soon commits suicide. Issey dies, what Mia calls, "a true artist's death: misunderstood and self-inflicted" (TD 178).

5.6.5. Fran and Grace

As with most characters of *The Dreamcloth*, the trauma of Fran also has several origins. As a child, she is raised by rather unloving parents, who neglect her and often leave her alone. During one of these absences, Fran is raped by her uncle: "[...] Uncle Max took the opportunity to become the bearer of secrets she did not want to keep, and she lay on her empty bed, sobbing for a mother who was always somewhere else" (TD 291). The young girl is traumatised by this violent incident and cloisters herself away. She believes that she is cursed with unhappiness and stops to trust anybody. In fact, her choice of marrying Issey also has rather practical reasons instead of affectionate ones. (Cf. TD 113)

Only when she discovers herself being pregnant, Fran regains a little hope that even *her* life might hold some happiness for her: "A glimmer of hope flared in the ashpit of her heart. [...] As her belly grew, her sense that the world held good things grew" (TD 292). Fran's misfortune, however, wins over her hope and after 298 days of imagining and planning for the birth of her child, she suddenly loses her baby. This loss represents the essential source of Fran's trauma. She ultimately gives up all her wishes and longings and becomes emotionally

⁵⁵ Cf. Richards 198.

cold and distant: “No-one in her prenatal classes, not one of her doctors, no other mother had ever warned her that you also needed to prepare for loss, for death. That day on the delivery table, the doors to her heart slammed shut” (TD 292).

Even when she discovers herself pregnant a second time, Fran cannot overcome her trauma. She does no longer “indulge hope nor think beyond pregnancy” but simply endures the weeks “with passive resignation” (TD 292). Fran’s trauma surfaces in a fear of loss, of losing again a person that she loves. After the birth of Mia – which is hard and takes Fran’s fertility – she can thus not show any affection for her daughter, but instead pushes her away: “[...] her coming had struck a terror in her heart – the fear of loving too much and of losing what one cannot bear to live without. Every afternoon, while Mia was small, Fran had lain on her bed in a locked room and wept into her pillow, while Mia wailed and knocked on the door, each abandoned by the other” (TD 298).

Despite of her emotional numbing, Fran also shows severe post-traumatic symptoms of avoidance. She ignores her own problems and the troubles of her daughter and devotes most of her time to her garden. There she weeds and prunes her flowers and aims for perfection. The cultivation of her garden gives her an opportunity to create something on her own, to express herself and mostly to achieve something without needing to expose herself to others. In her own garden, Fran simply enjoys her creation and neither needs to reflect upon her trauma nor on the consequences of this trauma for her daughter Mia: “So she tended her garden, a place free of judgements, a corner of the world of predictable punctuality. A blossom does not ask your history, or refuse its beauty because you have made terrible mistakes. Plant a seed, water it. It will grow” (TD 293).

The trauma of Grace, on the other side, can be traced back to the traumatic experience of rape. On the one hand, it can be assumed from the plot of the novel that Grace is raped by her brothers Graham and Andrew. There are rather explicit allusions to the fact that they played “doctor-doctor” with Grace (TD 166) and her trauma becomes obvious by her behavioural change. Grace, who used to sing for Mia to take her nightmares away, stops singing and joking around, and instead, slowly distances herself from Mia. While she always loved the stories and dreams of her friend, she now tells Mia that “Not everything you dream is true” (TD 165).

On the other hand, Grace is also raped by Asher. During the night of the Passover Table, Asher traces Grace in the toilet and forces her to sexual intercourse. She is traumatised and her childlike innocence and jauntiness is finally taken from her: “Asher snuffed out the voice

that sang to take nightmares away” (TD 343). As a consequence, Grace cloisters herself away and becomes emotionally numb. She abandons the friendship to Mia, loses interest in the activities she used to like and develops an eating disorder. Even more, it can be assumed that Grace loses her own self as she begins to prostitute herself for as little as fifty cent. Grace loses the connection not only to her mind, but also to her body and practically gives herself away.

Towards the end of the novel, it is narrated that Grace avoids the employment with her past and instead delves into religion. It can thus be assumed that she has probably not worked through her trauma. Mia however, who is in the course of recovery, attempts to re-connect with Grace and, in the last sentence of the novel, asks Grace to sing for her once more: “Start with the chorus and work your way backwards. It’ll come back to you” (TD 349).

5.7. Themes, motifs and symbols related to trauma

5.7.1. Themes of the novel

The thematic structure of *The Dreamcloth* is clearly associated with the experience of trauma. Rape, for instance, is an important theme of the novel and concerns several women with different histories and experiences. Maya for example is raped by her own husband, Fran and Grace are the victims of incest and in addition, Grace is abused by a stranger. The character Sarafina on the other side, establishes another discourse, namely that of a poor black woman, working for a white family, and selling her body for only two rand.

Migration, relocation, exile and homecoming are also fundamental themes of the novel and refer to the experience of colonialism. In addition, these themes are tied to the Jewish persecution and the Diaspora and thus establish the discourse of Jewish collective traumatisation.

Moreover, the themes of death, loss, and separation relate to the experience of trauma. The characters clearly develop post-traumatic symptoms such as emotional numbing, uncontrolled flashbacks and nightmares, loss of memory, loss of speech, dissociation, avoidance behaviour or feelings of guilt. An especially important issue seems to be the loss of identity, the scattering of the self and the question of belonging.

At the beginning of this thesis, it has been argued that history is one of the most fundamental themes in the South African novel. *The Dreamcloth* is such an example of South African literature and frequently alludes to the country’s history. Sometimes the narrator informs about certain historical events such as the beginning of colonisation and racial segregation. (Cf. TD 29-31) In other instances however, history is told by the means of direct speech of the

several characters. The following quote from Yankel, for example, relates to the Soweto Uprising on June 16, 1976: “They killed hundreds of children, little children, in the township last year. Didn’t you see this all on the news? Children what wanted a better education. Like the Nazi’s – they opened fire on innocent children” (TD 230). The history of South Africa is thus an important theme of *The Dreamcloth* and can even be regarded as forming the background of the novel.

At last, art and its relation to trauma is another crucial theme of *The Dreamcloth*. Thereby, the novel addresses different forms of art such as poetry, carving, painting, sewing and music.

First of all, the creation of art can in many respects be regarded as the direct result of traumatic experience. Mia’s poetry, for example, originates in and reflects upon the transgenerational trauma she inherits from her grandmother Maya. As Fran explains, it is thus marked by cruelty and death: “We have a child who writes about houses burning, babies dying, dogs with one eye, goats that bleed, hearts tearing, limbs in dustbins” (TD 116). As has already been argued above, the novel itself indicates that art and suffering or art and trauma closely belong together and that one is the result of the other: “Perhaps, in the end, that is all art was: exhaled pain” (TD 182). What is important to note however, is that the expression of sorrow by the means of art, also has its limits. After the separation from Rochel, for instance, Maya can no longer express her pain in her writing. Her suffering is too grand to express it and so not even art can convey it: “[...] for the words to be spoken were immense and words could not hold them. Not even poetry” (TD 192).

Secondly, the medium of art also functions as a refuge from trauma as it offers a place to express one’s feelings, dreams, emotions and wishes. Art as a place of imagination offers comfort to the artist, as he or she can see *beyond* reality and one’s traumatic experiences:

Here alone was her space, her place at the altar, the open *Aharon Hakodesh*, where she walked the unfootprinted paths of imaginings. Here gypsies, madwomen, angels and crones nattered endlessly to their stories of things she had never seen, but had sometimes wished for. And only in this way and at this time did she feel a pulse in her blood, a heat from beneath her apron [...] the whisper of a promise that something existed beyond the stingy pinch of her meagre life (TD 74/75).

In the third place, art plays a crucial role in the relief of trauma and many characters of the novel precisely engage with art to obtain this easing of their traumata. The Dreamcloth is an important example of such a piece of art and offers comfort to Maya, Issey, Mia and Asher. Poetry on the other side also fulfils the purpose of easing trauma as the characters Mia, Rochel and Yankel use it as a consolation. Finally, Grace’s singing is reminiscent of the relieving function of art, as the songs of Grace take Mia’s nightmares away.

By contrast, however, art may not only function as refuge, but even pose a threat to the consumer and remind him or her of traumatic experiences. Rochel, for instance, is initially

afraid of Maya's writing. The feelings expressed in her poetry overwhelm the seamstress and thus frighten her: "To Rochel, afraid of words and their strange indecipherable markings on paper, and the way they took up space in the air and between people, these times left her feeling fragile, as if words perhaps could break her" (TD 157).

As a last point, it is important to note, that art is essentially a medium that connects people with each other. In *The Dreamcloth*, for instance, art connects the characters Maya and Rochel (who share their arts), Maya and Mia (the latter continuing the poetry of the other), Yankel and Maya (since he uses her poetry to relate to her) or Mia and Issey (as art leads to the bonding of the two). It can thus be assumed that one of the most crucial functions of art is the establishment of a connection and possibility of communication between different people. Transferring this insight onto the activity of writing literature, the novel itself relates the reader to the narrator and the characters of the book and thereby enables communication between them. Art does not only need one that creates it, but also one that engages with it. The novel itself comments on this phenomenon and declares that art only becomes art "[w]hen somebody sees it" (TD 184).

5.7.2. Motifs and symbols

The Dreamcloth is full of symbolism and numerous motifs relating to the experience of trauma. Several of these symbols have already been discussed, such as Mia's birthmark, her winged and wingless figures, or the motifs of haunting and ghosts.

In addition, the Dreamcloth itself relates to the concept of trauma as it serves primarily to relieve the trauma of a person and to offer him or her some sense of comfort. In this regard, the Dreamcloth functions as transitional object: it symbolically relates two or more characters with each other and thereby makes up for the loss of a beloved person. Relating to this, the motif of the Dreamcloth is also indicative of the immortality of art. While the earthly connection of people may come to an end, art is eternal and even overpowers death.

What is more is that the Dreamcloth has another crucial symbolic function related to its multi-faceted texture. It consists of different colours, materials, buttons, feathers and threads, which are sewn together into a whole. It can thus be assumed that the Dreamcloth symbolically represents humanity, which is also made of people of different origin, colour and shape. More importantly, by the joining of different materials and colours, the Dreamcloth can be regarded as a symbol for unity and thus stands in contrast to the historical South African reality of Apartheid. The Dreamcloth – and in this respect, the motif of sewing and stitching – may thus

be seen as a metaphor for the need of bringing different people together, instead of separating them.

Sewing and stitching however, have another symbolic function in the novel. After the separation of Rochel and the rape of Yankel, Maya sews up her genitals to prevent her husband from thrusting into her once more. Her physical self-mutilation thereby symbolically reflects her psychological state of mind: Maya has not only closed the door to her sexuality, but more generally, to her inner feelings and emotions.

The moon is another important motif in *The Dreamcloth* and relates to the concept of trauma. Before their separation, Maya explains to Rochel that “[t]he moon is our only witness. It shall hold us together” (TD 160). Thus, the moon symbolically mirrors the love between Rochel and Maya and is reminiscent of their togetherness. Since Mia inherits the transgenerational trauma of her grandmother, the moon also has great significance for her. As a child, she only stops crying when the moon is full (TD 42) and by contrast, she is “worried about the moon” (TD 204) when Asher enters her family’s life. Most strikingly however, Issey paints a portrait of Mia, which he calls ‘Moonsmile’ (TD 93) and which points towards the connection between Maya and Rochel. When the moon smiles, this symbolically means that Rochel and Maya are together again, in fact as their souls live on in the character Mia.

Similarly, the motif of potatoes refers to the love between Maya and the seamstress: “And together, a potato between their clasped hands, they held one another” (TD 156). Since Mia inherits the trauma from Maya, potatoes become a transitional object for her by which she can relieve her nightmares and is subconsciously reminded of the bond between Maya and Rochel. During one night of furious dreams, Mia cannot get hold of the Dreamcloth, and instead, uses “a raw potato” (TD 56) to ease the pain of her nightmares.

Stones and magic stones in particular are further crucial motifs of the novel. In general, stones stand symbolically for something that one can hold onto and that anchors one in a place. (Cf. TD 277) Thus, they form a contrast to the post-traumatic condition of several characters in *The Dreamcloth*, who have been bereaved of a place where they sense a feeling of belonging. Asher, for example, collects stones during his childhood so that they connect him to the earth, in which he has experienced too much cruelty: “In all his year his mouth would not allow language to escape, he collected stones, the earth’s rubble, and always kept some in his pocket. Little nuggets of gravity to keep his heart from flying away” (TD 277). As an adult, Asher suspects a feeling of homelessness in Mia and gives her three stones as a present so that she can hold on to them. What is striking is that, at the very end of the novel, Mia picks up a stone again and it anchors her to “this place” (TD 348), the Emmarentia Dam in

Johannesburg, South Africa. It can thus be assumed that she slowly recovers from her trauma and her consequent loss of a place to belong.

By contrast, magic stones are thematised in the novel as Mia makes up a poem about them, which reads as follows:

*Last night I had a dream about a magic stone,
And if you looked deep inside, you could see your home.
There was yellow and green and lots of blue
As if a rainbow was passing through.
Some of the colours had no name,
But you could feel them and hold them all the same,
I dreamed I found one at the dam with you
And if you made a wish on it, it would come true.
You can only find a magic stone
If two people look – not on your own. (TD 164)*

The present poem is connected to a number of themes. At first, it relates to dreams and wishes a person might have about one's future. Secondly, it relates to something you can hold on to and is thus reminiscent of a home. In the third place, it is connected to love and friendship as one cannot find a magic stone on one's own. Traumatic experience however, destroys one's dreams and wishes, it bereaves one of a home and a place to hold onto and at last, it may destroy friendships or love relationships. It is thus striking that after being raped, Grace, who used to collect the magic stones together with Mia, stops believing in the existence of such stones and declares that Mia's poem is "wish pish" (TD 164). Grace's suffering and her traumatic experiences have snuffed out her imagination and deprived her of the comfort zone, which she used to share with Mia. At the end of the novel, it is thus particularly striking that Mia gives Grace the Dreamcloth and asks her to sing again. Above all, the primary function of the Dreamcloth is the relief of trauma. It can thus be assumed that Mia gives Grace the cloth, because she recognises Grace's ongoing difficulties with her trauma and wants to help her to work through it. This act, in turn, can be regarded as a compensation for the fact that Mia let Grace alone with her traumatic experiences during her childhood. On the other side, Mia's invitation to Grace to sing for her once more indicates that Mia wants to remind Grace of her childlike innocence and the time before her traumatic experiences. These symbolical acts at the end of the novel thus point to the fact that although Grace did not come to terms with her past yet, she may find a way to deal with her experiences in the future.

5.8. Multilingualism

It has been explained in the previous analysis, that multilingualism in the novel is a frequent characteristic of postcolonial literature. The presentation of a variety of languages points towards the experience of colonialism and different, segregated ethnicities living next to each

other. (Cf. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 50) In regard of South Africa, multilingualism and language variance in the novel also hint towards the idea of the country as a ‘Rainbow Nation’, a term coined by Archbishop Desmond Tutu after the end of Apartheid. Thus, it refers to the fact that the population of South Africa can often not be described in terms of a whole, but rather consists of several nationalities living side by side. What is more is that language is an important marker of cultural identity. The depiction of numerous languages in the contemporary South African novel thus reflects upon the various identities living in the country and highlights the importance of differentiating between them.

