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in the Contemporary South African Novel“

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1. Introduction

The various forms and psychological and social consequences of rape have been subject to a great amount of research. However, it is hardly ever discussed what happens if the rape results in pregnancy. Will the mother be able to love the product of rape? In how far does the mother's trauma affect the child's well being? What does it mean to be raised by a deeply traumatised mother? Will the child inevitably become another victim of traumatisation? Will it be stigmatised because of the mother's victimhood? The aim of the first chapter is to deal with this set of questions and to give an insight into deviant maternal behaviour and children's reactions. First of all, it is important to understand the severe consequences of trauma through rape in order to analyse the maternal behaviour of rape victims. The next step consists of examining the mother-child-relationship and the resultant implications for the well-being and development of the child.

The second chapter is related to the specific situation of children of rape in South Africa. What is remarkable about this country is the clash of two different ethnic groupings which differ not only in language, culture, and norms, but also in appearance. It can be assumed that the subjugation of the native inhabitants through the European colonisers was the starting point of the long and painful racial history of the country. The introduction of the complete segregation of the country's ethnicities during apartheid signifies the perpetuation of violence and hostility until this very day, in spite of the transition to a democracy and the establishment of equality between black and white citizens. A short overview of the country's history is presented in order to point out the connection between the violence committed in the past and the high rates of crime measured in the present. Due to the seemingly never-ending ethnic conflicts, it can be assumed, that a certain percentage of children of rape are of mixed colour. Therefore, the emergence and situation of so-called 'coloureds' in South Africa is discussed.

Various South African writers have dedicated their novels to the problematic nature of rape and its outcomes. J.M. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* serves as a basis for discussion of a set of relevant issues: the conception of a child through rape, the mother's trauma, racism in contemporary South Africa, the traumatic past of the country, the continuation

of violence and crime, and the attempt of reconciliation. The practical part deals with *What Kind of Child* by Ken Barris, *Bitter Fruit* by Achmat Dangor, *The Madonna of Excelsior* by Zakes Mda, and *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* by Rachel Zadok. All four novels that are subjected to analysis were published after apartheid and deal with rape as a consequence of the rigid political system. Some of them present quite explicit rewritings of *Disgrace*, posing a challenge to the idea of reconciliation. Naturally, it is crucial to keep the political background in mind; nevertheless, the focus of the analyses is on the personal situations of the children of rape. First of all, the relationship and the patterns of interaction between mother and child are looked at. It is crucial to see to what extent the maternal behaviour influences the child's well-being in order to be able to draw a link between the childhood and the later ability to come to terms with the past of the child of rape. It is questionable if the child is able to develop into a mentally healthy person or if he/she is metaphorically stuck in a vicious circle of depression, self-doubt, and lack of direction. Does the character try to cope with his or her anxieties or is suppression of the traumatic experiences the only viable solution? Finally, the endings of the novels are analysed and the possibility of long-term recovery is examined. Does the author suggest that the trauma transferred from mother to child can be overcome? What factors come into play when the traumatised person is able to come to terms with his/her past? Although the child's character is the center of attention, it is mandatory to pay attention to the attitude towards reconciliation between black and white characters in the novels, since the conflicts between the ethnicities, the high rates of rape, and the resultant emergence of children of rape are related to each other.

2. Traumatized mothers – traumatized children

2.1. Trauma and rape

In order to understand the personal crisis children of rape are faced with, it is essential to briefly discuss the tragic situation the mothers are placed in and to look at the far-reaching consequences they have to struggle with. Rape is a serious crime which can happen to both women and men and can affect persons of all age groups. However, since the victims in the novels I analyse are exclusively female, I will particularly focus on the phenomenon of men raping women. Therefore victims will be generally referred to as “she”.

Brownmiller defines rape as “[a] sexual invasion of the body by force, an incursion to the private, personal inner space without consent – in short, an internal assault from one of several avenues and by one of several methods – [...] a deliberate violation of emotional, physical and rational integrity and [...] a hostile, degrading act of violence”¹. If a man violently penetrates a woman’s body, he will certainly inflict physical pain on her, and even worse, he will shatter her sense of security and autonomy. The victim’s self is severely damaged due to the humiliating experience of being incapable of liberating herself from the control of the perpetrator. She finds herself in a completely helpless situation which she is incapable of handling on her own and relies on the aid of another person who is preferably a male stronger than the rapist. Women are usually smaller and weigh less than men who are more likely to have a strong and muscular body. A feminine body, on the contrary, is expected to be slender and smooth and will therefore be of little help in case of a physical attack. Furthermore, it is very probable that a woman will develop greater fear since they conventionally behave rather passively and might avoid direct (bodily) confrontations. Therefore, it can be argued that female victims are doubly disadvantaged, because in case of a rape, they are not only physically inferior, but are also restricted by “conventional female behaviour”², and will most probably not be able to win the struggle. If the rapist additionally threatens her with a lethal weapon, such as a knife or a firearm, it is even more likely

¹ Brownmiller 1976, p. 376

² *ibid.*, p. 257

that she will surrender. The results are feelings of inferiority and doubts about her autonomy.³ In addition to the terrifying emotion of helplessness, the victim's dignity is damaged through the painful penetration of her body against her will.

In the past, a violated woman was regarded either as damaged property, which means that losing her virginity is equal to losing her worth, or as partly responsible for the crime. Even today, where rape is considered a severe crime against women in particular, the issue has never stopped to be associated with shame and feelings of worthlessness and the myth of women wanting to be raped still exists.⁴ Although victims never fully understand why such a terrible event happened to them, many feel guilty and “agonize afterwards in an effort to uncover what it was in their behaviour, their manner, their dress that triggered this awful act against them.”⁵ Finding a plausible reason for the assault allows the victim the possibility to change her behaviour towards men or her dressing style and enables her to re-establish a basic feeling of safety in everyday life. Nevertheless, the shame and guilt the raped woman might be filled with anyhow might be intensified by reporting the crime. If human beings find themselves in a state of extreme fear, it can happen that the body fails to move and “freezes”, as it can be found among many species of animals⁶. While a woman might have surrendered out of the fear to lose her life in the struggle with her rapist, her case will probably be dismissed in court due to lack of evidence of a fight between the perpetrator and victim. If the victim's case is not taken seriously, she will feel even more insecure, ashamed, humiliated, and helpless.

Another problematic issue connected to trauma and rape is the challenge to understand the terrible event and express what happened. Victims are very often simply overwhelmed by the physical and psychological violence they are confronted with and fail to understand the reason for the sexual assault. They are incapable of finding a resource to respond to the crime that has changed their lives and are in danger of falling silent. Due to lack of comprehension and the wish to remove the traumatic experience from one's mind, disconnection or distortion of the event are possible protective

³ cf. Herman 2007, p. 53

⁴ cf. Brownmiller 1976, p. 312

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 312f

⁶ cf. Herman 2007, p. 42

mechanisms of the human mind to prevent a complete breakdown of the self. The victim might already disconnect the rape while it takes place and will later deny the fact that the crime happened to her.⁷ However, in order to overcome the trauma, the horrendous event must be understood and the traumatic memory must be integrated into the victim's life. It is suggested that the integration of the traumatic event and its transformation into a memory the victim is able to cope with can only happen via language. Therefore, the victim must find a medium to articulate what has happened to her, either through spoken or written language.⁸

There are numerous effects traumatised persons suffer from, which affect both the victim's body and mind. Herman divides the signs of post-traumatic stress disorder into three major categories, namely "hyperarousal", "intrusion", and "constriction"⁹. Hyperarousal refers to a constant state of alertness of the body out of the fear that the traumatic event could repeat itself. The victim is filled with panic and a permanent sense of insecurity during day and night, which additionally leads to sleeping disorders. Intrusion means that certain stimuli may cause feelings of terror and helplessness recurring in the present, even though the traumatic event might have happened a long time ago. The victim relives the trauma as if the event took place in that very moment. Also continuing nightmares are a source of great distress. Constriction describes the numb state a victim might find herself in as a self-protective mechanism of the human mind. Dissociation of the horrible event is also a possible consequence which can occur even during the sexual assault:

Sometimes situations of inescapable danger may evoke not only terror and rage but also, paradoxically, a state of detached calm, in which terror, rage, and pain dissolve. Events continue to register in awareness, but it is as though these events have been disconnected from their ordinary meanings. Perceptions may be numbed or distorted, with partial anesthesia or the loss of particular sensations. Time sense may be altered, often with a sense of slow motion, and the experience may lose its quality of ordinary reality. The person may feel as though the event is not happening to her, as though she is observing from outside her body, or as though the whole experience is a bad dream from which she will shortly awaken. These perceptual changes combine with a feeling of indifference, emotional detachment, and profound passivity in which the person relinquishes all initiative and struggle.¹⁰

⁷ cf. Herman 2007, p. 51

⁸ cf. Van der Merwe 2007, p. 25

⁹ Herman 2007, p. 35

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 42f

Severe depression, anxiety, feelings of guilt and shame, and suicidal thoughts might accompany victims for years after the rape took place.¹¹

2.2. Maternal behaviour and structural trauma

A woman traumatised by a horrendous event like rape requires careful attention and plenty of time to process the crime done to her. Ideally, she undergoes regular therapy in order to recover from her trauma. Young children need just as much care and attention to grow into persons sound in mind and body. Therefore, it can be very problematic if a traumatised woman is the mother of one or several children. Turney investigated “unfavorable parenting practices”¹² developed by depressed parents who are not able to provide their children with the necessary attention and care due to their constant fight against feelings of worthlessness and lack of drive. Neglect is a possible result of depression, as well as lack of motivation to engage and interact with the child. The mother might be overwhelmed by the responsibility of satisfying the permanent needs of an infant. Also when children are older, tasks such as reading to or playing with the child must be fulfilled. Furthermore, as soon as children can talk they expect their parents to respond to numerous questions. However, it can also happen that depressed mothers harshly discipline their children by means of imposing guilt on and withholding love from the child.

It is argued that single mothers who at the same time suffer from “mental health impairments”¹³ present a great harm to the wellbeing of their children, while married women or women who enjoy stable relationships to family and friends are more likely to be able to cope with depression and trauma. A partner, relative, or close friend can firstly support the mother through her depression and secondly provide the child with the additional attention that would be necessary for a healthy development.