The Dreamcloth employs such a variety of language, as it uses Yiddish, Hebrew, Afrikaans, English and the African languages Zulu and Sotho in the course of the narration. As has already been stated, numerous chapters of the novel are preceded by Yiddish vocabulary and thus highlight Jewish identity construction as an important theme of the book. Moreover, the characters Yankel and Maya often speak in the Yiddish language or at least, use some Yiddish words interrupting their English. *The Dreamcloth* is thus full of parenthetical translations, that is, Yiddish, Hebrew, Afrikaans or Zulu terms remain untranslated in the narration, but are simultaneously translated by the means of footnotes. (Cf. e.g. TD 240) In addition, the novel also incorporates examples of selective lexical fidelity, that is, words that remain untranslated (Cf. e.g. TD 73), as well as examples of codeswitching: “See, *kunye, isibili, kuthathu*. One two three, [...]” (TD 128).

Furthermore, the narration also comments on the fact that the enforcement of a foreign language may pose a threat to someone’s identity. As has previously been explained, the experience of colonialism often incorporated the compulsive use of the language of the oppressor. Since language is an important marker of cultural identity, however, the loss of one’s own language may simultaneously lead to the loss of one’s personal identity. Yankel, for instance, forces his wife to use the English language after her emigration to South Africa, but Maya cannot find any meaning in this language and is afraid of the new words: “What was English? A mirage of sounds, indecipherable with meanings she could not reach. Words with too many different meanings, all aswirl in her mind, making her giddy” (TD 241). This reflects the situation of many Jews emigrating to other countries in the course of the Holocaust and is thus tied to the concept of collective Jewish traumatising. Their expulsion from Europe during the 1930s and afterwards did not only require the abandonment of their home countries, but, more often than not, also demanded the sacrifice of their language. This in turn resulted in the loss of their cultural identity and thus in the collective trauma of the Jewish population after the Diaspora. However, Maya’s condition can also be transferred onto

the situation of the African population in South Africa, who were usually forced to speak the language of their oppressors if they wanted to participate in public discourse or needed to consult any public services.

Another good example, referring to the threat which Afrikaans posed to the South African population during the days of Apartheid, is set by a schoolmate of Mia. One day, the only black boy in Mia's school, Zachariah, refuses to sing *Die Stem*, which is the national anthem of the Afrikaner. When Mia asks him for the reason of his denial, he explains to her that "Afrikaans is the language of our oppressors. It is not my national anthem. I keep quiet as a form of protest" (TD 257). This statement reflects a common attitude of the African population during Apartheid. Afrikaans was usually connoted negatively by the black people of the country, as it was identified with the European suppressors. Denial of speaking the language of these oppressors thus symbolises the attempt to protect one's personal and cultural identity. (Cf. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 50)

6. A QUILT OF DREAMS

6.1. Plot overview

Patricia Schonstein's novel *A Quilt of Dreams* (2007) is a Family Saga, which connects the stories of two South African families, namely one of Jewish and one of Xhosa heritage. Reuben Cohen van Tonder is born in Grahamstown around 1960 and is descended from a Jewish family. He is raised in an orphanage, where he becomes the victim of violence and is even raped by the dean of the institution. Throughout his childhood, Reuben only experiences little moments of happiness during the weekly visits to his grandparents, Gershon and Rosa. At their house, he sometimes wonders about a man, who lives in his grandparents' garden, but they tell him that it is the Angel of Death and that Reuben shall stay away from him. After his release from the orphanage, Reuben joins the governmental military and falls in love with the Afrikaner call-girl Georgie. He marries her a few years later, continues to work as a reservist for the military and opens a bottle store in Grahamstown, but soon, the marriage is broken and Reuben becomes an alcoholic. At the morning of his twenty-second birthday, then, he decides to change his life and start all over again.

Reuben's grandfather Gershon comes from a Jewish family and grows up in Dresden in the first half of the twentieth century. The Holocaust in Germany fundamentally shapes his character as he witnesses the Kristallnacht in November 1938 and views the burning of the Jewish area as well as the killing and detention of his community. In this night, Gershon's father is also shot, their shop is burnt down and Gershon is forced to flee from Germany. He

emigrates to South Africa, where he is admitted by his aunt Pearl Kulber. By contrast, Reuben's grandmother Rosa grows up in Rhodesia⁵⁶ and comes from a poor Jewish family. Her mother rejects her and after the death of her father, Rosa is raised by her rather unloving grandparents. She stays with them until their death and afterwards becomes a regular visitor of Gershon's aunt.

The two of them meet at the house of Pearl Kulber. They marry soon afterwards, have a child named Lilianna and open the Cohen Trading Store or kwaBelungu⁵⁷ in the black area of the already segregated Grahamstown. Gershon hires Nicodemus Mdoko as counter assistant and from now on, Rosa and Gershon spend nearly all of their time working in the shop. Once only, Rosa connects with another person as she develops strong affection for the salesman Emmanuel Levy who helps her with the creation of a large, colourful quilt for her daughter Lilianna. During a riot in the 1980s, kwaBelungu is burnt down by a group of black youths. As a consequence, Rosa never leaves the house again and Gershon is progressively haunted by painful flashbacks and nightmares of his experiences in Dresden. Disoriented by his trauma, he dies in a fire in his kitchen a few years later.

Reuben's wife is Georgiana Christina Botha, who is nicknamed Georgie and comes from an Afrikaner family. In her youth, she works as a call-girl and enjoys smoking, drinking and flirting around, but a few years after her marriage with Reuben, her husband becomes an alcoholic and develops an inner aggressiveness. He starts to hit Georgie and only has violent sex with her. As a result, Georgie quietens down, hardly ever leaves the house and becomes chronically ill.

Another important character in the novel is Vita, the daughter of Gladness, who is in turn the servant of Georgie and Reuben. Vita comes from a black Xhosa family and grows up in the poverty of a black township. Her father, who worked for a military wing of the ANC, has been detained a few years ago and her eldest brother Boniface, who also joined this underground movement, is said to be dead. One day, Vita asks her grandmother for the reason of their family's bad luck and her grandmother tells her the following story: Vita's great-great grandfather Phathuxolo, the nephew of Maqoma, felt in love with Vuyolwethu and wanted to marry her. Therefore he had to pay a big 'lobola' or dowry, consisting of a great number of cattle and the favourite bull of the Boer Isaac, which was related by blood with Maqoma's favourite bull Jingqi. The Boer Isaac in turn demanded a golden British sovereign for his bull, but although Phathuxolo managed to earn one, he never paid the lobola. Nevertheless, he still

⁵⁶ Today Zimbabwe.

⁵⁷ KwaBelungu means "at the white people" and is the name given to Gershon's and Rosa's shop by the African people in Grahamstown.

married Vuyolwethu and thus left his ancestors with an unfinished business, which is the origin of the bad luck of the family. Following this narration, the grandmother gives Vita the golden British sovereign, which belonged to her great-great grandfather, and the young girl decides to finish his business. A few days later, she goes to town on her own in order to buy a bull, which is as beautiful as the one of the Boer Isaac. Unluckily, however, she gets into a students' protest, in which her brothers Lunga and Unathi are also involved. The demonstration is soon resolved violently by the police and Vita is shot in the leg.

Reuben's parents, Lilianna and the Afrikaner Jacobus van Tonder, meet during Lilianna's studies of art and immediately fall in love with each other. They begin an affair, and Lilianna soon becomes pregnant with twins, but at Jaco's request, she undergoes an abortion. However, one of her twins survives this 'treatment', and nine months later, Reuben is born. Afterwards, Lilianna and Jaco move in with Rosa and Gershon and although the elderly couple despises Jaco for his heritage, the five of them live together for a while. Four months later, however, Jaco leaves Grahamstown to work in Port Elizabeth and despite his promise to return every fortnight, Lilianna drowns herself soon afterwards. Reuben is brought to an orphanage and when his father returns from Port Elizabeth, Gershon and Rosa only inform him about Lilianna's death, but never let him in anymore. Jaco apparently becomes mad and soon afterwards, he is committed to an asylum. After his dismissal three years later, he returns to Rosa and Gershon and comes to live in their garden.

At the age of thirty-two, Reuben bears witness to his therapist. He explains that during his service at the military, he killed dozens of Africans revolting against the regime and that he was also responsible for the death of Boniface, the eldest brother of Vita. Reuben also tells that Rosa committed suicide after Gershon died in his kitchen, and that afterwards, he drank even more and often abused and hit his wife. What is more, Reuben explains that he found out about the truth of his parents' history, his mother's suicide and about the fact that the Angel of Death in his grandparents' garden was his own father Jaco. At last, Reuben narrates that Nicodemus Mdoko visited him and gave him a wooden bull carved by his father Jaco. Following this visit, Reuben has an emotional breakdown and cries for hours into the quilt of his mother.

In the last chapter, the novel retells the day of the student's protest in Grahamstown and skilfully intertwines the narratives of Reuben and Vita. When Reuben hears the rioting and the shots on the streets, he experiences a turn in himself. Instead of joining his military comrades and fighting against the Africans, he decides to support the blacks and to warn them of the police. At the same time, Vita wakes up from unconsciousness, but is seriously injured

by the shot in her leg. Reuben rescues Vita, brings her to hospital and gives her the wooden bull of his father. When Vita finally wakes up in hospital, she is surrounded by her family, including her father, who has been freed from imprisonment. The new State President Frederik Willem de Klerk has held a speech and has laid the foundation for the end of Apartheid and the freedom of South Africa. Apart from this national triumph, Vita has also scored a victory. The wooden bull of Jaco bears a resemblance to the bull of the Boer Isaac and thus symbolically points to the fact that Vita has finished the business of her grandfather and finally brought an end to the bad luck of her family. In the meantime, Reuben apologises to Georgie, leaves their house clasp the quilt of his mother and heads towards the train station. He is ready to make a new start, not by forgetting his past, but rather by holding it in remembrance. The novel ends with an optimistic outlook into both South Africa's and into Reuben's future.

6.2. The structure of the novel

6.2.1. Intertextuality

It has been mentioned repeatedly that intertextuality is a prominent characteristic of both trauma literature and the contemporary South African novel. (Whitehead 84; Irele 11 & 159) Similarly to Joanne Fedler, Patricia Schonstein makes use of this feature and places both a quotation and a poem in front of her novel *A Quilt of Dreams*. The quotation is from Ludwig Alberti, an officer of the Waldeck Regiment at the Cape of South Africa during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. It reads as follows:

To a Xhosa, his cattle are the foremost and practically the only subject of his care and occupation, in the possession of which he finds complete happiness. The bellowing or mooing of a cow is so pleasing in the ear that it can enchant it to the point where he will pay greatly in excess of its worth, and cannot rest until he has acquired it (AQOD 9).

This citation relates to the plot of the novel and simultaneously to the concept of trauma. Vita's great-great grandfather is of Xhosa heritage and aims to gain the favourite bull of the Boer Isaac in order to pay his dowry for Vuyolwethu. However, it can be assumed that he never manages to acquire the bull and thus cannot pay the marriage portion for his wife. As a consequence, Phathuxolo *cannot rest until he has acquired it*, and therefore begins to haunt Vita's family. His unfinished business and his bad luck are transferred onto the following generations and thus constitute a transgenerational trauma for the family of Vita. The young girl finally acquires the bull and finishes the business of her great-great grandfather, but acting in place of Phathuxolo, she has to *pay greatly in excess of its worth* as she is shot and wounded by the police.

The poem preceding the plot on the other side is called *The rescue of Maqoma from Robben Island by his favourite bull 1873* and originates in Xhosa oral tradition. (Cf. AQOD 364) A shortened transcription of it reads as follows:

They say that the favourite bull of Jongumsobomvu
 raised its head, flares its nostrils, champed at the dry ground
 and followed the wind
 which had come inland from the ocean to guide him [...]
 and that it plunged into the ocean and swam the waves
 until it reached the prison Island. [...]
 and that it broke the prison chains
 which held the Xhosa warrior.
 They say that Jongumsobomvu leapt onto the back of his favourite bull,
 which had come from the mainland [...]
 to free him and to carry him back to the lands of his fathers.
 They say that the favourite bull of Jongumsobomvu
 rode proudly into the surf of the prison Island [...]
 but that two bullets shot by the prison wardens
 flew through the air
 and that one struck the great warrior through the shoulder bone
 and that one struck his favourite bull.
 They say if you look out to the prison Island [...]
 you might see the mirage of a great bull with a rider on his back [...]
 That will be the great warrior, Maqoma,
 praise-named by his people as Jongumsobomvu [...]
 free and going home on his favourite bull, Jingqi (AQOD 11/12).

This poem deals with the fate of the historical figure Maqoma and thus establishes the historical context of the novel, namely colonialism and its consequences for the indigenous population of South Africa. According to Schonstein's notes after the narration, Maqoma was a Xhosa leader and warrior, who lived from 1798 to 1873. He was deprived of his land and sentenced to imprisonment on Robben Island without any hearing or trial. Prison documents state that after eighteen months of total isolation on the island, Maqoma died of loneliness, but Patricia Schonstein does not follow this theory. Instead, she takes account of Xhosa oral tradition, which provides another version of his decease and tells that the warrior was murdered by the prison guards of Robben Island. (Cf. AQOD 363/364)

By implication, Maqoma's fate mirrors the situation of the indigenous South African community in colonial days, who was deprived of its land, its rights and its freedom. The poem is thus reminiscent of the collective trauma of the South African nation and, by preceding the plot, makes this trauma an important issue of the novel. In addition, the poem is also taken up twice in the plot of the novel itself. On the one hand, Maqoma's favourite bull is related by blood to the bull of the Boer Isaac, which Vita needs to acquire in order to finish the business of her great-great grandfather. What is more important however, the very end of *A Quilt of Dreams* also alludes to this poem since the last sentence of the novel reads as follows: "As he made his way towards the station, Reuben heard, from the far distance, a bull bellowing loud and triumphantly into the new day" (AQOD 356). The triumphing of the bull

naturally points towards the rescue of Maqoma and thus to the end of imprisonment for the Xhosa warrior. In the context of the plot, Reuben hears this bull in the year 1990, and more precisely after Frederik Willem de Klerk's speech, which marked the end of the system of Apartheid. By transferring the victory of the bull onto the state of the nation, one can thus assume that in 1990, South Africa, and in particular its indigenous population, has finally made a first step towards freedom in the country.

As the poem originates in Xhosa oral tradition, another crucial point is that its integration into the novel emphasises the African culture and gives voice to the indigenous people of the country in order to make up for their silencing during the years of colonialism and Apartheid.

6.2.2. The chapters of the novel

The chapters of *A Quilt of Dreams* are named after the characters of the novel and thus emphasise and give voice to the individual stories of Reuben, Gershon, Rosa, Georgie, Vita, Lilianna and Jaco. By implication, however, these individual fates are connected to the community of South Africa and thus symbolically point towards the collective experience of the nation. (Cf. Granofsky 5/6) What is particularly interesting is that two chapters of the novel refer to the character of Reuben and thereby indicate his post-traumatic growth. The first chapter is called "Baby", a name which is given to Reuben during his time in the orphanage "because there he cried through the first five years of his life" (AQOD 31). The nickname "Baby" is thus reminiscent of Reuben's trauma originating in the loss of his parents and his unloving treatment and abuse in the orphanage. His birth name "Reuben" on the other side, which is the name of the penultimate chapter of the novel, is given to him by his grandfather Gershon and symbolically refers to Reuben's true identity. In the course of the novel, Reuben undergoes a development and works through his experiences. It can thus be assumed that the naming of the chapters from "Baby" to "Reuben" reflects upon this progression and that they are thus indicative of his post-traumatic growth.

At last, the chapter "Reuben" is of particular significance as it has the form of a testimony and narrates how Reuben bears witness about his experiences to a therapist. The chapter is written in direct speech, but whereas the statements of Reuben are displayed, the voice of the therapist is omitted. Testimony is an important concept both in relation to trauma narration and in the context of South Africa. On the one hand, testimony is thus a means by which one may be enabled to speak about his or her traumatic experiences, to work through them and eventually to achieve post-traumatic growth. It is used to re-claim one's experiences by narrating the truth about them. On the other hand, testimony was also a prominent and

important practice in South Africa, and more precisely, part of the work of the TRC. After the end of Apartheid, both victims and perpetrators of the regime bore testimony to the atrocities of the past in order to work through these traumatic experiences and to raise hope for the future of the country. The form of the chapter “Reuben” thus reflects upon the narration of trauma, and in further consequence, relates to an important practice after the abolition of Apartheid. At the same time, the form of testimony results in a more personal, honest and emotional mode of the narration, which adds to the credibility of the novel.

6.3. Time, space and causality

6.3.1. Setting and historical context

Space, time and historical context play a major role in the analysis of *A Quilt of Dreams* since historical facts, places and events are mentioned and emphasised throughout the narration. Grahamstown for example, which is the primary setting of the novel, is described in extensive passages and by the means of concrete place names and explicit depictions of certain areas. Thereby, the narration highlights that the fictional setting of the story is basically identical with the real geographical place of Grahamstown in South Africa. In other words, the realistic and concrete depiction of place in the novel relates the fictional setting to reality outside the narration. Reuben and Georgie, for instance, are said to live “at High Street’s intersection with the top end of Bathurst Street. [...] Their bedroom window viewed across the road to the ornate Victorian two-storey shops of High Street, and overlooked a more-than-a-man-size bronze statue of a robed angel protecting a dying soldier who lay at her feet – a memorial to the Anglo Boer War’s dead” (AQOD 23/24). Apart from the mention of specific street names, this passage describes a rather popular memorial in Grahamstown, namely the sculpture of Peace. It was put up for the soldiers who were killed in the Anglo-Boer War, and thus in a battle which led to the formation of the Union of South Africa and in further consequence, to the increasing repression of the indigenous population of South Africa. (Cf. Clark and Worger 18-21)

In addition to the emphasis on space, the narration also highlights the historical, social and political contexts of the story and thereby, it points towards the importance of history and politics for the understanding of the novel and of South African literature in general. The following passage, for example, relates to the last ten years of the period of Apartheid: “During the 1980s, the country’s political tempo began to accelerate, with black resistance intensifying and government repression becoming even more brutal. In an attempt to crush opposition, various States of Emergency were declared, allowing for martial rule and

detentions without trial [...]” (AQOD 130). There are numerous examples of such historical excursions and what is more, the narration frequently alludes to certain historical events such as Soweto 1976 (AQOD 276), various school boycotts and student’s protests or de Klerk’s first speech as State President of South Africa. (AQOD 330) Most strikingly, the funeral of the so-called ‘Cradock Four’ is incorporated into the plot of the novel as Matthew Goniwe, one of the four, was a close friend of Vita’s father. What is also particularly noteworthy about this historical embedment is that certain historical figures, such as the archbishop Desmond Tutu, are portrayed in this depiction and can thus be classified as minor characters of the novel:

The road was lined with farm workers who raised clenched fists. The stadium was so full that the sounds of many lamentations became one. [...] Her father mounted the stage with an archbishop and others. [...] Now she heard the name of her father’s friend: Matthew Goniwe. And the names of those who had been killed with him: Fort Calata, Sparrow Mkonto and Sicelo Mhlauli. The little purple-robed archbishop took the microphone and announced that the white government had that morning declared a State of Emergency. The crowd exploded again. In the centre a banner was unfurled, red and with a golden hammer and sickle on it; and a second one, with the colours yellow, black and gold [...]” (AQOD 253/254).

As can be seen from this and many other examples in the novel, *A Quilt of Dreams* mixes historical facts with fictional elements. The novel can thus be regarded as an example of “faction”, which is a literary term denoting the mingling of fiction and facts, or else the narration of fictional events against the background of a realistic setting. In any case, historical context and setting play a crucial role for the understanding of the novel and this circumstance, in turn, relates *A Quilt of Dreams* to both trauma literature and postcolonial narration.

6.3.2. Disruption of time and causality

The plot of the novel is set against the background of the Apartheid regime and covers a time span from about the 1940s to the year 1990. Similarly to Joanne Fedler’s *The Dreamcloth*, however, Patricia Schonstein’s narrative does not proceed chronologically, but instead, alternates between different levels of time and between the past and the present. *A Quilt of Dreams* is thus utterly achronological and the narration is significantly marked by the narrative techniques of flashback and foreshadowing. In turn, this non-chronological structure of the plot leads to the disruption of causality and produces numerous gaps, omissions and black holes in the narration.

Flashbacks in the novel are primarily used to tell of the past of a certain character and thus, in order to reveal something about his or her background. In the second chapter, for example, it

is narrated how Gershon and Rosa get to know each other, become engaged and eventually get married. This narration however is interrupted by a flashback about Rosa's history:

Rosa Miller happily accepted the awkward man's proposal [...] She was unlikely to receive another offer, and did not want to remain a companion to the elderly Pearl Kulber for ever. *Rosa's father had been a mining prospector who, before she was born, had taken his wife and two small sons into northern Rhodesia [...] When she was five, Rosa's father succumbed to black water fever [...] She nurtured a quiet and deep love of trees, fed by memories of very early childhood [...] Every Monday [...] she made her way to the museum's Herbarium, where she systematically taught herself [...] all the trees that grew in southern and central Africa.* During six months of their engagement she and Gershon grew quietly close to each other and Rosa often gazed at the ring [...] [Emphasis added]" (AQOD 71-74).

Foreshadowing and allusions on the other side are used to give certain hints towards the future and to create suspense in the novel. The story of Lilianna and Jaco in particular is only narrated bit by bit and incorporates numerous allusions to the future, but is not resolved until a later part of the narrative. In the first chapter, for instance, Reuben asks his grandparents about the man working in their garden and they declare that it is "the Angel of Death" who stole their garden "and dug up all the lilies" (AQOD 43) that belonged to their daughter. At this point in the novel it is not at all clear that it is actually Reuben's father who rages in the garden of Gershon and Rosa. Only towards the end of the narrative, this secret is finally revealed, and it is told that Jaco became mad after Lilianna's death and moved into the garden of her parents: "[...] he broke the lock of the servant's room at the back and settled there [...] One day, in a rage, he took a pick and dug up the lilies that grew at the back" (AQOD 274). The achronological structure and the intermingling of past and present in the novel, again, emphasise the relation of these time levels or else, highlight the importance of the past for the present. In addition, the disruption of time, chronology and causality mirrors the experience of trauma, and more precisely, the disruption of memory and sense of time, which is in turn a common feature of trauma literature. (Whitehead 3)⁵⁸

6.4. Point of view and narrative style

6.4.1. Point of view

A Quilt of Dreams is primarily narrated from a third person singular point of view, but, similarly to *The Dreamcloth*, the novel makes use of figural focalisation and features different voices of the characters. The following passage for example, describes Reuben's decision to visit a therapist and while it is narrated from an authorial perspective, it simultaneously integrates the considerations and emotions of Reuben:

For his first appointment – he had it all planned – he would take with him a crate of whisky [...] But he'd show his therapist a thing or two about self-control. This is Reuben here, he imagined introducing himself. Not fucking Baby. Reuben, son of Lilianna Cohen, the beautiful Lilianna who should never

⁵⁸ Cf. also Granofsky 16/17; Erll and Nünning 335/336.

have got involved with Jacobus van Tonder, and who died because she was a little bird and life did not deserve her [...] And he did not want counselling for ever. He would have to make that clear. He just needed help for a few weeks, just to get through the first, dark level of abstinence's hell (AQOD 22/23).

In particular the description of Lilianna in this passage reveals the unreliability of the narrator and in turn, the figural focalisation of the narration. Reuben, who does not yet know about the story of his parents, glorifies his mother and it is his view, that Lilianna was *a little bird* and that *life did not deserve her* rather than an objective description of her character. In this instance, and in many others, character voice is used to add a subjective and personal tone to the narration. An exception of the third person singular point of view is constituted by the chapter "Reuben", which, as has been explained above, is written in the first person singular point of view and has the form of a testimony.

6.4.2. Narrative style: fantasy and magical realism

The narrative style of *A Quilt of Dreams* is marked by the complex and neat narrative structure of the narration. In addition, it has already been mentioned that the novel is an example of faction and thus has a certain aspiration of realism. By contrast however, the novel also includes numerous passages which turn away from this authentic depiction and, instead, feature fantasy and magical realism. In the following quotation, for instance, it is narrated how Reuben survives his first time at the military and thereby, death is not treated as an abstract concept, but is instead, personified: "He wore her words of love like a full body-suit of armour made of platinum, lead, stainless steel and gold – no bullet could penetrate it. Death knocked against him, scratched long fingers down his young body, blew malodorous breath at him. But it took him not" (AQOD 165/166).

Fantastic narration and magical realism are also used in a crucial scene of the novel, in which Vita, wounded by the shootings of the police, lies on the ground in Grahamstown and is rescued by Reuben. Hereby, the novel does not instantly mention that it is Reuben who saves the girl, but instead magical realism is used to portray Vita's perspective on the events:

The mist swirled and the angel slowly unfolded from the bronze. The angel unfurled her wings [...] She stepped over the soldier and down from the stone plinth onto the road. She moved towards Vita and her flowing garment swirled around her. [...] The angel held Vita close to her, then touched her cheek, so that the girl looked up at her and then across into the mist. There, in the churning whiteness, stood a magnificent, a beautiful bull, a bull of the colour of sun touching dry grasses in the late afternoon [...] (AQOD 327).

In fact, of course, it is not the angel of the Statue of Peace who saves Vita and also, she does not see a real, living bull. What the girl views instead is Reuben who comes to rescue her, puts his arms around her and holds the wooden bull of his father Jaco. The narration however

does not explicitly indicate that Vita's vision of the angel and the bull is merely a fantasy, but instead this passage is integrated without marking into the otherwise realistic narration.

6.4.3. Multilingualism

A Quilt of Dreams incorporates a great number of languages and thereby reflects both the colonial experience and the existence of multiple cultures and identities in South Africa. More precisely, one can find Xhosa, Shona, Zulu, Afrikaans, English, German, Yiddish and Hebrew terms in the narration and also examples of parenthetical translations (e.g. AQOD 239), codeswitching (e.g. AQOD 54) or selective lexical fidelity. The latter is used, for example, to enable an authentic depiction of South African history and more specifically, to give account of certain crucial terms during the regime of Apartheid. "Amandla!" and "Ngawethu!"⁵⁹ (AQOD 259), for instance, were popular African protest sayings and were frequently shouted at mass demonstrations against the oppressive government. In the narration, they are used by Lunga and Unathi, when they participate in the students' march in Grahamstown in 1990. (Cf. AQOD 355) Another example is the use of many Yiddish and Hebrew terms, which emphasise an important sub-theme of the novel, namely Jewish identity construction: "How was he [Reuben] to discern that once, from Gershon's kitchen, came forth broths and casseroles, *latkes* and *tayglach*, *gefilte* fish and cheese blintzes [...] chicken soup with *kneidlach* [...] platters of *tzimmes* with brisket [...]" (AQOD 54). In this passage, it is narrated what Reuben does *not* know about the Jewish rituals of his family and thus his difficulties to relate to his Jewish identity are emphasised.

In general, the multilingual narration of *A Quilt of Dreams* highlights the presence of numerous cultural identities in the story of the novel and also points to the importance of differentiating between them. In contrast to many other countries and peoples of the world, it is still hardly possible to speak of a certain South African identity, and multilingualism in the contemporary South African novel reflects this condition and the presence of multiple or different identities in South Africa.

6.5. Trauma and the characters

Similarly to the novel *The Dreamcloth*, Patricia Schonstein's *A Quilt of Dreams* also portrays a number of traumatised characters, who suffer traumata from different origins and more often than not, have multiple traumatisations. As has been mentioned in the previous analysis, this presentation of distinct, individual experiences symbolically points towards the collective experience of the South African community and thus potentially restores cultural memory. In

⁵⁹ "Amandla!" can be translated with "Power!". "Ngawethu!" is the typical response to "Amandla" and means "It is ours!" (Cf. AQOD 355).

addition, the depiction of numerous traumata also enables a variety of possible identifications for the reader and consequently increases the chance to relate to one's own experiences.⁶⁰

By contrast to Joanne Fedler however, who features only one black main figure in her novel⁶¹, Patricia Schonstein depicts characters of various ethnicities and from different cultural backgrounds. More precisely, *A Quilt of Dreams* interconnects the fates and traumata of people from Jewish, African and Afrikaner heritage and, thereby, gives a realistic account of the South African population during Apartheid. What is more, the presentation of their *different* fates emphasises the fact that the living conditions and everyday reality of people from distinct ethnicities varied greatly during Apartheid and were usually unequal to the detriment of the black population. The following passage, for instance, contrasts the living circumstances of the White man Emmanuel Levy with those of his black chauffeur Witness:

“When they overnighted at whites-only country hotels, Emmanuel took a room and Witness slept in the servants’ quarters at the back. On those occasions when there was no place for him, he slept on the front seat of the car. Emmanuel ate in the dining room and Witness sat in the Opel with take-aways – generally fish and chips and a Coke” (AQOD 98). Another striking example in the novel is that Vita is almost denied medical treatment after she is shot, as the nurse in the white casualty of the hospital initially refuses to look at her. (AQOD 330)

What is particularly important in this respect, is that Schonstein does not only present characters from various backgrounds next to each other, but that she interrelates their fates and illustrates how people of different ethnicities interacted with each other during the regime of Apartheid. When Emmanuel Levy stops working for the African Trading Company, for instance, he also needs to leave his driver and servant Witness behind. The two of them have been working together for twenty-five years and have become friends rather than employer and employee. At the moment of their farewell, however, the political system in South Africa still separates them and renders it impossible to show their affection for each other: “They shook hands, gripping each other at the wrist and holding on for a long moment. Their bodies urged for an embrace, yearned to place heart against heart. But they dared not, on this public platform. Witness boarded a crowded, non-white third-class carriage and began the long journey back to central Africa [...]” (AQOD 118). Contrasting examples, which illustrate the tensions in the interaction between blacks and whites, can also be found in the course of the novel. Gershon and Rosa, for instance, own a shop in the black area of Grahamstown and manage to run their business almost entirely by selling to black customers. However, behind their backs, the black people sneer at them and develop an anger towards the white Jewish

⁶⁰ Cf. Chapter 5.5. (Trauma and the characters in *The Dreamcloth*)

⁶¹ Namely, Sarafina.

couple: “Among themselves, these women often commented on the ugly, ghostlike faces of white people and, if their children misbehaved, threatened to hand them over to a pale bogey” (AQOD 101). As a consequence of this growing resentment towards the whites, kwaBelungu, the shop of Gershon and Rosa, is ultimately burnt down by a group of black youths who “resented Gershon and Rosa for being allowed to do business in the township while their own fathers were forbidden to trade in the town” (AQOD 131).