Nevertheless, it can be assumed that a depressed person might refuse contact even to the dearest friend or family member out of shame and runs the risk of completely isolating

¹¹ cf. Herman 2007., pp. 35-50

¹² Turney 2011, p. 401

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 401

herself and her children. Chronic mental illnesses might be the cause of the destruction of whole families.¹⁴ Furthermore, the lack of drive and motivation caused by depression might lead to economic insecurity since the mother is incapable of leaving her isolation at home and go to work.¹⁵ A life in poverty would add to the daily struggle mother and child have to face and worsen the mental state they are in. The mother's behaviour might deprive the child from a warm and secure environment at home. In summary, "[t]he role impairments associated with depression may lead to reduced economic wellbeing, impaired parenting behaviors, hampered social relationships with intimate partners, or less perceived social support, all of which have consequences for child wellbeing."¹⁶

Maternal depression is particularly harmful to a child, if the mental illness has begun even before the infant is born. It is crucial for the emotional development of a newborn to be granted a close and loving relationship to a caretaker, which is in most cases the mother. The acquisition of a sense of safety and trust happens at a very early age and "forms the basis of all systems of relationship and faith."¹⁷ In other words, if the mother fails to satisfy the child's need for security and warmth, the infant might never develop a sense for trust, which is a prerequisite for building healthy relationships. Denying the child the necessary care means that it is permanently exposed to stress, which can result in difficulties with coping with pressure and stressful situations. Since small children will spend their time primarily at home among the closest relatives until the entry into kindergarten or primary education, the negative influence of a depressed single mother might be highly detrimental to the child's development of the self. If the traumatised mother leads an isolated life for reasons such as insecurity, fear, or shame, this inevitably means that the child also lives in isolation and might be permanently exposed to the mother's behaviour influenced by depression in the first years of its life.¹⁸ It can be assumed that the mother-child relationship might particularly be challenged by the fact that the child is the product of rape and probably reminds the mother of the horrendous event by merely being present. It is very likely that the mother has not been able to recover from her trauma at the birth of her child, when the rape took place only

¹⁴ cf. Schone 2002, p. 13

¹⁵ cf. Turney 2012, pp. 1548, 1567, 1568

¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1558

¹⁷ Herman 2007, p. 51

¹⁸ cf. Turney 2012, p. 1547

nine months ago. If the child additionally resembles the rapist in appearance, the mother might firstly be in danger of a re-traumatisation and secondly might never develop the ability to deeply love her offspring or even tend to “psychological aggression, and physical assault”¹⁹ towards the child.

Although it is obvious that the traumatised mother affects the child in a negative way and will very probably transform the child into a traumatised person too, it must be distinguished between two different kinds of trauma, namely historical trauma and structural trauma.²⁰ Victims of rape suffer from historical trauma, which refers to a single life shattering event that destroys the sense of security. If a traumatised mother burdens her child with the effects of her trauma, the child might become a victim of structural trauma, which is caused by “a pattern of continual and continuing traumas.”²¹ On the one hand, victims of structural trauma are used to the adverse condition they live in, which in this case would be their permanent exposure to impaired parenting practices, and might be frightened by what is conventionally considered as “normal”. On the other hand, it must be emphasised that deviant maternal behaviour certainly will be harmful to the child’s development, even though the child is ignorant to a loving mother-child-relationship, due to an infant’s bare necessity for attention and care.

2.3. The child’s emotions and behaviour

As discussed above, it is evident that the behaviour of a mentally ill parent has an immense impact on the development of the personality and of the self-image of a child. While the previous chapter concentrated on the effects on newborn and very young children, this part focuses on the feelings of children who are already cognitively capable of perceiving that their parent suffers from a mental illness and further presents the emotional and behavioural consequences. Frequently, parents refuse to provide their children with sufficient information on the mental illness and make the issue a taboo subject within the family. Children dare not raise the matter, although they are willing to learn more about the illness for several reasons. First of all, children live in great fear

¹⁹ Turney 2012, p. 406

²⁰ cf. Van der Merwe 2007, p. 11

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 11

that the ill parent could die. If they are not explained what the illness means for the parent, they are constantly afraid to lose the beloved person and cannot find a way of gaining hope due to the lack of communication. They can assess neither the severity nor the course of the illness and often suffer from separation anxiety. An informative conversation might calm the child who possibly expects the illness to be more dangerous than it really is.²² Secondly, even from an early age on, children are willing to help and support the ill parent, but do not know what to do if they do not understand what is happening to the beloved person and are left completely helpless. Finally, they are afraid of inheriting the illness, especially when they are older and are aware of the existence of hereditary diseases. The illness and its consequences are omnipresent; however, the issue is not allowed to be addressed. In order to avoid burdening firstly the ill parent and secondly the healthy parent even more, children keep their questions and emotions to themselves and suffer silently.²³

It has already been emphasised that neglect is very detrimental to the development of infants; however, also older children suffer immensely from parents who are incapable of taking proper care of them. Instead of enjoying the carefree life of childhood, they are forced into adulthood and are obliged to take on several responsibilities which are usually fulfilled by the parents. First of all, they quickly become independent and learn to cater for themselves. If they might not be able help the ill parent, older children very often care for the healthy parent and look after younger siblings. Furthermore, they frequently try to relieve the adults by carrying out the necessary household chores. It must further be stressed that children who are raised by a single-parent who suffers from a mental illness tend to change roles with the ill person, a process that Jungbauer and Lenz call “Parentifizierung”²⁴, where the child assumes the role of the adult, taking all responsibilities, while the parent remains passive and incapable of meeting the parental duties. Children might simply be overwhelmed by the lack of care and the accumulation of new responsibilities they have to shoulder without having reached the emotional maturity nor being adequately prepared.²⁵

²² cf. Schone 2002, p. 15

²³ cf. Jungbauer; Lenz 2008, pp. 10, 11

²⁴ cf. *ibid.*, p. 12

²⁵ cf. *ibid.*, p.13

A great challenge for the family sentiment is the isolation the ill person withdraws into, voluntarily or involuntarily, and the feelings of shame and guilt that affect all family members. Mentally ill persons frequently feel ashamed for the changes the disease entails. In order to avoid further stigmatisation from family and friends, they tend to withdraw from their social lives and prefer to live in isolation. Also the children harbour similar emotions, that is, feeling ashamed for the changed behaviour and possibly deteriorated appearance of the ill parent. Their fear of being associated with the concerned person and as a result being stigmatised themselves leads to psychological distress and affects their self-esteem.²⁶ Simultaneously, the child might feel that it is partly guilty for causing the illness. In order to protect themselves, children are obliged to distance themselves from the ill parent, but feel ashamed for doing so and feel guilty in case of a deterioration of the parent's condition. The child might fail to release these emotions of guilt which might persist until adulthood.²⁷ The emotions of the children of mentally ill parents are clearly reminiscent of those of a traumatised person, as discussed in the previous two chapters. They struggle with feelings of guilt and shame due to the problematic situation at home, but at the same time withdraw from other children, possibly out of the fear of being judged or discriminated by play fellows as soon as they learn about the family circumstances. Since children in particular are excluded from essential information about the parent's disease, they are left helpless and might develop a feeling of complete worthlessness. Due to the loss of control, these children desire to distance themselves from their ill parent in order to gain control over the course of their own lives. Generally, children from mentally ill parents feel sad and neglected, but feelings of shame might also lead to aggressive behaviour towards other persons.²⁸

²⁶ cf. Quinn; Chaudoir 2009, p. 635

²⁷ cf. Jungbauer; Lenz 2008, p. 10

²⁸ cf. Turney 2012, p. 1561

3. Perspectives on South Africa

3.1. Rape in South Africa's history

In order to understand the high rates of rape and the emergence of children of rape in South Africa, it is inevitable to look at the country's history. Colonialism, racial segregation, apartheid, and the anti-apartheid struggle resulted in the development of a "culture of violence"²⁹, of which women and children have always been the most helpless victims. Rape had different functions during the various eras of the country: during colonialism, taking native women as wives (which can certainly be regarded as equal to sexual coercion) can firstly be seen as a method of conquering the land and its people and secondly as an emphasis of white supremacy, while during apartheid and the transition to a democratic country, the main purpose of violation was the demonstration of power and rape can be regarded as act of intimidation. However, it must be stressed that rape has always served as means to exercise power over a certain group of people. In spite of the efforts to achieve reconciliation, current statistics show that South Africa still belongs to the countries with the highest rates of violent activity, including a considerable amount of cases of rape. Jewkes argues that "women's right to give or withhold consent to sexual intercourse is one of the most commonly violated of all human rights in South Africa."³⁰

From a present-day perspective, the first recorded rapes in South Africa happened during the conquest of native Africans by white colonialists. Miscegenation took place right from the beginning of European settlements in southern Africa, so that already in the late seventeenth century it was analysed that "three quarters of the children born to the company's slave women had European fathers."³¹ Intermarriage became quite common due to the lack of European women at the beginnings of Dutch settlements in the Cape. Settlers paid for the freedom of native slave women and had them baptised in order to transform them into socially acceptable wives. In the course of the eighteenth century, however, race mixing decreased with the increasing arrival of European women to the arable districts of the country. Another consequence of the rising number of white females was the adaptation of family structures to the European norm.

²⁹ Breetzke 2012, p.300

³⁰ Jewkes; Abrahms 2002, p. 1240

³¹ Keegan 1996, p.20

Nevertheless, white people in Cape Town, particularly those from lower classes, such as sailors, soldiers and company employees, continued to enter into intermarriages and to take slave women as their concubines throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century.³² The children of these interracial relationships were mostly absorbed into the South African bourgeoisie. Especially female offspring were desired because of the scarcity of marriageable women, while the acceptance of male offspring depended on the lightness of their skin, the degree of education, and the amount of their property.³³ Even though some mixed race people enjoyed rights which were denied to the enslaved native population, it must be stressed that intermarriage was no act of goodness on the part of the white coloniser. “Casual miscegenation on its own does not of course imply any degree of racial tolerance, but can be seen as a further form of racial exploitation. In fact interracial marriages did not pose any threat at all to the racial hierarchy that was a feature of colonial society by the eighteenth century.”³⁴ Keeping the inferior position of European women at this point in time in mind, it is obvious that also native women were forced to enter into marriages with white settlers, who regarded them as property and exploited them sexually. What added to the suffering of black women was the fact that they were pulled out of their native culture and had to adapt to a completely new culture. While native women were at the mercy of white colonisers, the European women who came to live as wives of the latter were strictly kept away from native males. Black men were severely punished in court whenever they were accused of touching a white woman, let alone of violating a white woman, which was punished with death. It was clearly defined that only “men from the dominant group took partners from the dominated groups.”³⁵ As already mentioned, the increasing number of settler woman resulted in an approach to European norms with regard to attitude and behaviour. Therefore, miscegenation was gradually deemed as abnormal practice. Also the British contributed to the increase of awareness of race and class hierarchies.³⁶

South Africa’s development to a racially segregated country peaks in the political system of apartheid, in which a clear boundary between black and white citizens was drawn. Between 1952 and 1994, the authoritarian state enforced racial segregation and actively enforced overt discrimination against the non-white population (which includes