6.5.1. Reuben

Reuben is one of the main characters in *A Quilt of Dreams* and suffers from multiple traumatisations. First of all, his trauma originates in the loss of his parents Lilianna and Jaco, of which Reuben has neither knowledge nor memory. After he is brought to the orphanage, however, his pain becomes apparent in his permanent crying for the first five years of his life. Secondly, Reuben’s trauma arises from his childhood experiences in the orphanage, where he is scoffed by the other children because of his Jewish heritage: “He was a Jew-boy whom no one wanted to befriend. He was born to burn in hell forever” (AQOD 49). In addition, he is treated carelessly and cruelly by the nuns working in the orphanage and what is more, he is also raped by the priest Father Victor. (AQOD 286) His fifth birthday in particular becomes traumatising for Reuben, since Sister Mary Edwina locks him into a cupboard, and threatens that if he will not stop weeping, she will not let him out again and everybody in the orphanage will forget about him. In the darkness of the cupboard, Reuben is scared to death: “He stood absolutely still with eyes wide open – though seeing nothing – in this unbearable internment. The darkness was so profound that he lost sense of dimension and immediate personal space. [...] He held his hands over his ears to shut out the sounds of darkness which were like the wails of demons” (AQOD 33). After he is finally released from the cupboard, Reuben has lost memory of this incident and stops crying for the rest of his childhood and youth. In addition, it seems as if this experience has deprived him of his personal identity, as from now on he is only addressed as “Baby”, except by his grandparents Gershon and Rosa. (AQOD 34)

In the third place, Reuben joins the military and works as a soldier for the Apartheid government after acquiring adulthood. During his service, he kills dozens of Africans and claims not to have a problem with that, but one day Reuben needs to kill Boniface and this experience becomes traumatising for him. When he fires at Vita’s brother, the young man does not immediately die, but reaches out to Reuben and calls him “brother”. Reuben, emotionally numb by his previous experiences, does not help him to get up, but instead shoves Boniface’s face into the dirt until he dies. Afterwards, this incident begins to haunt

him. Reuben has recurring nightmares about the murder, repeatedly sees Boniface's face before him and starts to drink even more alcohol. To his therapist, he explains that "[...] he stays with me. [...] he tied himself to me" (AQOD 309).

A few years after marrying Georgie and opening the bottle store in Grahamstown, Reuben loses both of his grandparents and this loss ultimately adds to his trauma. During his childhood, the visits at Gershon's and Rosa's house resemble his only moments of happiness and his grandparents are the only persons, Reuben can really trust. Thus, when Gershon suffocates in the flames in his kitchen and Rosa consequently commits suicide, Reuben remains shocked. He sleeps in their house for about a month, and afterwards does not go there for a long time. To his friend Aziz, Reuben explains that "I haven't been right for a long time. Come to think of it, not since my grandparents died" (AQOD 30).

Reuben's multiple traumatisations show themselves in a number of post-traumatic symptoms. During his sleep, for example, he is plagued by recurring nightmares about Boniface's murder and the image of the young African begins to haunt him day and night. (Cf. AQOD 283). To forget these dreams as well as the traumatising experiences of his childhood, Reuben consciously represses his memories and drowns his problems in a vast number of drinks. From early adulthood onwards, he develops a disposition to alcoholism and finishes between one and two bottles of whiskey a day, but in particular during his service at the military, he drinks heavily to forget about his everyday reality: "[...] when we got back from the funeral [of the Cradock Four], we went to the Old Vic and I drank myself motherless. [...] That way I didn't think about the roadblock, or about the fact that they were tortured and stabbed. I just left it all behind, covered nicely with a drink" (AQOD 313).

In this regard, another striking characteristic of Reuben is his emotional numbing. During his service as a soldier, for example, he does not allow his feelings to bother him, but instead, carries out his orders blindly and never challenges the commands of his superiors: "All I knew was to do as I was told and not ask questions. The first one you kill is hard. But after that, you just shoot and don't get emotional. You just close off" (AQOD 284). By contrast, however, Reuben does not fully manage to repress his feelings and his doubts about the killing, but instead, he develops an inner violence and aggressiveness. Mostly, he vents his anger on his wife, but he also delves into violent fantasies about murder:

Reuben drank more and more, alone at the back, easily finishing off a bottle of whisky on his own. He focused on his business. His new sense of inner violence did not go away. He found himself remembering the boys in the orphanage and wanting to kill them all, one by one, slowly strangling them with wire. He had fantasies of stripping Sister Mary Edwina of her habit and ramming her with a broom handle, all the way up till it came out of her mouth. He wanted to pour petrol over Father Victor and set him alight to give him a taste of the hell he had always threatened Baby with (AQOD 198).

Towards the end of the novel, Reuben can no longer cope with his traumatic experiences and feels the need to talk about them, so he visits a therapist. As opposed to this, however, his memories often overwhelm him and he struggles to speak about them at all. During one of his therapies, he thus announces that he wants to talk about Boniface's murder, but afterwards he wants to leave and not speak about the incident again: "I'm just going to tell you this one thing today. And then I'm going. I can't talk for long about this. [...] I can't" (AQOD 301). This passage significantly illustrates one of the central paradoxes of trauma, namely the need to speak about the atrocities of the past in contrast to the difficulty to talk about them, or in other words, the impossibility to speak about the experience of trauma.

During the beginning of his therapy, Reuben is not willing to face his past and to work through the events of his life, but instead, he wants to leave his experiences behind. He aims to make a new start and to change his life, not by drawing conclusions from his past, but by moving on from his previous experiences: "One day I'm going to have to face what I did. I know that. But not now. There's too much to do now. [...] Right now, I've got to change my life. I've got to start from scratch and track down who I am. Otherwise I'll start drinking again" (AQOD 309/310). Reuben's desire to close the door to his past is also evidenced by the burning of his mother's dress. During his childhood, this dress links him to his mother and makes him feel as if they were together again. In his adulthood, however, Reuben can no longer stand the sorrow about her death and wants to forget about it. Together with Lilianna's poetry, he thus burns her dress.

When Nicodemus pays him a visit and tells him about the background of his father, however, Reuben is overwhelmed by his emotions and for the first time since his childhood, starts to cry again: "I locked myself inside and went to lie on my mother's bed. On her quilt. And then I started to cry. I cried and cried like a damn baby. Holding onto that bull. Fucking kissing the bull" (AQOD 306). From now on, Reuben weeps many more times and thereby works through his traumatic experiences. With regard to trauma therapy, it can be assumed that by crying and releasing the pain about his past, Reuben mourns his losses, namely the loss of his parents, his youth, his innocence, his grandparents and also his wife, who betrayed him during their honeymoon.

Mourning his losses and facing his past leads to the post-traumatic growth of Reuben and simultaneously to a turn in himself. He is no longer willing to fight against the black population and shoot, wound or kill any Africans. By contrast, when he hears the shootings during the students' protest in Grahamstown, Reuben realises the cruelty of the events and decides that he wants to help the blacks: "As he stood looking out at the explosive, tinder-dry

gathering of forces, something deep in him stirred. It was a quick movement, a swift reshuffling of his perception of right and wrong. He realized something unforgiveable was about to happen” (AQOD 324).

Reuben consequently saves Vita, takes care of her treatment in hospital and gives her the bull of her father Jaco. At the end of the novel, Reuben is ready to make a new start, not by leaving his past behind, but by keeping it in mind. For the first time in his life he apologises to his wife Georgie, and then he takes the quilt of his mother – which is reminiscent of his past – and walks up to the train station to find out about his father, his roots and even the family of Boniface: “[...] ‘World!’ he called out into the sharp air. ‘I am Reuben Isaac Cohen van Tonder! Listen to me! Listen to this nothing-of-a-Jew, this fucking drunkard, this murderer, this abusive shit! Today! From today, everything is going to be different. Just watch how I turn my whole life around, and find forgiveness, and start again.’ [...]” (AQOD 354)

As has been explained repeatedly, the individual experience in *A Quilt of Dreams* points towards the collective. Reuben’s struggle with his traumatic experiences and his final post-traumatic growth can thus be transferred onto the whole community of South Africa and it can be assumed that the denial and avoidance of the country’s past leads to aggressiveness and emotional numbing among South Africa’s population. In turn, the novel suggests that the country needs to face its past, be aware of the social and politics events during colonialism and Apartheid and only then can make a new start into its future.

6.5.2. Gershon

Reuben’s grandfather Gershon also suffers from multiple traumatisations and primarily represents the collective trauma of the Holocaust. During the night of Germany’s Kristallnacht in November 1938, the Nazis storm the city of Dresden, destroy the homes, shops and synagogues of the Jews, kill almost a hundred of them and send further thirty thousand to concentration camps. The shop of Gershon’s father is also set on fire and Gershon has to watch his father die from a gunshot in his stomach. He develops a trauma from this experience and throughout his lifetime, re-experiences the events through repetitive nightmares:

This was the nightmare: Gershon lies still in a ditch as if dead and watches soldiers smash windows glass and torch the synagogue. They force women and children out and beat them down to the ground. They push men forward with rifle butts; beat them; shoot them; puncture them with bayonets so blood spurts out like the water of fountains. [...] Gershon crawls to his father, through piles of shattered glass, across silver shards lying everywhere. Tears come, but no sound. Father holds the Angel of Death back with one hand and Gershon tries to lift him, to give him life: ‘Don’t die! Don’t die! Don’t leave me!’ And his father’s weak voice instructs: ‘Take my coat. Go away. Go far away. Leave this place.’ He dies with the Torah burning. Gershon takes his father’s coat and boots and the wedding ring from his father’s marriage finger and runs (AQOD 133/134).

Following the last advice of his father, Gershon emigrates to South Africa, but he never manages to settle there and is instead haunted by his past. The character Gershon thus symbolically represents the Jewish community after the Diaspora. As has previously been explained, the experience of the Holocaust led to a collective trauma and uprooting of the Jewish people, since they lost their homes, their beloved ones and their cultural identity: “Gershon left Europe by ship, but he never really left it behind. He crossed the sea, but his nightmares were always of Dresden fragmented into glittering glass. He reached Africa, but he never arrived; not in any true sense. He tried to forget and begin again, but the past haunted him [...]” (AQOD 134).

What adds to Gershon’s trauma after his emigration from Dresden, are the conditions which he discovers in South Africa. By the end of 1938, the population of Grahamstown is already segregated for the most part and laws based on the race of the people are increasingly brought into force. The situation of South Africa bears a resemblance to the segregation, persecution and killing of the Jews in Germany and consequently doubles Gershon’s trauma: “Gershon had been driven from his home by the Nazi engineers of racial intolerance, only to arrive at a place of mirrors in which would be reflected much of the meanness of human spirit he had fled from” (AQOD 65).

The first morning after his arrival at his aunt’s house in Grahamstown, Gershon decides to bury his past. His memories are too painful to speak about them and he requests Rosa and his aunt never to ask him about his experiences. He never tells anyone about the events of Kristallnacht and instead represses his feelings and memories: “[...] he realized that the only way he could carry on living [...] would be to close up his past for ever” (AQOD 68). Gershon and his later wife Rosa open a shop in the black township of Grahamstown, but although they are known and respected by everyone in town, they remain at the edge of society. They perform their civic duties, such as the tendering of their house and garden, but never genuinely befriend or engage in longer conversation with others. In their own home, they live after their everyday routine and never deviate from it. Gershon in particular develops an exaggerated strive for controlling their lives. He cooks, keeps the house and the personal finances, leads the shop and makes all decisions for his family. It can be assumed that it is precisely the lack of control, which Gershon has of his own past that arouses his need of self-control in the present: “By occupying himself every moment of his waking life, he was able to focus only on the present and never reflect on his tormented past and the despair that war and Nazism had seared into his psyche” (AQOD 92).

The birth of his daughter is the first event since Kristallnacht, which brings some happiness into Gershon's life. Rosa and her husband adore Lilianna and devote their lives only to her fortune so that, for the most part, their daughter becomes their only reason of living. When she commits suicide shortly after Reuben's birth, however, Gershon again needs to face his lack of control and is traumatised by her loss. He becomes even more reclusive and in principle, emotionally numb. Only when Reuben visits him and Rosa on Sundays, he starts to live for a few hours, but for the rest of the time, he does not share any emotions, feelings or personal anxieties with others. (AQOD 127) Instead, Gershon focuses completely on his work in the shop and delves even more into his routine and his exaggerated self-control. When his shop is finally burnt down by a group of black youths, however, Gershon can no longer ignore his pain and is overwhelmed by the memories of his past. His trauma surfaces visually in wounds and ulcers on his legs, which deepen and broaden now, after the loss of his shop: "They had always troubled him, but now they looked terrible and beyond healing" (AQOD 136).

Gershon's past increasingly proceeds to haunt him and in the end, his trauma overpowers him. Disoriented and insecure from the re-experiencing of his trauma, he has an accident in his own kitchen, sets it alight and burns to death in the flames. Gershon does not manage to face his past or work through his experiences and thus, his trauma ultimately leads to his death. In the last seconds of his life, he remembers the events in Dresden:

The fire raced across his back and he heard his father calling and calling [...] As he fell to the ground, he heard soldiers storm the street and smash windows. He watched glass slivers fly up into the sky, sparkling and shimmering in the light of the flames. Glass pieces fell back, all over Dresden, all over his boyhood, all over his pre-war innocence like fallings starts, like pulverized diamonds, like glowing ashes. Ashes. Ashes falling, but not in Dresden. They fell here, in Africa, in the heat where crickets sing (AQOD 139/140).

6.5.3. Rosa

Gershon's wife Rosa is characterised by her insecurity and lack of confidence. She is born with a huge scar on her mouth, and is thus repudiated by her mother, grandparents and other children she comes in contact with. At the age of five, her father dies from black water fever, and as Rosa's mother commits her to the care of her parents, the young girl loses both mother and father in her early childhood. Then, during her unhappy youth in her grandparents' home, Rosa becomes a victim of sexual harassment. In the course of the festivities of Purim, Leslie Abramowitz, one of her school colleagues, lures Rosa behind the community hall of the synagogue and abuses her: "He had pushed his fingers up into her, and let his *thing* out of his trousers, then rubbed it against her, over and over, making her all wet. But he had not kissed her. No. He told her no one would ever kiss her because she had the mouth of a spook. He

zipped up and swaggered off, leaving her crying and smelling of his awful secretion” (AQOD 77/78). Rosa is traumatised by this experience and becomes even more self-conscious. She loses the love for herself and from now on, always covers her mouth with her hand, so that nobody sees her ugliness. In her adulthood, Rosa marries Gershon and eventually discovers a meaning in her life. She delves into the work in the shop and finds contentment in stitching and sewing. Most importantly, she gives birth to Lilianna and focuses all her life and her daily activities on her. For many years, Rosa lives more or less content in the same routine as her husband. She works in the shop, visits her daughter as often as possible and even develops affection for the salesman Emmanuel Levy.

Rosa’s life takes a turn when Lilianna drowns herself. Both Gershon and Rosa are traumatised by the loss of their daughter, become even more reclusive and avoid any memory of her death. Rosa develops an exaggerated startle response and an almost constant feeling of anxiety. She feels that she has “nothing left to live for” (AQOD 55) except her grandson and thus Rosa and Gershon concentrate their whole attention on his weekly visits. However, when Reuben meets Georgie, a non-Jewish person just like Jaco van Tonder, his grandparents are deeply worried. Rosa gets restless, can neither sleep or eat and paces up and down the hall in their house, anxious that she will lose Reuben the same way as she has lost her daughter: “She could not find words for her feelings, could not explain that if he meddled with *goyim* he would get burnt; that he would meet some frightful end, as had his mother” (AQOD 163). After Georgie has betrayed Reuben, Rosa and her husband implore her grandson not to forgive her and to terminate their relationship, but the young man insists on his love of the Afrikaner woman and asks Georgie to marry him. Gershon and Rosa initially refuse to attend the wedding, but Reuben forces them to and squeezes his grandmother into the black dress of Lilianna. When Rosa looks into the mirror, she is reminded of the loss of her daughter, called forth by a non-Jewish man, and fears that similar misfortune may happen to Reuben: “The mirror holding her reflection was like a large daguerreotype, in which her seemingly posed figure stared back like the ghost of her own future-past” (AQOD 186). Similarly to Gershon, Rosa occupies herself with work and delves into their everyday routine. When kwaBelungu is burnt down during the 1980s, however, Rosa can no longer control her grief and thus never leaves the house again. She only lives on for her husband and when Gershon burns to death in the flames of his kitchen, Rosa also decides to bring an end to her life. She commits suicide soon afterwards and her suffering remains unspoken.

6.5.4. Vita and her family

Vita's family is of Xhosa heritage and lives in a black township in Grahamstown, in which the living conditions are rather miserable. The streets are not tarred, there is no proper sanitation system and water is not piped to the houses. There is no regular refuse collection and the streets are littered with waste. The whole area and the houses in particular are overcrowded and there is no electricity. The family lives in poverty and can hardly buy enough food to provide for themselves. (AQOD 80/81) Vita's mother Gladness works as a servant and housemaid for Reuben and Georgie, while her father has been detained for his commitment in the ANC. Her eldest brother Boniface has also joined a military wing of the ANC and as the narration reveals, he was seized by the police and murdered by Reuben. Lunga and Unathi, Vita's other brothers, are also politically active and participate in various students' protests and school boycotts.

By comparing these circumstances with the social and political reality during Apartheid, it can be assumed that Vita and her family symbolically represent the African population during this period. Poverty and hunger belonged to the everyday reality of many blacks then and just as Boniface and Vita's father, several thousands became victims of long-time detention without trial, torture or even murder. Black women such as Gladness usually worked as servants for the whites and often lost their husbands and sons in the struggle for freedom. Even the youngest, such as the schoolchildren Lunga and Unathi, already fought for the end of suppression. The novel thus attempts to come to terms with the past of the black population by mirroring their living conditions and by implication, their trauma. What adds to this assumption is the fact that Vita's family inherits the transgenerational trauma of the girl's great-great grandfather Phathuxolo, who has not finished the business of his life and transfers his bad luck onto his descendants. In other words, Vita and her family are haunted by their past and by the fates of their ancestors living in colonial days. In turn, this condition of cross-generational trauma can be assigned to the whole black community of South Africa, since it was ed by its colonial past during the time of Apartheid, and continues to be haunted in the present day, by the country's history and the suppression of its people.

6.5.5. Minor characters

Apart from the already discussed main characters of *A Quilt of Dreams*, the novel also portrays a number of minor characters who suffer various traumata.

Most strikingly, Jacobus van Tonder, Reuben's father, develops trauma after the suicide of Lilianna and after Rosa's refusal to let him see his son again. The narration implies that Jaco

becomes mad and even desecrates the grave of his lover, wherefore he is committed to an asylum for three years. During this time, he is haunted by the ghost of Lilianna, but does not remember the night after he was informed about her death: “From his confinement at Fort England Mental Hospital, where he had been taken and sedated, he remembered nothing but a tangle of webs and was haunted by a vision of his son’s mother floating in grey-blue water, her black hair trailing behind her, her once beautiful white skin yellow with death” (AQOD 274). When Jaco is finally released from the asylum, he moves into the garden of Gershon and Rosa, plants various fruits and vegetables and places them at Rosa’s front door, assuming that his son will eat them. He does not know that Reuben grows up in an orphanage and does not dare to knock on Gershon’s and Rosa’s door: “He was afraid to find his lover’s face in the infant’s eyes. He was afraid to look at the quilt upon which he and Lilianna had lain. He thought he would knock on the door when he had the courage; when his heart had properly healed” (AQOD 175). After seven years of working through his experiences, Jaco, who still thinks that Reuben lives happily with his grandparents, leaves Grahamstown and moves to Johannesburg to make a new start.

Georgie also seems to suffer from post-traumatic symptoms originating in the violence and abuse of her husband. Especially during the first years after their marriage, Reuben frequently hits his wife and wounds her severely. In addition, he also transfers his aggressiveness onto their sexual life and more often than not, forces her to violent sexual intercourse:

They had a fearful argument and his hand had flown out, backwards, so the back of it had struck her and sent her sprawling. She had lain there, on the kitchen floor, crying on the tiles [...] When he bent to pick her up, he found himself burning with sexual energy, aroused, wanting her, wanting to claim her back as his own. He kissed her on the lips, licking her blood and tears and lipstick, forcing his tongue deep into her mouth. He led her upstairs, where he tore her clothes from her and they made love with a strange and new brutality, after which Georgie cried because they had entered a new territory, one terrifying and uncharted (AQOD 196/197).

Shortly after this incident, Georgie finds herself pregnant, but following another outburst of her husband, she loses the child she has so longed for, and never again conceives. Georgie develops a trauma from her husband’s abuse and continuously quietens down. She becomes permanently ill and suffers from neuralgia, asthma, headaches and depression. She stops smoking, drinking and flirting around and by contrast, turns towards religion. In addition, she abandons her friendships and completely isolates herself, never telling anyone about the domestic violence. After a few years, Georgie has lost all her friends, is often desolate or depressive and compensates her grief with eating too much. (AQOD 198)

At the edge of the narration, the novel portrays two further characters which also seem to suffer from the experience of trauma. On the one hand, there is Emmanuel Levy who works for the African Trading Company and regularly visits Rosa at kwaBelungu. He lives each of his days after the same habits and routine (AQOD 102/103) and thus seems to avoid any preoccupation with his past. After his death, it is revealed that he used to have a wife and two children in central Africa, but the novel never resolves what happened to them or why Emmanuel is no longer with them. It is only narrated that before he died, Emmanuel had collapsed, had soiled himself and had lost his ability to see. On the other hand, there is John Rix, of whom the novel tells that he used to have a wife and four boys on a farm nearby Queenstown, but that he unwittingly killed the four children. Afterwards “[t]aking nothing with him, he walked from the farm to Grahamstown [...] stamping his guilt and grief into the tar of the highways, and abandoning his old life completely” (AQOD 86). Gershon consequently employs him as nightwatchman for his shop, but he never requests what happened in his past “knowing that, whatever it was, John Rix would not be able to live if he faced what he had buried” (AQOD 86). In both cases, *A Quilt of Dreams* leaves black holes regarding both the biography and the trauma of the characters, but it is clearly indicated that both Emmanuel Levy and John Rix suffer from traumatic experiences.

All in all, the novel thus portrays a plurality of traumatised characters and in turn, their individual experiences symbolically represent South Africa’s collective experience of trauma resulting from colonialism and Apartheid. The end of the novel, however, suggests a positive outlook for both the characters and the future of South Africa. *A Quilt of Dreams* ceases in the year 1990. Frederik Willem de Klerk unbans the political opposition and releases most political prisoners including Vita’s father. The girl has finished the business of her family and, thereby, has simultaneously ended their bad luck. Reuben has come to terms with his past and leaves his racist wife to find out about his roots. The whole nation seems to head for a better future without racial segregation: “Our country is free now. We are like birds, my sweet one, like birds” (AQOD 345).

6.6. Themes, motifs and symbols related to trauma

6.6.1. The quilt

The novel *A Quilt of Dreams* is full of symbols and themes relating to the concept of trauma, and one of the most important motifs is the *quilt of dreams* itself. When Rosa weaves, stitches and sews this quilt for Lilianna, she continuously whispers her daughter’s name, so that “the quilt would become imbued with her love and longing” (AQOD 104). Thus, the quilt

symbolically represents this love and consequently becomes a transitional object for Reuben, in which he seeks comfort from his traumatic experiences:

He breathed in the smell of the old work and [...] tried to say something to his grandmother, who had sewn it, and his mother, who had lain on it [...] he placed his lips upon an embroidered lily and let his tears wash down until [...] its petals took life and reached out to touch his face. The fragrance of a woman's breath overwhelmed him and the tranquillity of love alighted upon his heart (AQOD 352).

What is more, however, the quilt, which grows organically (AQOD 105) like a human being symbolically represents humanity, and more precisely, the unity of various ethnicities rather than their separation. It is made of numerous cloths, all different in texture and colour, and all from disparate parts of the world. Emmanuel Levy gives these cloths to Rosa, explaining that each of them has its own history and identity. The individual fabrics thus represent different ethnicities and as Rosa sews them together, she symbolically joins them and makes them a whole. Thus, the quilt symbolises the unity of humanity and thereby stands in contrast to the policies of Apartheid and racial segregation: "Over the years, while the country's apartheid regime strengthened and its policies became more cruel and divisive, the quilt had slowly grown towards a harmony of types and unison of different colours" (AQOD 112). What is interesting is that the activities of sewing and stitching have a similar function as in *The Dreamcloth*, namely the joining and bringing together of distinct textures and colours, or by implication, of various ethnicities: "she sewed slowly, in small, delicate and precise stitches, joining together fabrics that had come from all corners of the earth, some ancient and some just old; all of them exquisite" (AQOD 55). At last, it is striking that Emmanuel Levy not only helps Rosa with the creation of the quilt, but that he bequeathes her precisely eleven fabrics after his death. It might be that these cloths again refer to the different ethnicities of South Africa as eleven languages are officially spoken in the country.

6.6.2. The bull

A Quilt of Dreams tells the story of three bulls: the one of Maqoma, who tries "to free him and to carry him back to the lands of his fathers" (AQOD 11), the one of the Boer Isaac, who is related to the first and whom Phathuxolo shall pay as the dowry for his bride, and lastly the one of Jaco, who carves it during his stay in Fort England hospital. These three bulls, however, function as one and the same motif in the novel and relate the past to the present of South Africa, precisely the year 1990 in the narration.

Maqoma's bull cannot finish his business, but is instead shot dead together with the Xhosa warrior and does not return to the main land of South Africa. In turn, this incident points towards the annexation of land by the European settlers during the time of colonialism and simultaneously to the repression of the indigenous people of the nation and their loss of land.

Phathuxolo similarly does not finish his business and, by implication, cannot get the favourite bull of the Boer Isaac and bring it in possession of the Xhosa people. Again, this circumstance indicates that the bull, which used to belong to South Africa and its native people, remains lost for the African population and is seized by the colonial powers of Europe. At last however, Vita manages to acquire Jaco's bull and thereby apparently finishes the business of her grandfather (Cf. AQOD 303) and by implication, the business of Maqoma's bull. When Reuben gives the bull to Vita, this is thus a symbolic act, which points towards closure, not only for the family, but for the nation of South Africa and its postcolonial trauma. Finally, after hundreds of years of colonialism, the bull returns to its "home" and this coming back symbolises the end of repression and segregation of the African people and the ultimate recapture of their land and their freedom.

As a motif in the novel, the bull connects the current population of South Africa, represented by the various characters, to its ancestors, namely Phathuxolo and also Maqoma in the narration. In other words, the bull symbolically relates the past to the present and thereby points towards the importance of the past for the present time, both with regard to the novel and to the actual reality of South Africa. In addition, the bull as a motif connects the stories of Reuben and Vita and consequently the fates of the white and the black people in South Africa.

6.6.3. Ghosts and survivors

A Quilt of Dreams integrates two more motifs, which are indicative of both trauma novels and postcolonial literature, and have already been discussed in the previous analysis.⁶²

The motif of ghosts and haunting is primarily used in relation to the story of Vita's family. As has been explained, Phathuxolo did not finish his business during his lifetime and could not find peace in death. Thus his spirit lives on in the following generations and haunts the family of Vita. Again, this motif points towards the continuing interference of the past with the present and illustrates that more often than not the past cannot simply be buried, but repeats itself in the present. In addition however, the motif of the ghost is also used in relation to Jaco, who is said to be "haunted by a vision of his son's mother" (AQOD 274) after her death. In this respect, Lilianna's pursuit of Jaco self-evidently indicates his trauma.

The theme of being a survivor on the other side also continues throughout the whole narration. Reuben survives Lilianna's abortion, Rosa is characterised as survivor (AQOD 72) and Gershon survives the Holocaust. In all cases, being a survivor is tied to the fact that others might not have survived and what is more, it is indicative of the experience of trauma. (Cf.

⁶² Cf. 4.2.6. and 5.5.

Caruth 1996: 58) Gershon, for example, survives the Kristallnacht in Dresden, but never again recovers from his imperative survivor's guilt: "He did not want to discuss the guilt he felt for having survived genocide. All these reservations made it impossible to indulge in small talk or laugh with ease" (AQOD 93).

6.6.4. Naming of the characters

It has been mentioned repeatedly that the characters' individual experiences in *A Quilt of Dreams* point towards the collective experience of South Africa's community. The names of the characters in the novel are thus by no means arbitrary, but indicate that they are role models for particular groups of human beings.

Gershon and Reuben, for example, are typical Jewish names and relate to the Hebrew Bible.⁶³ The surname Cohen, in addition, is one the most common family names of the Jewish community.⁶⁴ These two characters, in turn, represent this religious group, and what is more, they embody the collective Jewish trauma originating in the experience of the Holocaust and the Diaspora.⁶⁵ The difference between the two characters, however, is the scope of their experiences. While Gershon is a refugee of the Holocaust and identifies Apartheid as a system of political oppression, Reuben did not experience the persecution of the Jews directly. Thus he initially works for the oppressors of South Africa, and only at the end of the novel, changes sides and saves the black girl Vita.