³² cf. Keegan 1996, p.21

³³ cf. *ibid.*, p.22

³⁴ *ibid.*, p.23

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.21

³⁶ cf. *ibid.*, p. 24

also dark-skinned people of European descent). Groups of natives were forced to abandon their homeland and to move to the townships, which are impoverished residential areas inhabited by almost exclusively blacks in the course of racial segregation. As a consequence, townships became

places where social and economic deprivation, combined with repressive policing, criminal predation and a corresponding reliance on vigilantism, produced urban environments in which violence frequently became a normative means of ‘pursuing material interests, resolving conflicts and seeking “justice”’.³⁷

The townships developed into centres of criminal activity; nevertheless, it must be emphasised that one major source of violence and crime was the state itself.³⁸

As a result of oppression, violence against women boomed during apartheid. Those who were in power were able to abuse (particularly black) women, while those who were socially and economically powerless asserted their dominant male position by domestic violence and rape of the physically weaker sex. Also in post-apartheid South Africa, sexual violence serves men to keep women under their control and to regain some of the respect and self-esteem which has been taken away by the past authoritarian regime. It is emphasised that South Africa’s society is based on “very substantial gender power inequalities”³⁹, which put women into a distinctly inferior position. Women are partly understood as vehicles for proving to be a successful man; therefore, practices such as gang rape are quite common among male South Africans as means of displaying manliness in front of each other or of becoming fully-fledged gang members. Furthermore, women are frequently placed in “relationships of dependency”⁴⁰ through poverty and are forced to be sexually available in exchange for shelter and food.⁴¹ Consequently, children who are the product of violence against women will firstly find themselves in an inferior position similar to their mothers’ and secondly be influenced by the violence and precariousness they are surrounded with.

³⁷ Breetzke 2012, p.302

³⁸ cf. *ibid.*, p. 301

³⁹ Jewkes; Abrahms 2002, p. 1238

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.1239

⁴¹ cf. *ibid.*, pp.1238-1239

3.2. Coloureds in South Africa

In an international context, the term “coloured” is usually used to generally describe people possessing dark skin; in South Africa, however, a coloured person specifically refers to a person of mixed ethnical background, descending from “the early encounter [...] between European colonialists and indigenous southern Africans”⁴². Ever since, coloureds have been marginalised in South Africa and have found themselves in a disadvantageous in-between position until the very present. Due to the circumstance that they have always been denied affiliation to both black and white groups respectively, let alone the current ruling party, coloured “identity is an issue fraught with racial ambivalence and ideological uncertainty.”⁴³

With the arrival of the Dutch in the Cape of South Africa, the group of ‘Bastaards’ emerged as white settlers started to mix with black native women. Many coloured children were incorporated into the white households and “grew up in the Dutch language and with Dutch names and a modicum of European culture, including in some cases adherence to Christianity.”⁴⁴ Being baptised in the Dutch Reformed Church was considered a prerequisite for coloureds to be offered considerable advantages in society. Nevertheless, persons with native roots hardly ever enjoyed equal rights and full acceptance. Naturally, groups of coloureds desired to be accepted by the white elite and therefore attempted to adapt to the Western style. White power had such a great influence that individuals denied their African roots and distanced themselves from family and friends in order to be granted privileges which only white people enjoyed.⁴⁵ The appeal of escaping racial segregation “gave rise to such practices as ‘trying for white’, ‘playing white’ and ‘passing for white’.”⁴⁶ However, during apartheid the few privileges individual coloureds were granted before were revoked and their existence was deemed as a crime with the introduction of the *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act* in 1949 and the *Immorality Amendment Act* in 1950, which forbade marriage and sexual relationships between black and white people. Miscegenation was said to produce mentally as well as morally deficient people who permanently reminded the powerful white groupings “of past lapses of morality” and “presented the danger of an ongoing

⁴² Farred 2001, p.180f.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 176

⁴⁴ Keegan 1996, p. 31

⁴⁵ cf. Adhikari 2006, pp. 10; 16

⁴⁶ February 1981, p. 5

infiltration of white society”⁴⁷. Coloureds failed to maintain their partly advantageous position when every privilege they might ever have enjoyed was turned into complete racial segregation. Disenfranchisement was only one of the many consequences coloureds were confronted with due to their native African ancestors. Nevertheless, their former aspirations to be accepted by the powerful white population led to feelings of hostility among the African natives. For this reason, coloureds were also marginalised by their black fellows, although both black and coloured people suffered immensely under the strict rules of apartheid. Furthermore, “coloureds cannot retreat into a mythic precolonial “innocence.””⁴⁸, since they are the product of colonialism, being the living prove of whites oppressing the native population of South Africa. Already during apartheid, but also after its abolishment, it became clear that also the oppressed black population in the country harboured negative feelings against hybridity and therefore rejected colouredness.⁴⁹

In spite of the aspirations to unify South Africa, coloureds fail to identify with the black groupings in power, because they see themselves only “as liminally “black””⁵⁰, which is also the source of discrimination against them. While ““full blackness,” or Africanness, has translated into full citizenship of and belonging to the post-apartheid state, colouredness has retained its historic ambivalence.”⁵¹ During apartheid, as well as in post-apartheid South Africa, the decisive criterion to belong to the powerful side has been the colour of skin. From the point of view of coloureds, it can be argued that their craving for acceptance and power in the new South Africa is very similar to their inferior position during apartheid. The great challenge coloureds have to face is “to define themselves against the hegemony of the “*biracial*”—the black and white, not the “*hybrid*”— nation state.”⁵² In the past, during white supremacy, coloureds were for the most part deprived from white power due to their African roots, whereas in post-apartheid South Africa, they are too closely linked to their white ancestors as to find general acceptance among the black population.

⁴⁷ Adhikari 2006, p. 15

⁴⁸ Farred 2001, p. 186

⁴⁹ cf. Adhikari 2006, pp. 18; 23

⁵⁰ Farred 2001, p. 182

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 182f.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 185

3.3. J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and the future of the New South Africa

Disgrace was the first post-apartheid novel published by the white author J.M. Coetzee in 1999. The novel won both the Booker Prize as well as the Commonwealth Writer's Prize; nevertheless, it was sharply criticised in South Africa for the expression of racist attitudes and for presenting black and mixed-race persons as rapists, whores and potential accomplices to crime. The author even received criticism from the African National Congress (ANC), which deemed the novel as an offence to the black population of South Africa.⁵³

The story revolves around the attempt of reconciliation in a country, whose "deep racial history [...] complicates possibilities of common ground."⁵⁴ The protagonist is the white university professor David Lurie who moves to his daughter Lucy's farm after being suspended from his faculty for having had sexual relations with a (seemingly coloured) student. In the course of the novel, the farm is invaded by three native Africans who injure David and rape Lucy. While David seeks legal action against the perpetrators, his daughter refuses to report the rape to the police and even decides to marry her black neighbour Petrus, who might be involved in the crime, in exchange for safety and an independent life as a tenant on her farm. Even when Lucy meets the youngest member of the rapists, who turns out to belong to Petrus's family, she is determined to keep her firm resolution of being a responsible person. The young woman ignores David's warnings and dismay at her decision of submitting herself to her neighbour's will. According to her father, she is willing to "to humble [her]self before history" (*Disgrace*, 160) and accepts her rape, which is regarded as resulting from "[a] history of wrong", coming "down from the ancestors." (*Disgrace*, 156) Roy, however, argues that "[c]ontrary to Lurie's fears, Lucy's decision to keep her rape private is not a sign of her passive acceptance of history; instead, it is a clear indication of her rejection of the postracial politics."⁵⁵ Although her sense of safety is shattered, Lucy cannot regard taking legal actions against her rapists as meaningful way in order to achieve reconciliation. Lucy's refusal to report the crime might be interpreted as criticism of the TRC. Her efforts towards reconciliation are not based on a public confession, but treated as a completely private matter. She is convinced that her confession will firstly

⁵³ cf. Roy 2012, p. 700

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p. 699

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p. 707

not change her situation of being a defenceless woman living on a farm remote from urbanity, secondly cannot restore her dignity, and thirdly would extend the seemingly never-ending circle of violence between the different ethnicities in the country. Lucy regards her rapists as “debt collectors, tax collectors” (Disgrace, 158); therefore she must give up her dignity to be allowed to stay on her farm. In spite of the omnipresent danger, she is not willing to give up the delights of living in a rural area and move to Amsterdam, as David insists on, but seeks protection from her neighbour Petrus, offering her farm as “dowry.” (Disgrace, 203). In spite of his doubts, David’s personality gradually changes and he eventually learns to accept that his daughter will keep the child whom she has conceived during the rape.

In reality, a female rape victim is very unlikely to humiliate herself and offer such complete forgiveness as Lucy does. Therefore, it is argued that *Disgrace* must be regarded as a “glaring allegory”⁵⁶ and that Coetzee uses irony as a tool “to critique the effects of contemporary racial politics on reconciliation to present interracial reconciliation in South Africa as an ethical process, outside law and politics.”⁵⁷ The allusions to Christianity contribute to the symbolical value of the novel. The female protagonist Lucy functions both as “scapegoat and Holy Mary.”⁵⁸ She is willing to take the accumulation of sins the white population has committed during the colonisation of Africa, particularly during apartheid, and still commits in the present, on her shoulders. David, who has decided to stay on the farm with his daughter until the baby is born, sees himself as a “[a] Joseph” (Disgrace, 217), that is, the earthly father of Jesus. If Lucy is regarded as Holy Mary and David refers to himself as Joseph, Lucy consequently bears the “Saviour”⁵⁹ of South Africa. Even though Lucy seeks reconciliation and David too learns to swallow his pride and give up his egoistic ambitions, it is questionable if the circumstances the child is born into will support the positive attitude of its mother and grandfather. The conception of the child evidently is an act of violence and hatred against Lucy, who admits that she cannot understand why these men abhor her to such a high degree. The novel also reveals that the recently traumatised Lucy is not yet able to love the child, but is convinced that her feelings will change: “But I will. Love will grow – one can trust Mother Nature for that. I am

⁵⁶ Mengel 2009, p. 304

⁵⁷ Roy 2012, p.701

⁵⁸ Mengel 2009, p.305

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p.305

determined to be a good mother, David. A good mother and a good person.” (Disgrace, 216) Nevertheless, the story ends before the child is born, so the reader does not know if Lucy will be really capable of genuinely loving her offspring. Furthermore, it is doubtful whether the coloured child will be accepted, firstly by its white relatives who are constantly reminded of the rape and Lucy humiliating herself in front of Petrus, and secondly by its black neighbours. With whom will it identify or will it be rejected by both sides as many coloureds in South Africa are, as described in the previous chapter? If the child is regarded as the ‘Saviour’ of the country, will it then be metaphorically ‘crucified’ by its own people?

Lucy’s neighbour Petrus bears a very symbolical name, namely the Afrikaans version of “Peter”. The biblical Peter “is named by Jesus as the rock on which he will build his church.”⁶⁰ On the one hand, Petrus can be referred to as the solid rock Lucy can hold onto. Under his protection, she might be able to rebuild a sense of security and is able to feel safe at her farm after the violent penetration of her home and private life. On the other hand, it is possible that “the suggestion is that Petrus is the kind of person on whom the new South Africa [...] is built: the entrepreneurial black businessman/farmer.”⁶¹ In spite of his wish to marry Lucy, it is obvious that Petrus does not intend to form a harmonious relationship to the Luries, but wants to acquire Lucy’s farmland. Petrus’s relative Pollux, the boy who participated in Lucy’s gang rape and who is regarded as mentally disabled by David, articulates the impossibility of identifying with his white neighbours. In a fit of rage, Pollux expresses the death threat many formerly suppressed native Africans might wish for in an act of revenge: “We will kill you all!” (Disgrace, 207) The youth builds up the dichotomy of ‘we’ and ‘you’, ‘we’ being the black population, ‘you’ referring to the white population of South Africa. In contrast to Lucy’s attempt to take responsibility of the past crimes committed by whites against blacks, Pollux maintains the segregation of black and white. Furthermore, it seems that due to his alleged disability he is very easy to influence. If he is capable of taking part in a gang rape, he might also be used by Petrus to either terrorise Lucy’s child or try to get it on the side of Petrus and his family. The possibility of a happy family life seems to be very unrealistic and the reader appears to be obliged to read the ending in a very ironical way, recognising that in fact the novel “present[s]

⁶⁰ van Heerden 2010, p. 57

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 57

postapartheid South Africa as a dark world, with little scope for congenial inter-racial relations.”⁶²

Other South African authors produced rewritings of Coetee’s *Disgrace*, presenting the lives of children of rape. In Achmat Dangor’s *Bitter Fruit*, Mikey, the child of rape, rejects reconciliation and shoots his biological rapist father in an act of retribution. Similar to *Disgrace*, the novel criticises the work of the TRC. Silas, who works for the TRC, believes in reconciliation through confession and advises his wife Lydia to tell her tragic story in public. Lydia, however, doubts the positive effects of confessing and also her son finally chooses not to forgive. Mikey has always been excessively cared for and protected by his mother, out of genuine love, but also out of feelings of guilt, therefore the shock is overwhelming when he reads his mother’s diary and finds out the truth about his beginnings. *What Kind of Child* by Ken Barris tells the stories of two children of rape. The first storyline gives insights into both the childhood and adult life of the coloured person Luke Turner. His mother and grandfather are highly reminiscent of Lucy and David Lurie from *Disgrace* and contribute to the severe traumatising of the boy. It becomes obvious that as an adult, Luke has not achieved to recover from his traumatising and in the end survives an attempted suicide. The second storyline of the novel depicts the miserable circumstances a child of rape might be born into. The protagonist Malibongwe and his mother Xoliswa Joyini try to survive on the streets of Cape Town and are completely dependent on the aid from others. For a limited period of time they enjoy having a shelter; however, the price for safety is high: Xoliswa is regularly raped by the owner of the shack they live in and suffers great pain. After his mother’s death, Malibongwe returns living on the streets, sniffing glue in order to numb on the one hand the pain resulting from hunger and a severe eye infection and on the other hand the trauma caused by the inhuman living conditions. In the end, the young boy dies in the gutter. A more detailed account on the parallels between *Disgrace* and *What Kind of Child* can be found in the analysis of the latter novel.

The two novels definitely show that the children of rape can by no means be regarded as ‘Saviours’ of the new South Africa who bring about reconciliation and mutual understanding between the black and white populations of the country. Their mothers’ traumatisations spread to the whole family and particularly affect the child’s wellbeing.

⁶² Roy 2012, p. 717

Therefore, it can be argued that Lucy's idea of peacefully raising a coloured child amidst a hostile environment is very unrealistic. In spite of Lucy's attempt to end the "self-reinforcing cycle"⁶³ of violence and crime, the circumstance that she has to submit to Petrus in return for security points out that the novel is rather "pessimistic about the possibility for the white coloniser of finding a true home in the colonised space or of coming to a full integration of settler", hinting at the impossibility of a "happy hybridity"⁶⁴. It is very likely that her child will become a victim of the fight for power.

⁶³ Breetzke 2012, p.311

⁶⁴ Glenn 2009, p. 89

4. Ken Barris: *What Kind of Child*⁶⁵

4.1. Parallels to J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*

The title of Ken Barris's novel *What Kind of Child* originally is the beginning of a quote from J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*. When David Lurie learns that his daughter Lucy had become pregnant after being gang raped, he asks the following question: "What kind of child can seed like that give life to, seed drive into the woman not in love but in hatred, mixed chaotically, meant to soil her, to mark her, like a dog's urine?" (*Disgrace*, 199) Although Lucy tries to adopt a positive attitude towards the situation, David is convinced that the existence of the child of rape will have severe consequences. The coloured child will always function as a living proof of the horrible crime which has changed Lucy's life forever.

Apart from the title, there are further similarities between the two novels. The characters appearing in the storyline about the life of Luke Turner are highly reminiscent of the protagonists of *Disgrace*. Similar to Lucy, Caitlin Turner is a white woman who is raped by a black man and delivers a coloured child. Since the story of *Disgrace* ends before the child of rape is born, Caitlin can be regarded as a possible future version of Lucy. While Lucy is still full of hope to become a good mother and seeks reconciliation with her black neighbour Petrus, who might have been involved into the rape, Caitlin already seems to be dead inside. Furthermore, the latter is regularly visited by a man who takes advantage of her weakness and rapes her. Both women see the rape(s) as price they have to pay in order to be allowed to continue their lives. Lucy draws a link to the cruel history of South Africa under apartheid and wonders "if *that* is the price one has to pay for staying on?" (*Disgrace*, 158) Also Caitlin states that "[t]his is the cost of my life here, and of my motherhood." (*What Kind of Child*, 83) In order to grant her son safety she sacrifices her own mental and physical health and consents to being raped. It is not certain if Lucy and her child are completely safe, now that she has submitted to Petrus's wish to marry her, especially since one of the rapists belongs to the black farmer's family and lives in close proximity. Will Lucy be granted to raise her child in safety or might she be terrorised by her neighbours as soon as the child is born?

⁶⁵ Unless otherwise indicated all quotes in this chapter are from Barris 2006.

Will she be able to fulfil her wish to love the child or is it possible that she will become a miserable person such as Caitlin?

David Lurie and Arthur Turner are the fathers of the rape victims and have difficulties to understand their daughters' behaviours. Both are university professors who have been suspended due to immoral behaviour. After Caitlin's rape, she completely excludes her father from her life and seemingly prefers to raise her son on her own. Arthur has also developed to a traumatised person who is addicted to alcohol. Although David achieves to swallow his pride and decides for a humble life together with his daughter on the farm, it is not certain how he will react as soon as the child is born. It might happen that Lucy breaks the connection to him as soon as he expresses doubts about her raising the child of rape.

Moreover, Lucy's situation can be compared to the second storyline of *What Kind of Child*, which revolves around the life and death of the street child Malibongwe Joyini. Due to his violent conception, "[h]is mother does not know how to love him." (*What Kind of Child*, 120) Lucy, on the contrary, defends herself in front of her father: "Why? I am a woman, David. Do you think I hate children? Should I choose against the child because of who its father is?" (*Disgrace*, 198) She is convinced that she will learn to love her child naturally. Nevertheless, it is questionable if she will be able to look at her offspring without being constantly reminded of her rape. Both mothers appearing in *What Kind of Child* are deeply traumatised persons who are incapable of changing their miserable situations. Their traumata have significantly affected the relationships to their children who are constantly exposed to deviant maternal behaviour and suffer from social and emotional isolation. Therefore, *What Kind of Child*, among other novels, can be regarded as realistic rewriting of *Disgrace*.

4.2. The structure of the book

What Kind of Child is divided into two main parts and tells the stories of three characters whose paths cross each other in the course of the novel. The first part treats the stories of Bernal Díaz and Luke Turner. Bernal Díaz is a very old man who owns a tattoo studio and uses Luke's body to tell the story of his life. Since he is not involved in

any rape, his character and relations will not be analysed. Luke's story is divided into parts about his childhood and about his adulthood. The plots alter on a regular basis and enable the reader to understand the development of the young man's personality.

Nevertheless, there exists a great gap between the two plots, so it can only be guessed what happened to Luke and his mother when the boy goes through puberty and reaches adulthood. Furthermore, it is not evident what Luke's mother Caitlin feels or thinks, since the narration exclusively focuses on the boy's perception; therefore, the reader is completely dependent on the information Luke reveals.

The protagonist of the second part is the young boy Malibongwe Joyini, whose life is a mere struggle to survive. His story starts with his conception and ends with his early death. The reader gains explicit insights into the emotions of Malibongwe's mother Xoliswa and therefore is able to get a clear picture of the circumstances the child is born into. Moreover, part two also continues to depict the lives of Díaz and Luke, who keep regular contact until the old man eventually dies. There is only a brief meeting taking place on the street between Luke and Malibongwe, but the encounter shows the great difference between the two male characters who are both children of rape. While Luke has managed to finish his studies and lead a relatively normal life, Malibongwe is not capable of escaping poverty. Part two ends with Luke's survival from his attempt to commit suicide and Malibongwe's tragic death in the streets of Cape Town.

4.3. Luke's relationship to his mother and grandfather

Luke spends his childhood together with his mother in a house close to the seaside. At the beginning, it is not clear how old the boy is, if he goes to school or has contact to any other persons apart from his mother. What instantly becomes evident is that Caitlin Turner is a deeply traumatised person and severely damages her son's self-image and their mother-son relationship due to her habit of remaining quiet most of the time. Luke frequently feels the urge to talk to his mother, but he exactly knows that she usually refuses to communicate with him, as if "[h]er mouth [was] a healed gash", and "speaks only when necessary." (34) The people of the place refuse to speak with the Turner family – probably because Caitlin is a white single mother raising a coloured child – so his mother is the only person Luke has regular contact to. Only in the second part it is

indirectly said that Luke is born into apartheid, so people of the town indeed avoid establishing contact to Caitlin for having a coloured son. Caitlin diligently carries out the household chores and carries her boy to the beach so that he can ease the dull pain caused by his club foot in the cool water. However, the woman completely neglects her son with regard to communication. While young children normally are very talkative and ask their parents many questions, Luke has already developed into a quiet child at a very young age. He has learnt to accept the fact that his mother will simply stay silent even for longer periods of time and is unable to answer his questions properly. When he asks her if a motionless jellyfish lying on the beach is dead, she only replies that she does not know. Later, Luke asks the same question about himself and his mother: “Am I alive or dead, he asks. Is my mother alive or dead? Can we feel?” and Caitlin gives him the same reply as before: “I don’t think so. I don’t know.” (36) It seems that the woman has lost her sense of reality and finds herself in a trance-like state in which communication has no place. Since the focus of the story lies exclusively on Luke’s emotions and thoughts, the reader does not know what is going on inside the traumatised woman. Not only her strange behaviour, but also her ghost-like body that has “almost the colour of milk” and her “pale eyes” (34) remind the reader of a person whose inner numbness shows outside.