The Dutch community in South Africa, by contrast, is represented by two very different characters. On the one hand, there is Jacobus van Tonder, who has both a Dutch forename and a Dutch surname⁶⁶, but is politically active for the blacks. Thus, it can be suggested that he represents the white population in South Africa who fought side by side with the Africans and formed the political opposition. On the other hand, Reuben's wife Georgina carries the prominent surname Botha, which is reminiscent of Pieter Willem Botha, State President and leader of the National Party during the Apartheid regime. Thus, she represents the European colonisers in South Africa, who were responsible for the oppression of the blacks and were characterised by their racist attitude: "She thought of black people as servants who had to be kept in their place and who stole your sugar and toilet rolls if you didn't look out. She took

⁶³ Cf. <http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/Gershon.html> (18.04.2011) and <http://www.learn-hebrew-names.com/Hebrew-Names-By-Letter-R-82.htm> (18.04.2011).

⁶⁴ Cf. <http://www.genealog.org/ENtexte/page15.html> (18.04.2011).

⁶⁵ Levy, the surname of Emmanuel, is another popular Jewish name. The novel leaves the reader in the dark about his past, but his name might suggest that he is too, a victim of the Holocaust.

⁶⁶ Cf. <http://www.ancestry.com/facts/Jacobus-name-meaning.ashx> (18.04.2011) and <http://www.family-crests.com/family-crest-coat-of-arms/surnames-7-7/dutch-surnames-family-crest.html> (18.04.2011).

not the slightest interest in her maid's life and knew nothing about her family, even though Gladness had been in her employ for many years" (AQOD 217).

At last, Vita's name is also particularly striking and meaningful. As her father explains, her name means "life" and thus forms a contrast to "death". (AQOD 346) Hence, it can be assumed that Vita symbolically represents hope in the novel. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that she finally raises her relatives' hopes for a better future as she finishes the bad luck of her family. Since Vita's family symbolically represents the African people during Apartheid⁶⁷, the girl's victory at the end of the novel points towards the end of bad luck for the whole African community in South Africa, and thus one could claim that the whole indigenous population is brought back to *life*.

7. FOOLISH DELUSIONS

7.1. Plot overview

Anne Schuster's novel auto/biography *Foolish Delusions* (2005) tells the stories of Maria Bertrand and her great-granddaughter Anna and basically deals with the topic of cross-generational female suffrage in South Africa.

In the nineteenth century, Maria is raised by her father in Cape Town, and from early childhood onwards, she is told not to answer back, but to obey the orders of her father. In adulthood, she meets the German Trangott and despite her homosexual inclinations, she marries him, secretly trusting that she may escape her father's oppression. Trangott, however, blasts her hopes and they remain in her father's house throughout their lifetime. After the death of Maria's father, Trangott converts the house into the Germania hotel, where Maria now needs to work hard from morning to night. At her husbands' request for a big family, she gives birth to six children and has two more miscarriages.

A regular guest at Germania hotel is Dr James Feather, an Englishman who works at Lock Hospital and lives with his daughters Dorothy and Hester. Maria tells him about the arrival of Mrs Emily Booth who emigrates to South Africa in the hope to work as a teacher, but does not get employed on the basis of her coloured complexion. Consequently, Emily soon becomes a prostitute at Cape Town's most prominent brothel, namely the Dock Road Hotel. Mrs Pfaff, a conservative feminist, hears about the young woman's fate and eventually helps her to get away from prostitution, but two years later, Emily's dead body is found at Queen's Beach in Sea Point. She is one of the many victims of "the Strangler", an unknown person who rapes and murders prostitutes from Dock Road Hotel.

⁶⁷ Cf. 6.5.4.

In the 1880s, Maria increasingly starts to rebel against Trangott and slowly escapes her oppression as a woman. She starts to engage in feminist activities and becomes one of the founding members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, an organisation fighting for the legal rights of women in South Africa. At the same time, Maria falls in love with Rebecca Melrose and the two women have a secret affair.

Trangott eventually finds out about their romance, furiously leaves the Germania hotel and returns only in the middle of the night. The next day, Rebecca is found dead at Queen's Beach. Trangott is initially under suspicion of the murder, but when his corpse is found at the hotel a few days later, Maria becomes the chief suspect. By this time, she has become mute and paralysed and cannot remember the day of her husband's death. When Maria gets a trial, she remains silent, is found mentally deranged and committed to the Valkenberg Asylum in Cape Town. Her roommate there is Dorothy Feather who was rescued from the sea and was put into the asylum two years before Maria. Dorothy continuously mumbles to herself, but the doctors at Valkenberg Asylum do not listen to her stutter. They also note that she suffers from "erotic hallucinations" (FD 60) with her father and generally describe her as being insane. Maria spends ten months at the asylum and remains paralysed and mute. Shortly before her death, her memory slowly comes back, but she does not manage to speak anymore and eventually dies in June 1894.

Maria's great-granddaughter Anna Bertrand spends her childhood and youth in Cape Town, but moves to Johannesburg during her adulthood. She works as a researcher for gender issues and women's rights and monitors the case of Ralph Sebastian, who has been accused to have killed the prostitute Isobel at Queen's Beach in Sea Point. Anna is restless and struggles to cope with her past and her inner self. She is a lesbian, but just like Maria, she hides her sexual inclinations for fear of not being accepted in her social and occupational environment.

In 2004, at the age of fifty-six, Anna decides to come to terms with herself and to discover her roots. She acquires a guidebook for the writing of autobiography, begins to narrate her story and simultaneously begins to research about the life of her great-grandmother. Bit by bit, she reconstructs her ancestor's life and finds out about the truth of Maria's past: Dr James Feather was "the Strangler" and killed not only Emily Booth and many other prostitutes, but also Rebecca Melrose and Maria's husband Trangott. In the night when Trangott found out about Maria's affair, Rebecca took a walk at Queen's Beach and was strangled by Dr Feather. Trangott, who wanted to confront Rebecca about the romance with his wife, witnessed this murder and thus James Feather killed him shortly afterwards. Dorothy Feather was raped by

her father for many years and witnessed the murder of Emily Booth. To prevent her from telling, Dr Feather certified her insane and she was committed to Valkenberg Asylum.

In the meantime, Ralph Sebastian is found guilty of Isobel's murder and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment. Anna visits Rebecca's gravestone after the trial and writes a letter to Maria, in which she explains that she must now say goodbye to her. During the past few weeks, in which Anna has researched about her ancestor's life, she felt increasingly connected to her great-grandmother and even heard Maria's voice within her. Thus, she has told her own story through that of Maria and has finally come to terms with her past.

The last scene of the novel describes that Anna and Nikki Cody, the prosecutor of Ralph Sebastian's case, have dinner at a restaurant at Valkenberg. In the end, Anna allows for intimacy with the other woman, as she has now found her inner self and can move on into the future.

7.2. Structure and form of the novel

7.2.1. Subdivision of the plot

On the one hand, the plot of *Foolish Delusions* can be subdivided into four major components, namely the journal entries of Maria, the writing of Anna, blueprints of historical documents and texts, and finally, copies from a guidebook for the writing of autobiography. On the other hand, the plot of the novel is subdivided into eight "circles", which refer to this last-mentioned guidebook and symbolically point towards the various stages in the healing process of trauma. The first circle, for example, is called "rootprints" and suggests that one needs to discover his or her roots in order to initiate the recovery from trauma. By contrast, the last two circles of the novel are termed "re-membering" and "letting go". They relate to the reclaiming of one's traumatic experiences and finally to the act of leaving these experiences behind in order to move on. The outer form of the novel, or the subdivision into eight circles, thus provides a promising outlook and suggests that recovery from traumatic experience is possible. (Cf. FD 11)

7.2.2. Form of the main plot

The main plot of the novel consists of the narration of two-story tellers, namely Maria and Anna. Thereby, the chapters written from Maria's perspective imitate the form of a diary or journal as they are preceded by a handwritten description of place and date, and are written in the first person singular point-of-view. They are dated from June 17 to June 30, 1894 and thus cover the last fortnight of Maria's life. As has already been explained in the analysis of *The*

Dreamcloth, the particular form of a diary adds an emotional and confessional tone to the narration and highlights the inner feelings and subjective perspective of a certain character. Since the writing of a diary may be a first attempt to reflect upon one's traumatic experiences, this particular form also relates to the healing of trauma.⁶⁸ However, what is especially striking in regard to the journal entries of Maria, is that their origin is apparently paradoxical. After Rebecca's murder, Maria becomes mute and paralysed. She stays in this condition until her death and thus she can neither have written nor dictated these entries.⁶⁹ In further consequence, this impossibility of the form of the novel is exemplary for the disruption of conventional narration and thus both typical for trauma literature and the postcolonial novel. (Cf. Whitehead 6; Granofsky 16/17)

The second main part of the plot is constituted by Anna's writing and varies both in its form and in its content. First of all, a great part of the narration is related to the blueprints of the guidebook, which display so called "lessons" and illustrate the meaning of the "circles". These blueprints also contain certain tasks such as "*Introduce yourself*" and Anna fulfils them in the hope that she may find a way tell her story: "My name is Anna Bertrand. I was born in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 11 December 1947, which makes me 56 years old. I came across this workbook – *Writing the Stories of Your Life* – in the Women's resource Centre, and decided to work through it, exercise by exercise" (FD 19). As has been mentioned, the circles and, by further consequence, the lessons of the guidebook point towards the healing of trauma. The writing of Anna, which mirrors the tasks of the guidebook, is thus characterised by her development and more precisely, by her post-traumatic growth. Lesson five, for example, is called "crossing borders" and describes that in order to tell one's story, writing must go "into the darkness, on the inside of oneself, away from the comfort and confines of organized thought" (FD 131). At the first attempt, Anna cannot fulfil this task, since her trauma prevents her from making "the leap into the dark, the unknown" and from going "beyond the boundaries" (FD 132) of herself. At the end of the novel, however, Anna achieves the crossing of her borders and can finally tell the story of her own self: "Last night [...] I wrote into the darkness, into the unknown and unknowing, the place of no defences, writing to touch the tender, bruised places in myself" (FD 193). Recapitulating, a large part of Anna's narration is thus related to the blueprints of the autobiography guideline book and simultaneously reflects upon her post-traumatic growth.

In the second place, Anna's writing includes letters, which are addressed to Maria. What is particularly striking about them is that they frequently contain extended passages of indirect

⁶⁸ Cf. 5.2.2.

⁶⁹ The paradoxical quality of Maria's narration will be further discussed in the following analysis. Cf. 7.3.

and interrogative speech, in which Anna prompts questions to Maria or imagines certain aspects of her great-grandmother's life. Since her assumptions are mostly affirmed in later parts of the narration, Anna's letters are fundamentally characterised by the narrative technique of foreshadowing.

Thirdly, Anna's writing involves several reports about the trial of Ralph Sebastian, which merely have a symbolic function. Sebastian is basically a copy of Dr James Feather or the Strangler, since he has also raped and murdered a prostitute at Queen's Beach in Sea Point. Whereas James Feather never needed to atone for his sins however, Ralph Sebastian is found guilty and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment. His verdict of guilt is thus a symbolical compensation for the fact that Feather got away with his crimes and it points towards closure. Finally, it has been mentioned that Anna's writing also varies in its form and more precisely, it alternates between prose and poetry. Since the genre of the novel is usually defined by the use of literary prose⁷⁰, the integration of poetry into the main narration of the plot is exemplary for the disruption of conventional narrative and thus reminiscent of trauma literature and the postcolonial novel. (Cf. Whitehead 6; Granofsky 16/17)

7.2.3. Mixing of fact and fiction

The genre of *Foolish Delusions* is specified in the paratext of the book, namely as "novel auto/biography". This designation already indicates that Anne Schuster's narration mixes historical facts with fictional elements and that the novel is thus an example of faction. First of all, certain characters of the novel are based on actual historical figures, for example Dorothy Feather and Dr Dodds, one of the doctors at Valkenberg asylum. Secondly, the trial of Ralph Sebastian is also grounded on a historical case, namely the one of Sebastian Fillis in 1999. Thirdly, the novel contains numerous historical documents, texts and other extracts from authentic sources⁷¹ and at last, the guidebook for the writing of autobiography is also based on several authentic sources, which can be found in the author's note. (Cf. FD 202/203) This historical character of the otherwise fictional plot emphasises the relation of the story to the actual reality in South Africa and adds a certain truth claim to the narration. What is important to note, however, is that truth not only consists of proved facts, but is rather ascertained by the consideration of both fiction and fact. Lesson four in the novel confirms this assumption as it is declared that "[w]hat matters it emotional truth, not factual or literal

⁷⁰ Cf. Baldick 234.

⁷¹ For example, extracts from the Lunacy Register, the case book and the patient records of Valkenberg Hospital, extracts from newsletters and minutes of meetings of the Women's Christian Temperance Union or an article from the Cape Times dated on March 20, 1889.

truth” (FD 93). What is implied by this statement is that Anne Schuster’s novel finally tells the truth of the past, precisely since it mixes historical facts with fictional imagination: “*Making things up and fact are two different things, but you may need some of both to get to the truth*” (Toni Morrison, quoted in FD 85).

7.2.4. Intertextuality

As has previously been mentioned, intertextuality is a frequent characteristic of trauma literature (Cf. Whitehead 84) and the historical documents and authentic sources in the novel are naturally examples of this phenomenon. Hereby, the most striking samples seem to be the blueprints from the autobiography guidebook, which form a sort of guideline towards the healing of trauma. Through the frequent integration of these lessons and the portrayal of Anna’s post-traumatic growth, the novel itself seems to function as a guidebook, which the reader of the novel may use to work through his or her own experiences.

In addition, the poem preceding the plot and the quotations preceding each circle of the story are also examples of intertextuality, and most of them relate to the experience of trauma. The poem, for instance, relates to the narration of trauma, since it stresses the need of an emphatic listener, who listens “in circles” and tries to make sense of one’s narration, even if it does not “move in straight lines” (FD 9). The importance of speaking about one’s traumatic experiences, on the other side, is highlighted by a quotation from Susan Griffin, which precedes the first circle of the novel and reads as follows: “*Perhaps we are like stones; our own history and the history of the world embedded in us, we hold a story deep within and cannot weep until that history is sung*” (FD 13).

7.3. Disruption of time, space and causality

Foolish Delusions is set in two different points of time, namely 1894 and 2004, in Cape Town, South Africa. As has been explained, the plot alternates between the narration of Maria and Anna and consequently tells the past and the present at precisely the same time. The temporal structure of the narrative is thus disrupted and mirrors the experience of trauma, whereby the past intrudes and interrupts the present. (Cf. Shepherd and Robins 224)

Similarly, places in the novel hold the past in the present and thus intertwine these levels of time and connect the characters living in different periods. When Anna visits Valkenberg asylum, for example, she explains the following: “I came here this morning because I want to be close to you, to feel what you felt on a cold winter morning in June. It is as if this building

still holds the memories, the presence, of the time you and Dorothy Feather shared a ward behind these windows” (FD 106).