Only when Caitlin’s father Arthur suddenly appears, the single mother seems to regain determination and the ability to think rationally. Small Luke is rather frightened by the tone his mother uses towards her father, instead of being afraid of the stranger. “Half his fear is her speech, her voice: usually when she speaks, it is as if she moves through deep water, or is caught dreaming in a heavy rain. Now it comes out too quickly and tastes sour. The old man has changed her into a different mother.” (38) Arthur has never seen his grandson before and has abandoned his daughter five years ago, which must signify that Luke is still a very young child. It becomes obvious that something horrible happened before Luke’s birth and both Caitlin and Arthur were involved. Now Arthur’s presence evokes all the bad memories his daughter has tried to suppress. Furthermore, the old man explicitly mentions the serious problems the family struggles with, that is, the absence of Luke’s father, the child’s untreated club foot, and Caitlin’s everlasting silence. When he is alone with the boy, Arthur accuses his daughter of excluding him from her life. He retells a dream in which Luke occurred, but had no face. Arthur is able to denote the state Caitlin is in and to express the frustration her behaviour causes. He

calls her a “mass of silence” and describes her silence as “baffling and tormenting, and of course utterly demoralising.” (42) Although Luke does not fully understand the words his grandfather is saying, he might feel the same way with reference to his mother’s condition, but cannot express his frustration. In reality, Caitlin also excludes her son from her life, since the boy lacks knowledge about his grandparents, his father and even about his own mother with whom he has lived together all his life. Caitlin writes a book which she probably will never finish – perhaps to process her trauma – but refuses to tell her son what it is about and demands complete silence when she is writing. Whatever matter it is, Luke has absolutely no right to have a say. Naturally, he is still a young child and is not capable of taking important decisions, but Caitlin does not even consider the possibility of asking her son’s opinion. If she cannot talk about an issue due to her trauma, the consequence is silence for an indefinite amount of time. Also his grandfather, who has severe problems himself, but who might have wanted to meet him, is a complete stranger to the boy.

Arthur notices that Luke is a very silent child, who pays attention to what is said but hardly ever replies. Caitlin has maintained the silence for about five years. She has never spoken with her son about his biological father, nor is she able to answer simple questions. Luke does not know any other state than silence and has grown accustomed to it; nevertheless, it can be argued that it is very traumatising for small children if their parents ignore their curiosity and urge to question and explore the world surrounding them. The old man achieves to awaken the boy’s curiosity by mentioning all the subject matters that Caitlin has kept quiet about since Luke was born. The most delicate issue is the absence of Luke’s father. Although the boy would never dare to ask his grandfather directly about this matter, his curiosity is heightened when there is eventually a person who is willing to talk about all the things Luke’s thoughts circle around. The boy seeks his grandfather’s company but hardly ever opens his mouth, which irritates the latter: “Don’t you ever speak, child? You’re depressingly like your mother. I’m surprised you can speak at all.” (45) Luke wants to prove that he can speak, but when Arthur brings up the question if Luke knows his father, the boy lies in order to avoid falling silent again. Though Caitlin frantically tries to prevent her son from learning about his roots, Arthur tells Luke about the fatal incident he was forced to witness half-consciously when receiving a blow on his head for trying to stop Luke’s biological father from raping Caitlin. The information on his beginnings is too much for the small boy. “He finds it

hard to breathe; he doesn't fully understand his grandfather's words; he knows they mean something about his own life. It has to do with his mother, how he was made the wrong way." (46) In spite of his young age, he comprehends that his birth is connected to his mother's strange behaviour. Caitlin must have felt ashamed to such a degree that she prefers to break the connection to her father and raise the product of rape on her own, instead of accepting help by the man who witnessed the shameful crime. Although Arthur lies injured on the ground during the rape, it can be assumed that Caitlin is immensely disappointed and angry with him for not having been able to help her out of her dreadful ordeal.

While Arthur confuses Luke with the story of his conception, Caitlin all of a sudden starts to burden the boy with past events, too. She talks about her father's miserable life and tells that he was once a university professor and writer, but lost his job and reputation when found guilty of plagiarism. Due to his professional failure and incapability to save his daughter from being raped, Arthur can also be regarded as a severely traumatised person. It seems that Arthur as well as Caitlin only talk to Luke in order to relieve their own consciences, but never clearly explain to him the connections between the events. The boy immediately accepts his confusion due to the fact that his questions have never been answered. However, there is one burning question he has to raise in front of his mother. When he mentions that "Grandfather saw [his] getting" (73) and asks his mother for an explanation of the phrase, she quickly clarifies the meaning, but immediately withdraws to her inner world and Luke "will have to wait for her, perhaps several days. There is no bargaining with her silence. That is the first rule of the world." (73)

Arthur's visit ends with a bitter argument with Caitlin. The woman is furious about her father's attempt to tell Luke about his origin. They defer their heated discussion until night, but Luke can still hear them from his room. While Arthur keeps on accusing his daughter of being careless with her son's health, Caitlin can only defend herself by repeating that since the horrendous event in the past, she is a "broken personality" (77) and has therefore been incapable of having her boy's club foot rectified by a doctor. During the argument, it happens for the first time that Caitlin explicitly pronounces that Luke is a "child of rape" (77) and it becomes obvious that she will continue refusing to tell her son about his cruel father. In the morning, Arthur is gone and Caitlin predicts

that he will never come back. Although Luke might not have learnt to love his grandfather, at least he would have presented a person who talks to the boy on a regular basis. Moreover, he is the only link to the past. His absence means that Luke “will never know [his] father’s name.” (80) Now, the boy is again alone with a mother who is not in the condition to satisfy her son’s need to talk. After her father's departure, Caitlin spends day after day building a kind of coffin, using materials she finds on the beach. Though Luke might need her support, since his grandfather entered his life as suddenly as he disappeared, she retreats into “long, speechless nights”. (81) It seems that Caitlin misses Arthur as well, but it is obvious that she would never admit her feelings to anyone, not even to herself. The urge to build something could be regarded as distraction from the traumatising event of being left alone once more due to her own hostile behaviour.

Caitlin’s misery peaks in a visit by a brutal looking man, who apparently returns occasionally. Caitlin serves him food and then they disappear into the bedroom, ignoring Luke’s presence. It is Caitlin who closes the door; otherwise, Luke would be able to witness the entire act of loveless sex. Nevertheless, the boy cannot stand the uncomfortable situation and seeks refuge in his room, where he stays until the morning. Also Caitlin spends the whole day in her room, apparently out of pain and embarrassment, and only shows her bruised and beaten body in the evening, looking “older now than her own father.” (82) It is never explained who this brutal man is and if he is Luke’s rapist father, but it becomes clear that Caitlin has to struggle with a man who definitely makes use of the woman’s weakness. Her dependence on the man becomes clear when she laments the horrendous situation she is in: “This is the cost of my life here, and of my motherhood. I make no choices: my life and death are indistinguishable.” (83) Naturally, Luke does not understand what the man is doing to his mother, but his urge to flee from the situation proves that he perceives his mother’s pain and helplessness. He is far too young to protect his mother from the intruder, so the boy finds himself in a state of panic when there is no way to handle the problem. It could be assumed that Caitlin’s silence towards Luke is not only the result of him being the product of brutal rape, but it is also a consequence of her feeling permanently embarrassed and humiliated.

Years later, Arthur dies and mother and son attend to his funeral. Due to the lack of contact, both treat his death with indifference and sit through the burial ceremony. They have moved to a new home and Luke has problems making friends at the new school he goes to. The reason for his problem is most obviously the fact that he has never learned to establish communication, since he has spent his whole life in isolation together with his silent mother. Nevertheless, at school he firstly has contact to a girl called Erica. After being kissed by her, the part about Luke's childhood ends. As an adult, Luke hardly ever mentions his mother and it is not obvious what has happened to her. The reader learns that Arthur has written a book before his death, in which he mainly praises the effects of alcohol, but also tackles the delicate relationship to his daughter. Though Luke would never describe his mother as "sympathetic or even likeable", he criticises his grandfather's alcoholism which contributed to his "contemptuous treatment" (70) towards Caitlin. It is never clarified what happened during the huge gap between Luke's childhood and adulthood and why Caitlin is not present any more. It is not evident if the woman is dead, if she has completely withdrawn from ordinary life, or if her son refuses to contact her; however, it is obvious that Luke suppresses the memories of his childhood, in which Caitlin played an essential role.

4.4. Luke's distraction from his trauma

When small Luke looks into the mirror and looks at the brown face with black curly hair, "[h]e thinks he can see that other person grow older, and become a dark, strong person, grow into a life that is not his own." (43) Years later, he has become a person that appears to be strong, but in fact is merely incapable of establishing healthy relationships to women. As a child, he regards his brown face as ugly, although Arthur tells him several times what a beautiful child he is. As an adult, his beauty enables him to seduce women easily despite his club foot. Luke demonstrates a clear preference for white women who additionally possess particularly pale skin. He openly admits his predilection for white skin when one of his girlfriends asks him about the matter: "I mostly sleep with white women. In fact, I mostly sleep with unusually white women, fair women like yourself." (63) Already as a child, Luke pays great attention to the pale shades of his mother's skin and continues to notice a woman's quality of skin when he is a grown-up. If a woman possesses skin of the colour and quality the young man

adores, he immediately is overwhelmed by desire, whether he is in a relationship in this moment or not. He poetically describes the skin's texture, as if it was a justification for betraying. Though he is in a relationship, he cannot resist another woman's good looks, when he "notice[s] a sculptured quality about her hand" (31) and feels the urgent need to touch the skin of the "woman constructed of light" (61). However, when he meets the next woman with "skin the colour and texture of a macadamia nut, freshly broken open" (68), he quickly forgets the irresistible qualities his current girlfriend possesses.

Although the looks of the four girlfriends Luke has throughout the novel are reminiscent of his mother's appearance, their characters differ immensely from Caitlin's passivity and reticence. Ana Kock does not hesitate to communicate her dissatisfaction and swears at any occasion. She would never suppress her anger or disappointment, but reacts aggressively and even violently if she is unhappy with a situation. Although Luke criticises her bad manners and crudeness, he describes her as "irresistible". (28) Also when he starts to meet other women, he returns to her whenever he "feels[s] the need for something raw and sharp." (64) Bettina Moore, on the contrary, seems to be a very gentle woman who worries a lot about Luke. She wants to believe that he is a decent man and therefore cannot understand his need to have his complete torso tattooed. Initially, she even fears that her boyfriend's tattoos mark him as an ex-prisoner. When he reassures her that he has never been in prison and that it is his own wish to have his body tattooed, she wonders how his intention could be related to his childhood; however, Luke refuses to talk about this part of his life. His third girlfriend Gemma Papier is a self-confident and smart young woman, who recently graduated. Luke is surprised by the way she touches him and looks at him with "her hazel eyes filled with demanding intelligence." (67) While the talk with his other two girlfriends is rather superficial, Gemma and Luke easily establish conversation and "have a great deal to say to each other." (68) Finally, he meets Delta, who possesses a remarkably tall and broad body, which indicates that she is a strong woman who seems to be able to protect herself and others. When Luke finds himself "[c]ooned inside her thighs, her groin, the warm barrel vaults of her torso," he feels completely "safe from all harm" (101).

The four young women clearly display emotions and do not hide their problems and worries from the young man. It can be argued that each of them possesses one particular quality which Luke would have needed badly in his mother. Ana confronts him with a

storm of violent emotions, Bettina openly expresses worries, Gemma is able to make meaningful and animated conversation, and Delta is strong and provides him with protection. Nevertheless, it becomes obvious that each of them is only an exchangeable variable in Luke's life which only serves as a distraction from his real trauma. Their names, which correspond to the Greek letters 'alpha', 'beta', 'gamma', and 'delta', contribute to the assumption that their personalities in fact do not count, but that Luke uses them to fill the emptiness in his soul which his mother produced when he was a child. The fact that he never breaks up with the girls before seducing the next, proves that he uses them to release the tension resulting from his inner pain regardless of their feelings. Luke even openly admits that his current girlfriend is not the only woman he has sexual relations with when he is asked, although he knows that she will react aggressively, accusing him and calling him names.

Not only his girlfriends, but also his tattoos can be regarded as distraction from Luke's childhood trauma. When his girlfriends ask him why he lets an old man have his body to use it as a piece of art, he cannot give them a proper answer. He refuses to talk about the issue and notices that "[h]is mouth has set into a gash, the bitter kind that belongs to old women like his mother." (97) Since the urge to have his body tattooed obviously is connected to his trauma, Luke himself cannot even comprehend the reason for his wish. It could be argued that the young man needs the pain which the needles produce to be distracted from processing the real problem of his traumatising childhood. Furthermore, it is possible that Luke feels the urge to hide his brown skin behind colourful images and transform his crippled body into a work of art. Although he emphasises the importance of the pale skin colour of his lovers, he is not capable of perceiving the colour of his own skin. Since his colour is completely different from his mother's and his schoolmates', he thinks of himself as ugly and most probably feels like an outsider. Therefore, it can be assumed that as a young child he has started to develop a certain blindness for his own colour, which is simply not the same as the skin colour of the people surrounding him. Nevertheless, after several sessions in the tattoo studio with Bernal Díaz, Luke looks at his body, complaining that "[i]t's a mess" and that "[n]othing adds up." (97) The disorder of the tattoos on his body is reminiscent of the chaotic state of his most intimate feelings. Luke fails to give meaning to his life and is incapable of changing his situation, because it appears that he does neither recognise nor accept that he is a deeply traumatised person.

4.5. The end: Luke's survival

As a child, Luke once strolls down to the sea all on his own out of the urge to forget the serious argument between his mother and grandfather. He feels strong and relieved not only from his dull pain but also from his mother when he steps into the cold water and starts swimming towards the horizon. Years later, the young man feels a similar need to step into the cool water and swim to Robben Island. Alcohol encourages him to carry out his foolish idea; however, after swimming for a while Luke begins to panic, considering all kinds of danger which lurk in the sea. There is no way out of the awful situation, so Luke is forced to continue swimming until he is completely exhausted and even considers to give up: "The alcohol has worked off, and a pleasant, dangerous dreaminess filters through my body, tempting me to close my eyes and slide down into freedom. It would be so easy, so much easier than struggling on like this." (194) It can be argued that his unreasonable idea of swimming to a place he has never been before is a result of the daily struggle with his trauma and can be regarded as attempted suicide. Although it is not apparent to the reader what has happened to Caitlin during the large gap between Luke's childhood and his adult life, the young man's behaviour clearly shows that he has not yet come to terms with his past. Perhaps it frightens him when he retreats into silence like his mother as soon as someone asks him about his childhood. The way he treats his girlfriends proves that he is incapable of trusting others and of establishing a stable relationship to a person. He does not even have close friends. Even if his action of swimming to an island is only the product of his imagination, it can be assumed that Luke is too exhausted of living with his trauma that he considers giving up to be eventually free from his memories and problems.

In the end, Luke finds himself on a beach and very soon notices that he has "swum in a great circle and landed not far from [his] starting point." (196) His movement in the sea can be considered as metaphor for the direction in his life: Luke is incapable of overcoming his trauma and of moving forward, but he keeps moving in circles. It seems that he would never tackle his problem or talk to a friend, partner, or psychologist about his traumatising childhood. Despite his apparent wish to end his life, he is glad that he does not "have to find [his] way back alone from Robben Island, a country famous for its terrible desolation." (196) Reaching this desolate island would be similar to finding himself again in the care of his miserable mother and would cause severe re-

traumatisation. It is not obvious what Luke is going to do next, but his survival can be regarded as glimmer of hope. It is possible that he will start to appreciate his life and perhaps achieves to overcome his emotional isolation and seeks help in order to come to terms with his past and recover from his trauma.

4.6. Malibongwe's relationship to his mother

Malibongwe Joyini is born into complete misery. His biological father is a white policeman who rapes his mother Xoliswa on a whim. Thereupon, the woman loses her job and cannot find any support, not even from her sister. The rape takes place some time before the first free elections in South Africa after apartheid; therefore life has never been easy for the black woman. She tries hard to find work, but ends up homeless. In order to survive, she turns to begging and prostitution and continues this way of making money even when her child is born. Xoliswa regards her son as “a poisonous thing that has come out of her own body” and therefore “does not know how to love him” (120). It seems that Xoliswa has never been properly cared for, since there is no indication about her having parents who could support her. Furthermore, she apparently has never been loved or treated gently by a man, but gets pregnant during her rape. Whenever she looks at her son, she is reminded of being thrown onto the ground, of being hit for screaming out in terror, and of being brutally violated. Malibongwe's light brown skin makes her wonder if he is indeed related to her. “Sometimes she sees the policeman staring out of her son's eyes, even though they are still unfocused.” (121) On the one hand, it is obvious that the woman is only able to provide her son with the most necessary care as a consequence of the poverty they are living in. On the other hand, Xoliswa's actions prove that she is emotionally incapable of looking after her son properly due to her traumatising rape. In order to forget her miserable situation, she starts drinking and smoking, although she is still breastfeeding her child. At the age of three, Malibongwe is brought into hospital with a severe chest infection. While the child stays in hospital for supervision, Xoliswa “celebrates her day of freedom” and “is tempted to leave him there, and walk away into a new life.” (123) Nevertheless, when mother and son are separated in a big crowd of people, Xoliswa does not take advantage of the situation, but is filled with great fear for her son's safety. She cries tears of joy when she finds her child safe and sound in the information booth.

Xoliswa and Malibongwe's living conditions improve when they move into the township shack with Griffith Masica, who is an old acquaintance of Xoliswa. Nevertheless, Xoliswa is obliged to fulfil Griffith's sexual needs in return for his generosity. Due to the fact that the shack is extremely small, there is only one bedroom where all three persons sleep. For this reason, small Malibongwe is always present when the two adults have sexual intercourse. When he hears his mother breathing heavily during the act, he immediately knows that she is in pain. However, the young boy is used to it and ignores Xoliswa's agonised sounds. "None of this is surprising to the boy. Men have done this to his mother before in his presence. Even though he always pretends to be asleep and not to see or hear anything, he knows the various combinations that men and women make when they couple." (137) Although living with Griffith in his shack means having a shelter and enough money to eat regularly, Xoliswa is raped every other day by the man who grants her and her son a home. It seems that the woman never feels pleasure, but that sex is a painful duty for her. The loveless sex results in a constant pain in her womb which makes intercourse even more difficult. She offers herself to Griffith, but the pain becomes unbearable, so Xoliswa refuses to sleep with him. As a consequence, Griffith betrays her and suppresses his anger when he is at home. The woman has already swallowed all her pride and accepts the fact that Griffith sees other women to release his sexual tension, but she lives in constant fear that the man might throw her and Malibongwe out of his home. She has no energy to return to the hard life out on the streets and worries about the consequences for her young son when she no longer can care for him. The boy is forced into adulthood much earlier than other children anyway. In spite of all the tension between the couple living in the shack, Griffith cares for Xoliswa, whose condition deteriorates, and urges her to seek medical aid. The woman refuses to do so, on the one hand because black people are hardly ever treated in hospitals, and on the other hand because she feels that she deserves the pain. This conversation with Griffith shows that Xoliswa already believes that her miserable situation is completely her own fault. Though Malibongwe is only a few years old, he perceives his mother's fear and desperation and is terribly worried about "his mother's shrinking frame and her austere, irritable, listless mood, the flash of fear he catches in her eye, the tyrannical presence of her pain, his own terror at her visibly dwindling body, at the monstrous threat of living without her" (142). The boy has to suppress his fears since he simply cannot help his mother and furthermore

has to deal with his problems at school all on his own. Nevertheless, the insecurity about his mother's health presents "a new anxiety in his life that lurks low in his stomach and never disappears, even in sleep." (140) As a consequence of the poverty the family lives in, Malibongwe has never been able to enjoy the delights of childhood, such as a carefree life, security at home, parents who support him in everyday activities and at school, and friends to play with.

Xoliswa sometimes seeks her rapist to complain about her difficult situation. She is aware that Malibongwe detects her ambivalent feelings towards him and accuses the policeman of having "poisoned her love for the boy" as a consequence of the "bitterness" and "hatred" (169) she has developed as a result of the rape. Her tragic background prevents her from genuinely loving and tenderly caring for her child. Furthermore, the woman is too occupied with her own pain and misery as to properly look after Malibongwe. She does not play with him, nor support him at school, nor scold him for his regular absences at school. It appears that she does not show any interest in her son's life, since she does not even notice that he stays off school and goes begging instead. However, it must be argued that Xoliswa sacrifices her own health and dignity to provide herself and her son with a place to sleep and enough food to live through the day. It is the minimum of security she can grant her child, even if it means that she has no more energy to give Malibongwe the attention a small child would need.