In the course of the narrative, the stories of Maria and Anna progressively merge into each other. As a consequence, place and time in the novel seem to dissolve and at some point of the narration, Anna and Maria, who live three generations apart, even seem to meet each other at Café Royal. (Cf. FD 83/84 & 166) Their encounter, in turn, disrupts the causality and logical structure of the novel and is exemplary for the technique of magical realism, since the bizarre meeting of the women is simply integrated into the otherwise realistic plot. (Cf. Hawthorn 64) At the very end of the novel, time, space and causality ultimately dissolve, since Anna literally feels and hears Maria within her. What is more, the narration implies that Anna was even present during the last moments of her great-grandmother’s life:

[...] and the time and place that separates us – the skin between you and me – seemed to dissolve. I heard your voice and saw your words appearing on the page before me. I felt your breath in the rise and fall of my own breast. I have felt you, these past weeks, as a constant presence in my life. Perhaps, too, that particular winter so many years ago, I was in the margins of your dying life, waiting to gather the fragments as you let them fall. That last night, in Valkenberg, during a moment that seemed to be a crack in the night, it may be that I drew your last breath with you, and have held it, suspended, until now (FD 193/194).

Since this quotation implies that Anna accompanies Maria in her dying days and records the last fragments of her memories, the previously made statement that Maria’s narration is paradoxical due to her muteness and paralysis, can be qualified. Instead, this passage alludes to the fact that Anna narrates the story of her great-grandmother and that even the chapters written from Maria’s perspective are created by the character Anna. One might even go so far as to assume that the name Anna is another version of Anne and that it is indeed the author of the novel who acts as narrator of the story. The designation of the book as “novel auto/biography” suits this interpretation, since it may be the author herself who narrates the novel, and thereby, writes her own autobiography and the biography of her ancestors. In addition, the inscription preceding the novel and the description of her family tree (FD 21) reveal that Anne Schuster’s great-grandmother was also called Maria and thus strengthen the assumption that the author is simultaneously the narrator of the story.

In any case, time, space and causality in the novel are fundamentally disrupted so that past and present intertwine. Furthermore, the novel frequently points towards the future and comprises the literary techniques of foreshadowing and allusion. In this respect, it has already been mentioned that Anna’s letters contain large passages of foreshadowing, as she makes numerous assumptions about Maria’s life, which are mostly affirmed in later parts of the narration. The following extract from Anna’s writing, for instance, foreshadows to Rebecca’s murder:

Perhaps that is what happened to Rebecca. Is that how she died? Had she been to a Women's Union meeting in Sea Point? And had you hoped to slip out after dinner to catch the end of the meeting and see her? And did Trangott go out himself, leaving you to see to the after-dinner coffee, whisky and cigars in the lounge? Did Rebecca wait a while for you, and then decide to go down to Queens Beach? She was restless, perhaps she wanted to walk in the night air and be alone. She stood holding onto the railing [...] She was thinking of you, wanting to be with you [...] Then perhaps, she walked down the steps onto the beach. In the darkness she felt an arm around her throat. [...] He put both his hands around her throat and squeezed until the night fell silent once more (FD 180/181).

Another illustrative example of foreshadowing can be found in the last journal entry of Maria as she states that James Feather visited her trial and “there was something I seemed to remember about him [...] But my mind was sluggish and my memory was like a dammed-up river” (FD 189). This statement alludes to the fact that James Feather was the murderer of Trangott and that Maria witnessed the murder, but this part of the story is only narrated in the following circle of the novel. The narrative technique of foreshadowing thus produces gaps in the narration, which simultaneously disrupt the causality of the novel.

7.4. Point of view

The main plot of *Foolish Delusions* is told from a first person singular point-of-view and alternates between the narrations of Maria and Anna. This narrative mode allows for a particular personal and intimate form of narration, which reveals the most inner thoughts and feelings of the characters. What is extremely striking however, is that the narrative mode changes on the last two pages of the novel and shifts from a first person to a third person point-of-view so that Anna is no longer the narrator, but becomes the protagonist of the story. A possible interpretation of this shifting point-of-view is that Anna manages to work through her trauma, regains control over her life and herself and eventually takes the leading role in her own story. The shift in the narrative mode of the novel thus points towards Anna's post-traumatic growth and the closure of her traumatic experiences.

7.5. Tone

Some aspects of narrative style, such as interrogation and indirect speech⁷², have already been mentioned in the previous analysis. Another important aspect of narrative style in the novel is the tone of the narration. On the one hand, it has been explained that the tone of *Foolish Delusions* is in general very intimate and personal as it is written from the first person singular point-of view of the two narrators, Maria and Anna. On the other hand, however, the tone of the novel can also be described as dark or sombre. The narration of Maria in particular is strongly characterised by its sinister tone as she often describes her agonising stay in

⁷² Mostly in Anna's letters, cf. 7.7.2. and 7.3.

Valkenberg Asylum: “The *night* is an *empty* corridor echoing with the murmurs of *ghosts*. I lie in the *dark*, willing *death* to close over me like a *shroud*. Beyond this moment is *nothing*, *no hope*, *no possibility* of trying again, no reversing what has happened. *I long for oblivion*. *I ache for release* from this *frozen body*, freedom from this *cold* place, and from the *chill* of these memories [Emphasis added]” (FD 63). The dark tone in the novel, in turn, allows for the narration of cruel, horrible and painful events and is thus used as a means to convey the experience of trauma.

7.6. Trauma and the characters

7.6.1. Female trauma

The main subject of *Foolish Delusions* is transgenerational female trauma, originating in various experiences of oppression and violence, which have not been given voice to. Since the days of colonialism in South Africa, women have mostly been subordinated to men and experienced suppression in a number of forms. They were confined to household duties and the raising of their children and often needed to work hard and cater for their men. At the same time, they did not have a say in the political or economic life of society, but were expected to remain silent and show obedience to their husbands. In addition, many women in colonial days and afterwards, became victims of various forms of violence, including domestic abuse, rape or even murder. More often than not, however, these atrocities and the resulting traumata of many women have not been acknowledged or spoken about, but were instead ignored, silenced or dismissed as ‘foolish delusions’. As a consequence, these traumata were transferred onto the next generations and resulted in cross-generational female suffering lasting until today.

The characters Maria and Dorothy can be regarded as such victims of female trauma and symbolically represent the entirety of women suffering in the days of colonialism and afterwards. Their individual experiences thus point towards the collective and consequently, to hundreds of thousands of other women who have been repressed and discounted because of their sex: “Shadows flicker on the wall behind the bed, like the shadows in the candlelight of my memory. The shadows of women who walked at night in fear. Shadows of children afraid of their fathers. Shadows of women working, always working” (FD 153). Both Maria and Dorothy, however, do not manage to work through their experiences, but instead, they transfer their traumata onto the following generations, so that Anna, for example, inherits the trauma of her great-grandmother Maria. Again, Anna’s experience symbolically points towards the collective and thus she represents the present-day generation of women in South

Africa who are still haunted by the experiences of their ancestors: “Blink your eyes and see me, blink your eyes and see my mother, blink your eyes and see her mother” (FD 50).

Anna, however, decides to step off this path of female oppression and aims to re-gain control over her own life. She determines to write her autobiography in order to discover her own and her ancestors’ past, and to give voice and work through her own traumatic experiences and those of her great-grandmother Maria. Since the novel is addressed to “all women and our foolish ‘delusions’ [...]” (FD 7), it can be assumed that the narration shall function as an appeal to all women in South Africa, asking them to come to terms with the oppression of females happening in the past and continuing in the present time. In the end, there are still too many stories of suffering women, which have not yet been told, but need to be given voice, so that South Africa can make a new start into the future.

7.6.2. Maria

Maria’s trauma is manifold and comprises at least two important components. First of all, it has already been explained that Maria is a victim of patriarchal and male oppression since she needs to show obedience to her father and her husband at all times. In her childhood, she is sent to a private school in order to learn “all things [...] a young lady need[s] to marry a rich professional man and fulfil the social duties required of a wife” (FD 38/39). Although her education is thus restricted to the acquisition of ‘female duties’, Maria enjoys the time outside her home since she can escape her father’s oppression for some hours. Despite her pleading to let her stay, she is taken out of school at the age of thirteen and from now on, needs to support her father at his work: “If your father has decided, there’s nothing you can do. [...] You are lucky to have a father who will keep you till you get married” (FD 40). At first, Maria does not want to get married at all, but when she meets Trangott, she figures that he might bring her away from her father and allow her some more freedom. She agrees to marry him and at his request, gives birth to six children. Soon however, she must realise that Trangott represses her no less than her father: “I suppose I thought he would allow me a kind of freedom. But his freedom was only for himself, an adventure only for men” (FD 63). Maria and Trangott stay in the house of her father throughout their lifetime, and especially when Trangott decides to run the Germania hotel, Maria needs to work hard from morning to night.

In the second place, Maria’s trauma can be traced back to Rebecca’s and Trangott’s murder and realises itself in the numbing of her body. On the day after Trangott has gained knowledge of the secret love affair between the two women, Rebecca’s dead body is found on Queen’s Beach in Sea Point. Her brother Neville eventually informs Maria about her death

and as a consequence, she is traumatised and rendered speechless. Maria is overwhelmed by the loss of her most beloved and from now on never utters a word again: “There was nothing to say, nothing that could be said” (FD 182). When she finally witnesses the murder of her husband, this incident adds to her trauma and leads to the permanent paralysis of her body: “[...] I could not move. Then the stiffness moved down my arm and through my whole body, and I fell down” (FD 188).

Maria’s trauma realises itself in a number of bodily and mentally symptoms. For example, she experiences a loss of memory and especially during the beginning of her stay in the asylum, she does not remember the murder of Trangott: “But did I kill Trangott? Why can I not remember? [...] Could I, would I, have plunged the knife into his flesh? And am I condemned to lie here each night, unable to sleep, unable to die, until I remember?” (FD 17) As a consequence of her loss of memory, Maria develops a sense of inner numbness and initially feels neither her sorrow nor her pain. Only towards the end of her life, her memories slowly come back and she is haunted and tormented by repetitive nightmares and flashbacks about her past: “It is only now that the pictures have started appearing in my memory. For a long time [...] my mind was as numb as my body. I felt and remembered nothing” (FD 23). Maria is one of many women in Valkenberg Asylum, who are restless, harassed by their painful memories and cannot sleep, but only wish to die. (Cf. FD 15-17) Most importantly, Maria’s muteness and paralysis point to her traumatising and emphasise the relation between trauma and the body. It has often been argued that trauma is fundamentally unspeakable and the character Maria seems to embody this assumption as she is trapped in her body and can neither move nor speak. Consequently, she cannot tell her story and work through her traumatic experiences. Maria does not recover anymore and as she remains unheard, her trauma is transferred onto her great-granddaughter, Anna.

7.6.3. Dorothy

Dorothy is another victim of patriarchal and male oppression. She originally comes from England, but emigrates to South Africa at an early age, together with her parents and her sister Hester. Her father James Feather oppresses the women in his family and rapes his daughters. From childhood on, Dorothy thus develops trauma, grows fearful and mumbles unintelligible words to herself: “[...] Dorothy grew even more anxious. Most of the time she would not look at anyone and seemed afraid to be looked at or touched. At other times, she would attach herself to someone and jabber away compulsively and incomprehensibly” (FD 55). Dorothy’s father is the Strangler who kills the prostitutes at Queen’s Beach, including Emily Booth.

Since Dorothy becomes a witness of this murder, she undergoes another traumatic experience. To prevent her from telling, Dr James Feather certifies her insane and she is committed to Valkenberg Asylum.

While her later roommate Maria remains mute after Rebecca's death and cannot tell her story, Dorothy tries to give voice to her traumatic experiences and speaks continuously. Thus, it can be assumed that the two women symbolically represent the central dialectic of trauma, which is the paradox between its unspeakability and the need to narrate one's traumatic experiences nonetheless. Dorothy's speech is thereby reminiscent of the initial narration of trauma, as it is fragmented and incomprehensible to others: "She's whimpering and muttering. It is as if something upsetting comes into her mind and she has to chatter it out, talking in fast, broken sentences, at times repeating the same phrase over and over. [...] '... water ... drowning ... blood ... can't run ... no feet ... water ... blood ... water ...' [...]" (FD 53/54).

Despite her attempts to narrate her story, Dorothy's voice remains unheard. The doctors and nurses regard her as paranoid and insane and thus, they silence and ignore her or dismiss her utterances as "foolish delusions" (FD 150/151). Dorothy remains in the asylum for fifty-three years and during this time, her condition deteriorates continuously. She becomes numb, is progressively haunted by her flashbacks and nightmares and loses her orientation. Her trauma ultimately leads to the loss of herself and any sense of time or place. Towards the end of her life, Dorothy falls silent and abandons the hope to tell her story: "The entries describe her slow disintegration from the incessant talking and excitability and 'mania' of the first years, to the 'senile dementia' of her final years when she simply sat staring at her hands, not knowing who or where she was" (FD 61). After fifty-three years, Dorothy dies in the asylum and her story remains unheard.

7.6.4. Anna

Anna inherits the trauma of her great-grandmother Maria, which has its origin in the oppression of women and reveals itself in Anna's shattered identity. She is restless, avoids intimate relationships to others, hides her inner emotions, and most importantly, she is insecure about her own self: "I was never at home in any of the identities I was trying out" (FD 74). At the age of fifty-six, Anna decides to come to terms with her past in order to find to herself. She uses a guidebook for autobiography and explores her own story, but simultaneously she comes across her great-grandmother's past, and since she inherits the trauma of Maria, she soon feels connected to her: "You suddenly seemed very real to me, as if you were breathing beside me, inside me" (FD 41). By discovering the life of her ancestor,

Anna finds out that the origin of her trauma is female suffering and that this pain is enabled by the passivity of women. She realises that Maria resigned herself to her fate of oppression, that her mother allowed her husband to oppress her and that she herself suffers from female passivity. Anna tells how she did not assert herself in her childhood and youth, but instead, how she permitted men to oppress her. She realises that this cycle of female passivity and oppression will not cease, until she takes control over her own life and frees herself from inactivity and surrender. (Cf. FD 172/173)

One day, Anna visits Queen's Beach in Sea Point to examine the place of Isobel's murder and there, she is soon attacked by Ralph Sebastian. At first, she is paralysed by her fears and does not manage to fight back, but then she suddenly finds to herself again. Anna steps out of her passivity, actively reacts against Sebastian and prevents the rapist to overpower her: "I am paralysed with fear. [...] A passivity that starts in my belly. [...] then it spreads throughout my body, up into my throat, choking my voice [...] and into my brain [...] Suddenly I seem to connect with myself, find my energy. This time I hear my angry shout. Furiously, I push him off. Kick out at him [...] kick as hard as I can" (FD 174/175).

Anna progressively takes control over her life and as she starts to make sense of her own and her great-grandmother's past, she undergoes post-traumatic growth. She hears Maria's voice within her and tells about the suffering, of which her ancestor could not speak herself. By giving voice to Maria's traumatic experiences, she achieves closure and enables her great-grandmother's soul to finally win peace. At the same time, she tells her own story through that of Maria and slowly discovers the truth about herself. At the end of the narration, she decides to let go of her great-grandmother's story and to concentrate on her own healing: "In discovering your story, I have restored parts of myself that have been scattered, hidden, and forbidden. But to reclaim my own story, I now must let you go. We are near the end of our telling, Maria. The fragments of our stories merge – your story has become mine, my truth yours" (FD 199). By the end of the novel, Anna has worked through her past and has grown as a person. She no longer hides her feelings and her sexual inclinations, opens up and even allows for intimacy with another person, namely Nikki Cody.