When Xoliswa suddenly dies, Malibongwe mourns for his mother. When Griffith leaves him alone in the new shack, he is overwhelmed by loneliness and "the pain of his loss builds up unbearably." (184). He wonders if his mother is still somewhere, caring for him: "Is she there in the world of the ancestors? Can she see him now? Will she look after him?" (179) These feelings prove how much Malibongwe actually needs his mother, who is the only person that provides him with the basic protection to survive. The boy fears that Griffith might stop caring for him, now that Xoliswa is gone and will never return.

4.7. Malibongwe's short life and bitter end

Malibongwe is not only traumatised by his mother's incapability of properly caring for him out of bitterness and pain, but also by the great poverty the family lives in. He spends the first few years of his life out on the streets while his mother dedicates herself to begging and prostitution in order to earn enough money to survive. Thanks to Griffith Masica, the two have at least a roof over their heads, but living conditions in the township are miserable. The walls, which are made of corrugated iron, do not keep out heat or cold and there is neither electricity nor running water to regulate the temperature inside the shack. Furthermore, the boy is permanently forced to witness his mother being sexually used by a man. Also Malibongwe's school is in a very poor condition, due to unmotivated teachers, crammed classrooms, and lack of materials. It seems that working conditions at the township school are miserable to such a degree that the teachers have no intention of making an effort to teach their students properly.

Malibongwe does not show any talent for none of the subjects and struggles with letters and numbers. School cannot grant the boy a refuge from the problems at home, but rather prepares him for street life, as he achieves escaping from bullies, surviving without any friends due to the fact that "[h]e has been on the streets too long to trust anyone; he has seen too much abuse to allow anyone near." (139) It is certain that the boy will not receive a proper education and live a better life than his mother, that is, finding a decent job that provides him with sufficient money to allow himself the luxury of a home of his own. Apart from begging, Malibongwe has no other abilities or talents, since he receives no support, neither from his mother nor from his teachers. Normally, young children learn very fast and are extremely curious about the things happening around them, but the prerequisite for success in learning is a caretaker that looks after the child and challenges it intellectually. Since there exists no such person in Malibongwe's life, it can be argued that he simply does not recognise the connection between a good education and improved living conditions. However, the boy quickly discovers that begging quickly leads to small amounts of money which pay his daily food. While he ought to be at school, he follows his friend Khaya to different parts of the city to go begging. It seems that the boy has finally found a friend he can trust, but after some time, it becomes apparent that Khaya only uses Malibongwe and bullies him to get the money he has gathered. There is no person he can turn to in order to talk about his problem; therefore he has to live with the humiliation.

When Xoliswa dies, her boy is afraid that he will also lose the comfort of the shack. Though Griffith attempts to fulfil the function of Malibongwe's new father, "[i]t is hard for the man and boy to be together, without Xoliswa between them" (180), so Malibongwe eventually decides to earn his living by begging on the streets. He joins a group of street children who share their food and sleeping place; however, he has to suffer from the disadvantages of being youngest member of the group. None of the children can help him, when he catches an eye infection and the boy's health condition worsens when he starts to sniff glue in order to forget all the humiliation and misery:

His head aches violently. His mind is still dull from last night's glue. He forgets that he is bothered by a constant itch in his eyes, and occasional shooting pains. He forgets where he is. He forgets that people avoid him, treating him literally like dirt. He forgets that he is wildly hungry. He just stands on the street corner, floating in time. (204)

There are people approaching Malibongwe who attempt to help him, but the boy has experienced abuse and humiliation too often as to trust anyone. One of these people is Luke, who recommends him a place where street children are cared for, instead of giving him money out of the fear that the boy will misuse it. Also Rupert Chapman, a minor character in the novel, offers Malibongwe to clean his infected eyes and provide him with medicine. Since not even his own mother has been able to provide Malibongwe with sufficient care and protection, it is impossible for the boy to believe that complete strangers, who normally treat him with contempt, are willing to help him. His decision to fight all on his own, inevitably leads to his death. During a moment of panic caused by his encrusted eyes, Malibongwe blindly runs through the streets until he collides with a car and is brutally thrown down on the ground. All his suffering finally comes to an end.

Malibongwe stares up at the drizzling sky. It is quiet now, and the crowd that gathers round him makes no noise. The hooting noises disappear, the sound of traffic dims altogether. The steady drizzle doesn't matter any more, he no longer shivers. He isn't hungry either, and his eyes have stopped itching and aching. He sinks down into the bitumen, into the bitter salt of the road. It is warmer here, embedded in the sub-base, the stone and lime compacted, the scraped earth. Perhaps he will rest for a while until he thinks of something better to do. Perhaps he will become part of this Sea Point road, embedded forever in its garishly lit consciousness. (217)

4.8. Conclusion

The two young protagonists of *What Kind of Child* are both coloured children of rape who are raised by single mothers. The women suffer immensely from their traumata caused by rape and hardly bear raising their children who permanently remind them of the fact that they are victims of sexual assaults. They have developed into mentally instable persons and display deviant behaviour towards their children. While Caitlin hardly ever talks to Luke and retreats into long periods of silence as soon as a problematic situation occurs, Xoliswa is incapable of properly caring for Malibongwe mainly because of the extreme poverty they are living in. In short, the two mothers cannot process, let alone recover from, their traumata, but pass the trauma on to their children through excluding them from society and exposing them permanently to their own desperation and helplessness. It is questionable if a young child, who is still completely dependent on motherly care, can grow into a mentally healthy person if it is constantly burdened with the problems the mother cannot cope with on her own. For instance, both children witness their mothers being sexually abused by men and suffering from the effects of brutal intercourse. The boys are too young to help their mothers, so these extreme situations frighten them terribly and force them into adulthood much too early. They are robbed of their childhood and can never enjoy the protection and tender care parents usually provide their children with. In order to survive, they learn to ignore their mothers' pain, accepting that neither their caretakers nor they themselves can improve the situation they are living in. The complete social and emotional isolation furthermore leads to the incapability to trust people and to establish healthy relationships.

Particularly the part about Luke's life as an adult reveals the severe consequences of being raised by a deeply traumatised single mother. His preference for white women, who resemble Caitlin in appearance but who completely differ in character, proves that he is not able to solve the complex inner conflict about the relationship to his mother. The four relationships he leads throughout the novel show that he mainly uses his girlfriends to have sexual intercourse, but would never release his suppressed emotions or develop genuine intimacy. Above all, he refuses to talk about his childhood. Malibongwe displays a similar inability to trust people already at a very young age. Although his health is in a very poor condition towards the end of the novel, he cannot

accept the attempts of strangers to help him and prefers to flee as soon as people approach him. Both male characters are continuously disappointed by their relatives and friends. Arthur breaks the silence about Luke's father, but disappears before the boy knows the entire story about his beginnings. Malibongwe is not only neglected by his own mother and used by his friends, but is additionally despised and ill-treated by the passengers on the streets.

Luke and Malibongwe both go through severe traumata imposed on them by their mothers; nevertheless, the circumstances each of them is born into also play an essential role with regard to the course of their lives. While Caitlin works and can afford a home and regular meals, Xoliswa is forced to turn to prostitution in order to be able to provide her child with the most necessary care. It can be argued that their respective ethnical backgrounds determine their careers: Caitlin's father is a university professor who certainly insists on a good education for his daughter. The woman finds a job at a publishing house and is able to furnish her new home when she and Luke move to Cape Town. Xoliswa, on the other hand, suffers from the disadvantage of being black and female during apartheid. Apparently, she has never received a proper education and is denied access to work after her rape, so she is completely dependent on the money she receives from men. The women's ethnical and educational backgrounds determine their sons' careers. While Caitlin moves to Cape Town to grant her son a better education, Malibongwe has no other choice than to attend the badly organised classes of the school in the township, where he desperately struggles with the subject material and is absent most of the time. The abolishment of apartheid enables Luke, who is a coloured person, to study at university, whereas at the same time, young Malibongwe begs on the streets of Cape Town.

The end of the novel presents in how far unfavourable circumstances can determine the course of people's lives. Tortured by his trauma, Luke attempts to commit suicide, but survives, so he has the opportunity to seek professional help and change his situation. Malibongwe, however, is incapable of finding a way out of poverty and is doomed to perish on the streets. The boy has no chance of recovering from his trauma since poverty entails more than one tragic event. *What Kind of Child* illustrates how rape can be fatal for both mother and child, but at the same time promises a glimmer of hope.

5. Achmat Dangor: *Bitter Fruit* ⁶⁶

5.1. Mikey's trauma and quest for identity

Mikey can be described as an average teenager who is on the verge of adulthood. He still lives at home together with his parents and has regular contact to his maternal relatives. When his mother is in hospital, he pays her a visit and comforts her with embraces as it is expected from a good son. As boys at his age usually do, he attempts to maintain his distance to his overprotective maternal relatives, spatially as well as verbally, thanks to his “offhand humour”. (22) Mikey is fascinated by books and does not hesitate to voice his opinion in his literature classes. Even as a fourteen-year-old adolescent he is already convinced of becoming a writer in the future. At the same time, he starts “playing Gandhi” (32) with his older cousin Mireille. This ‘game’ does not only represent the awakening of the boy’s sexuality, but it is also the first time that Mikey occupies himself with religion, or in particular, with the religious phenomenon of asceticism. He and Mireille test their willpower by lying naked side by side without having sexual intercourse in spite of their aroused genitals. Since then, women and sexuality start to play an important role in the boy’s life. He regards his female teacher as an attractive person and associates a ripe plum with an adult woman’s sex. Although Lydia has always been horrified by the thought of her son having sexual relations with women, it can be assumed that Mikey actually has built a healthy relationship to sexuality.