7.7. Themes, motifs and symbols related to trauma

Anne Schuster's *Foolish Delusions* incorporates a great number of motifs, themes and symbols which are related to the concept of trauma. Many of these have already been discussed in the previous analyses on *The Dreamcloth* and *A Quilt of Dreams*, as for instance, transgenerational trauma or the restoration of the self by the exploration of one's past. In

addition, the themes of rape, murder, violence and incest in the novel relate to the experience of trauma and, more precisely, to the suffering of women in South Africa during and after the days of colonialism. The motifs of ghosts and haunting are also used in this narration and again symbolise how the past haunts the present and how the present-day society is influenced by the past of its ancestors. (Cf. Whitehead 6 & 14) Furthermore, differences between people from various ethnicities and racial segregation play a role in the novel and are mentioned in-between the main narration of the plot. For instance, Maria tells that her coloured cousins “learned skills suited to their station in life, things like cooking and sewing. Preparing to be servants [...]” (FD 39). Another example is set by Mrs Pfaff, who champions for the security of Christian women and helps them to get out of prostitution, but at the same time believes that “the worst aspect of prostitution in Cape Town was that ‘white women go with native or coloured men’. [...]” (FD 116).

A prominent motif of the novel is established by nightmares and dreams. On the one hand, Maria narrates how she and the other women in the asylum are haunted by their sleeplessness and the self-repetition of their traumatic past. On the other hand, however, Anna frequently has dreams, which are highly symbolical and relate to the shattering of her inner self:

Another ‘lost’ dream. [...] I don’t know the way, no map, no directions. [...] I can’t seem to find my voice. [...] I glance down at my body [...] and see that I am naked. [...] I look pregnant. [...] Am I invisible? [...] I tell myself I am lucky – now that I am invisible – because no one will see that I am naked. But somehow it feels worse to be invisible. How can I find my way if I am invisible? (FD 95-97)

This dream, which is narrated halfway through the novel, mirrors the trauma of Anna and relates to the struggle of finding her inner self. Her speechlessness in the dream naturally points to the unspeakability of her suffering, while her nakedness and her invisibility allude to her fear of vulnerability and the hiding of her inner self.⁷³ At last, pregnancy in dreams indicates that an aspect of oneself is growing, but that oneself is simultaneously worried about one’s development.⁷⁴ Thus, Anna’s pregnancy in the dream relates to her post-traumatic growth, but also to her fears about going into the darkness of herself. It is striking and highly symbolical that this dream is told around the middle of the novel and at a point of time at which Anna has not yet restored herself but is on her way to recovery.

Symbolism is also important in regard to Anna’s achievement of closure in the novel. On the one hand, she visits Rebecca’s grave in order to say good-bye in place of Maria and this visit

⁷³For information about nakedness and invisibility in dreams, compare for example: <http://www.dreammoods.com/cgi-bin/nakeddreams.pl?method=exact&header=dreamid&search=nakedintro> and <http://www.dreamsleep.net/invisible-dream.html> (18.04.2011).

⁷⁴For information about pregnancy in dreams, compare for example: http://www.whispy.com/dream_dictionary/symbols_p/dreams_about_being_pregnant_pregnancy_dreams.htm, <http://www.dreamsleep.net/dreamsaboutbeingpregnant.html> (18.04.2011).

indicates that she finishes the business of her great-grandmother and that Maria's soul can finally rest in peace. On the other hand, Ralph Sebastian's trial is highly symbolical and his verdict of guilt compensates for James Feather's escape. Only after both of these unpaid debts are paid, Anna can let go of Maria's ghost and concentrate on her own story.

In addition, it is striking that Anna begins to narrate Maria's story at the age of fifty-six, which is also the age of Maria by the time of her death. This relation symbolically points towards the fact that Anna hears Maria's voice within her and continues her narration after she has died.

Finally, the motif of sewing and stitching is also incorporated into the novel and seems to have a similar meaning as in *The Dreamcloth* and *A Quilt of Dreams*, namely the joining or mending of something. Dorothy however, has "no thread" and cannot sew anything together: "Dorothy has her needlework on her lap, but she doesn't seem to be sewing. Just sticking the needle in and pulling it out. No thread" (FD 53). Symbolically speaking, Dorothy tries to bring together the memories of her past, so that she can finally narrate her story. Without a thread, however, she does not manage to join them and thus, she cannot make sense of her past and put her trauma into words.

8. Conclusion

The previous analysis has shown that trauma is an important concept in the contemporary South African novel and basically realises itself in the disruption of conventional narration. Thus, the fundamental narrative categories of time, space, causality and narrative mode are challenged on any number of occasions. Characters in the novel often show symptoms of trauma and themes, symbols and motifs frequently relate to traumatic experiences. In addition, intertextuality and multilingualism are prominent features of the contemporary South African novel and reflect upon the events during colonialism and Apartheid. All these characteristics, in turn, relate the South African novel to other examples of postcolonial and trauma literature and thus highlight the postcolonial and traumatic identity of these narratives. As a consequence, the concept of trauma is an effective means by which postcolonial literature in general and the South African novel in particular can be analysed, but it is also important to note that trauma is certainly not the only crucial aspect of this literature. By contrast, the South African novel comprises numerous other features and characteristics, which make it both interesting and worthwhile to read. Similarly, the South African novel is of course highly characterised by its postcolonial identity, but reducing all South African novels exclusively to the category of postcolonial literature bears the risk that these novels will remain in the shadow of “non-postcolonial” literature, such as European, British or American novels. In summary, it can be stated that whereas it is important and fruitful to examine the contemporary South African novel in the context of postcolonial and trauma literature, an excessive reduction to these types of novels risks an underestimation and devaluation of the genre and neglects the literary and narrative excellence of South Africa’s literature.

Besides these considerations, however, trauma is certainly a widely used concept in the South African novel and its integration can be traced back to the fact that the novelists try to come to terms with the country’s past. In other words, the frequent incorporation of trauma into the narrative structure of the novels serves to work through the traumatic experiences of the South African nation and to give voice to those stories which have not yet been told. Literature is a means by which traumatic memory can be transformed into narrative memory and thus has a potential healing function both for the South African community and its respective members. The reprocessing of the individual and collective traumata of South Africa may therefore enable the readers of the novels to come to terms with their own traumatic experiences. On the other side, the contemporary South African novel is not only addressed to the country’s own community, but also to societies outside this nation and thus serves to communicate

South Africa's suffering to other individuals and cultural groups. The frequent reference to trauma into the novels, thereby, points to the fact there is still a great need to speak about the traumatic experiences of the past, both within the South African nation and in the international discourse.

As a result, research on the contemporary South African novel and other examples of postcolonial literature is a crucial activity which makes possible that the stories of trauma are not only told, but also heard by others. Thereby, readers of the novels who do not come from a postcolonial background or have not experienced trauma, function as empathic listeners who acknowledge South Africa's traumatising and listen to the unspoken stories.

In addition, the study of the South African novel and other postcolonial literature serves to end the dominance of European, American and British literature in the international discourse. Up to the present day, African novels have mostly been neglected in the study of English literatures and are instead, overshadowed by non-postcolonial novels. This condition, however, bears a resemblance to the events during colonialism and Apartheid, since the Europeans dominated and held a superior position to the Africans. This supremacy must now come to an end, both in the political and the literary discourse, so that equality among distinct cultures can finally be established. In turn, this equal status of different cultures and literatures even enables the recovery from the trauma of segregation in the first place. The fundamental aim of the present thesis was thus to give voice to unexplored stories, which need to be told in order to enable the healing of South Africa's people.

Another point is that the study of postcolonial literature and the South African novel opens up new possibilities to learn about history. Since these novels are mostly riddled with historical and political events, one can gain numerous insights and perspectives on the past of the nation. By reading postcolonial literature, one discovers history and may learn from the atrocities and inequalities of the past.

What is also important to note with regard to South Africa is the fact that emphasis must be placed on collective and transgenerational trauma. Down to the present day, trauma theory has mostly dealt with the concept of individual trauma, but since colonialism and Apartheid were primarily collective experiences and comprised mass suppression and structural violence, the examination of the South African novel must necessarily take account of the communal trauma of the nation. Moreover, trauma may also be transferred onto the following generations, so that even the younger population of present-day South Africa may be traumatised by the events of the past. Transgenerational or cross-generational trauma is thus

another important concept which needs to be taken into account in the analysis of the contemporary South African novel.

Concerning the future of the genre, it can be stated that the country's literature is still in development and can be expected to generate new and different forms from the ones being analysed in this thesis. South Africa itself is in transition and new writers from different ethnicities may potentially change or widen the characteristic elements of this literature. Thus, it is important to continue the research and give voice to the contemporary South African novel, so that the nation can finally come to terms with the past and look optimistically into its future.

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10. APPENDIX

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10.2. Abstract

The present thesis examines the use and function of the concept of trauma in the narrative structure of the contemporary South African novel. Hereby, the basic assumption is that the events during colonialism and Apartheid resulted in a collective trauma of the South African nation, so that both the country's community and its individual members suffer from various traumata. In turn, these traumata are processed in the literature of the nation. Trauma is thus a widely used concept in many contemporary South African novels and fundamentally determines the narrative structure of these narrations. To give an example, the temporal structure of the South African novel frequently imitates the experience of trauma which is characterised by the intrusion of the past in the present time. This phenomenon is transferred into the temporal structure of the narrative in so far as the past and the present are often told at precisely the same time. Another example is that the thematic structure of the novel often relates to the experience of trauma and consequently to the events during colonialism and Apartheid. Themes such as relocation and emigration, various forms of violence, exile and homecoming and the loss of a beloved person or one's own personal and communal identity are consequently very common in the South African novel.

Since history and politics can thus not be separated from this literary genre, the present thesis opens with an overview on the historical and political events in South Africa, beginning with the first settlements of European colonial powers in 1652 until the present day. To provide a basic knowledge of the concept of trauma, the thesis subsequently examines the characteristics and consequences of individual, collective and transgenerational trauma and connects these features with the present condition of the South African state. Afterwards, the thesis investigates the possibility of recovery from trauma and relates this aspect with the healing potential of narration. Thereby, it is assumed that the narration of trauma may lead to the reclaiming of one's experiences and thus initiate the recovery of the traumatised person or group. To provide insight into the present literary production of South Africa, the thesis continues with an overview on the most crucial characteristics of the contemporary South African novel and thereby highlights the relations between these novels, trauma narration and other examples of postcolonial literature.

Afterwards, the practical part of this thesis investigates three contemporary South African novels and concentrates on their narrative structures in association with the concept of trauma. The novels examined in this thesis are *The Dreamcloth* by Joanne Fedler, *A Quilt of Dreams* by Patricia Schonstein and *Foolish Delusions* by Anne Schuster.

10.3. Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht die Verarbeitung und Funktion des psychologischen Konzepts ‚Trauma‘ in der Erzählstruktur des zeitgenössischen südafrikanischen Romans. Hierbei wird zunächst von der These ausgegangen, dass die historischen und politischen Ereignisse während der Kolonialzeit und der Epoche der Apartheid zu einem kollektiven Trauma Südafrikas geführt haben, sodass heute sowohl die südafrikanische Gesellschaft als auch ihre einzelnen Mitglieder an unterschiedlichen Formen von Trauma leiden. Außerdem wird angenommen, dass diese Traumata weitgehend in der südafrikanischen Literatur verarbeitet werden. Trauma ist daher ein häufig gebrauchtes Konzept in den zeitgenössischen Romanen und bestimmt oftmals ihre Erzählstruktur. Beispielsweise imitiert die Zeitstruktur dieser Romane oftmals das Erleben eines Traumas, welches sich unter anderem dadurch auszeichnet, dass das jeweilige Opfer auch in der Gegenwart immer wieder von seiner oder ihrer Vergangenheit eingeholt wird. Dieses Phänomen wird schließlich insofern in die Zeitstruktur des Romans überführt, als dass Vergangenheit und Gegenwart oft gleichzeitig erzählt werden. Des Weiteren wird die Verarbeitung von Trauma häufig in der thematischen Struktur der Romane deutlich, da diese immer wieder auf das Erleben von Trauma und folglich auf die Geschehnisse während der Kolonialzeit und dem politischen System der Apartheid verweisen. Themenfelder wie Umsiedelung, Ein- und Auswanderung, Exil und Heimkehr, Gewalt in unterschiedlichsten Formen und der Verlust einer geliebten Person oder der eigenen persönlichen und sozialen Identität sind daher typisch für den südafrikanischen Roman.

Da diese Form der Literatur also nicht vom politischen und historischen Hintergrund des Landes getrennt werden kann, gibt diese Arbeit zunächst einen Überblick über die Geschichte Südafrikas, und zwar beginnend mit den ersten Siedlungen der europäischen Kolonialmächte im Jahr 1652 bis hin zur heutigen Gegenwart. Um schließlich eine genauere Vorstellung vom Begriff ‚Trauma‘ zu bekommen, wird dieses psychologische Konzept anschließend eingehend untersucht. Hierbei werden anfangs die wichtigsten Merkmale und Konsequenzen von individuellem, kollektivem und generationsübergreifendem Trauma bestimmt und in Verbindung mit der gegenwärtigen Situation Südafrikas gebracht. In der weiteren Analyse wird der Schwerpunkt schließlich auf die Heilung von Trauma gelegt, wobei der Genesungsprozess in Zusammenhang mit der Erzählung von Trauma gestellt wird. Hierbei wird also davon ausgegangen, dass die Erzählung eines traumatischen Erlebnisses dazu führen kann, dass das jeweilige Opfer oder die Opfergruppe die Kontrolle über seine oder ihre Vergangenheit zurückerlangt und so potentiell eine Heilung oder Genesung des Traumas

erwirken kann. Anschließend widmet sich diese Arbeit der genaueren Untersuchung der südafrikanischen Literatur und konzentriert sich hierbei auf jene Merkmale des zeitgenössischen Romans, welche im Zusammenhang mit dem Konzept Trauma stehen. Da ein Großteil dieser Charakteristika jedoch nicht nur in der Literatur Südafrikas vorkommt, sondern auch häufig in anderen Werken postkolonialer oder sogenannter Trauma-Literatur vorzufinden ist, werden die Gemeinsamkeiten des zeitgenössischen südafrikanischen Romans mit diesen letztgenannten Gattungen der Literatur besonders hervorgehoben.

Der praktische Teil dieser Arbeit widmet sich schließlich der Analyse dreier zeitgenössischer Romane und untersucht hierbei inwiefern das Konzept Trauma in deren Erzählstrukturen verarbeitet ist. Die hier behandelten Romane sind *The Dreamcloth* von Joanne Fedler, *A Quilt of Dreams* von Patricia Schonstein und *Foolish Delusions* von Anne Schuster.

10.4. Curriculum Vitae

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