It seems that the broken marriage of Lydia and Silas does not really trouble their son. Only when Lydia spends several days in hospital, Mikey’s curiosity is aroused. When he thinks about his parents and their relationship, he also remembers his mother writing a diary in the past. Though the rape took place nearly two decades ago, Lydia’s trauma causes an unfortunate chain of events. Silas unexpectedly meets Du Boise in the supermarket and immediately tells his wife about his encounter. Lydia, who has achieved to keep her anxieties under control over the years, never wanted to have the name of her rapist mentioned in her presence again. The married couple starts a serious discussion about the past event and Lydia steps on broken glass to dull her inner pain. While Lydia is in hospital and Silas at work, Mikey cannot resist his curiosity about the

⁶⁶ Unless otherwise indicated all quotes in this chapter are from Dangor 2004.

content of the diary and retrieves it from his mother's drawer. Although he initially thinks that the booklet will only contain dull documentations of "the routine passage of life, births, deaths, petty cruelties and vain hopes" (32), he suddenly has a presentiment of a link between the diary and his mother's accident. During one of his visits, he overhears his parents mentioning the name 'Du Boise', which he keeps in mind until he finds a way to gather more knowledge about this person. About twenty years after Lydia's rape, Mikey reads the lines which his mother intended to hide from intruders and finds out the truth about his origins. The first entry reveals that his mother is raped by a white policeman and that she immediately knows that she is pregnant. A detailed description of the sexual assault follows, including "Du Boise's eyes, his smell, his grunts, the flicker of fear when he reached his climax and, for a moment, was not in control." (127) Furthermore, Lydia writes down her innermost thoughts about the child growing inside her. Mikey is tremendously shocked and filled with horror when he reads the confidential lines his mother produced in order to relieve her unbearable pain. "He reasserts control, smothers a cry, the need to weep that rises primitively inside him." (127) The shock he suffers has two sources. Firstly, he learns that he is a child of rape and that his life was created out of an act of violence. For nearly two decades, he regarded Silas as his biological father. Although Mikey achieves to continue accepting him as such, he always keeps in mind that in reality he descends from another man he does not know. Moreover, he has to come to terms with having the genes of "some murderous white man [...] who worked for the old system" (131), which Silas fiercely opposes. Secondly, the boy is traumatised by the fact that his mother was brutally raped and deeply traumatised by the horrible event. Although it is not explicitly mentioned in the novel, it can be assumed that a young man his age usually develops the urge to protect his mother.

Although Mikey quickly recovers from the initial shock, the revelation leaves behind deep marks on his soul and results in a change of personality. He immediately calls Kate, a lesbian colleague of Silas, and sleeps with her. In spite of her preference for female sexual partners, Kate desires the young man and lets him use her for his selfish purpose. On the one hand, it can be argued that sexual intercourse helps Mikey to release the tension and frustration caused by the fatal revelation of his origins. On the other hand, it is obvious that he manipulates the older woman in order to obtain information about Du Boise, since he asks her to retrieve documents about the former

policeman from the security archives. The young man realises that “it will not be possible to apply his golden rule – look to the future, always – with the same single-mindedness as before. He can no longer think of the future without confronting the past.” (131) The terrible shock results in a loss of identity and a loss of his sense of belonging. Therefore, he craves for information about his origins.

When Lydia returns from hospital, the family avoids talking about the incident and each family member prefers to continue his or her life in isolation and silence. Mikey drastically changes his style of dressing and dedicates his spare time to drinking and going to clubs. “His external self reflects the coldly strident person being formed inside.” (168) Silas and Lydia even fear that he is taking drugs. However, their worries and problems do not bother him any longer, but he is exclusively occupied with giving his life a new direction. Apart from his change in character and appearance, Mikey also insists on being called by his given name ‘Michael’. The sudden shock entails a desperate struggle for identity and causes the need in the young man to define himself as a new person.

Even before reading Lydia’s diary, Mikey wishes his parents had offered him one of their religions, which could help him to “relieve himself of the responsibility of his thoughts.” (87) He has been brought up as “Christmas Catholic” (88) and blames his parents for his lack of sense of belonging. Although Silas is a Dutch Protestant and Lydia a Catholic, the young man feels attracted to his grandfather’s religion, the Islam, having the impression that “Ali Ali is someone he can identify with.” (88) During his phase of transformation, Lydia is extremely concerned when she hears her son reading in the Koran. Du Boise’s presence in the boy’s mind evokes the need to “find out more about [his] beginnings.” (187) In spite of the shocking revelation that Silas is not his natural father, Michael searches for the Ali family in order to retrace his roots. What is at first a mere exchange of formalities soon develops into a special relationship that is based on mutual respect. Michael maintains contact to his cousin Sadrodien and regularly visits the Imam Ismail in the mosque where his grandfather Ali Ali once was Imam. Sadrodien insists on driving Michael home in order to avoid dangerous situations in the streets of the township. The group of Muslims realises that Michael “is on some holy quest” (189) and Imam Ismail describes him as “a desert, pure and barren, waiting for a wind to shape it”. (195) The young man has lost his sense of belonging and dares not to speak about his problem with Lydia and Silas, who are deeply involved in the

tragedy and both refuse to bring up the matter. The Imam, however, exactly mentions the delicate issue Michael struggles with:

There are certain things people do not forget, or forgive. Rape is one of them. In ancient times, conquerors destroyed the will of those whom they conquered by impregnating the women. It is an ancient form of genocide. [...] The Romans and the Sabine women, the Nazis and the Jewish women in the concentration camps, the Soviets in Poland, Israeli soldiers and Palestinian refugees, white South African policemen and black women. You conquer a nation by bastardizing its children. (204)

His study colleague and friend Vinu confronts Michael again with the problematic issues of rape. The two young people have quickly become close friends because they both descend from parents with different ethnical backgrounds and struggle with their identity. Vinu feels that she can trust Michael and reveals to him that she has been sleeping with her father since she was fourteen. While the young woman insists on having had intercourse with her father out of love, Michael is convinced that a case of child abuse is presented to him. He can persuade his friend that her father is a criminal, whereupon she decides that the only viable solution is to kill the rapist. It is also Vinu who praises him for insisting on being called 'Michael', since "[a] child's given name is an instrument of self-identity, of freedom" (206). According to her, nicknames are imposed on children by their parents and only serve to preserve the innocent nature of a child. The young man indeed exchanges his nickname for his given name during a phase in which he cannot any longer identify with his parents.

5.2. Mikey's relationship to his parents

When Lydia is only eighteen, she is raped by Françoise Du Boise, a white policeman who takes advantage of the laws of apartheid. During her ordeal, her husband Silas is locked into the police van and desperately cries for help. The young woman knows that she is pregnant directly after the violation, but she does not dare to tell anyone about her pregnancy and decides "to conceal the moment of conception from everyone" (128), even from her husband who was involved in the violation. Her diary presents the only way Lydia can process her trauma. She records all the appalling thoughts that cross her mind during her pregnancy, including the inner conflict about the child growing inside her. She considers an abortion and even killing the child after it is born given that she is unable to love it. Nevertheless, Lydia comes to the conclusion that she is "already

beginning to separate the child in [her] from the father's ugly, fleshy features, his grunts, his groans," and asks herself if "the one life [must] be damned because of the other". (128) In spite of all doubts, the beginning of the novel reveals that Lydia dearly loves her eighteen-year-old son Mikey and almost displays exaggerated care for her boy. It is possible that Lydia has transformed into an overprotective mother, on the one hand, because she knows how cruel people can be and therefore is concerned about her son's safety, and on the other hand, because she lives in constant fear that her son might have inherited Du Boise's "dull rapist genes" (120). Her accident proves that Lydia still suffers from her trauma; however, she achieves to keep her anxieties under control. She never burdens her child with it, but rather relieves her frustration in the presence of her husband.

The relationship between Lydia and Mikey goes through different phases of closeness and distance. When Mikey is still a baby, Lydia uses to sniff at the boy out of the fear that she could detect Du Boise's smell on him. What started as precaution soon develops into an affectionate ritual between mother and son. However, as soon as Mikey notices that the other members of the family are filled with horror when watching the ritual, he starts to reject Lydia. Years later, when he observes a dog sniffing at its whelps, he regrets "discourag[ing] his mother from leaning her face into his body and inhaling his odours" (140). The incident with his cousin Mireille challenges the loving mother-son-relationship, too. Lydia is horrified when she discovers her young sister together with her son, lying naked side by side in bed. She is convinced that the two teenagers have been sleeping with each other, condemning their 'game' as "incestuous relationship" (44). Mireille is sent to Canada, so Mikey feels not only alone without her, but additionally feels alienated from his family, especially from his mother, who cannot conceal her anxiety and disappointment about her son's behaviour. In spite of the considerable irritation caused by the incident, the tension among Lydia's family soon vanishes and life goes back to normal. Such as an average family, the Alis have to struggle with minor and more serious problems, particularly when their son reaches puberty and discovers his sexuality, but "whatever passed between them, love always won" (140). Also when Lydia is in hospital, her son displays great affection by "resting his head on her chest with a tenderness that belied his tall, gruff appearance" (23) and is bothered by his "mother's distance" and the fact that she "is burrowing into her pain for comfort" (28). The relationship between Mikey and

Lydia has increased in intensity to such a degree that the boy develops the ability to sense his mother's presence and mood even before she is actually in the same room. Lydia, in turn, is capable of sensing if another person who does not belong to the close family has held her boy when Mikey is still a baby.

When Mikey reads his mother's diary and realises that he is a child of rape, he suddenly sees all the affection Lydia has expressed towards him from a different point of view:

Suddenly, every tender touch, hug, or kiss on the forehead she had offered him no longer seemed like a spontaneous, simple, motherly gesture. He remembered the anguished look in her eyes when she held him, and how she often embraced him so fiercely that he feared she wanted to tell him about some great wrong she had done. Lydia had loved him out of pain and guilt. Yes, she too suffered the inverted morality of other rape victims, accepting the blame for what had happened. (129f.)

He is deeply shocked by the fact that he is not the product of love between a couple, but of brutality and pain. In her diary, Lydia describes her inner struggle about keeping the child or having an abortion. She is not capable of feeling the excited anticipation of expecting a child, which pregnant women usually feel, but wonders if she will actually be able to love her son. Although Lydia has definitely proved that she is able to accept, love, and raise Mikey together with Silas, all the shocking information about Mikey's beginnings present overwhelming and traumatising facts the boy is incapable of dealing with. Realising the truth alienates Mikey from his mother and brutally forces him into adulthood. When Lydia has been hospitalised, the boy seeks refuge in his mother's bosom while the Oliphant family keeps eagerly inquiring about the accident. Now, the young man cannot regard his mother as a protector any longer and even notices a change in her smell.

When Mikey thinks of his mother, the word 'Mama' no longer comes to mind. Gone is the softness, the warmth of that word. It is no longer capable of absorbing him, the way it did when he was a child. He knows that Mama cannot offer him refuge in her motherly smells, gentle, milky, a blur of undefined generosity. There is a sharpness to her now, a sweetness of oranges, tangerines, he searches for the word – citrus! – that was not there when he snuggled into her as an infant, feeding on her breasts, or as a little boy, simply seeking love. (139)

Soon after Mikey's discovery, his mother returns home, but instead of celebrating a happy family reunion, the members of the Ali family feel uncomfortable and irritated about living together again. Though they have been a relatively happy family before,

suddenly none of them knows how to approach the others. “Mother and son should not be avoiding each other like this,” (154) is what Mikey thinks when each family member spends most of the time in their respective rooms, but he is not capable of breaking the silence. Mother and son feel terribly awkward when the young man rests his head on Lydias lap the way he used to do before. Neither of the two dares to move or to change their uncomfortable position, but wait until the embarrassing moment passes. While Mikey is traumatised by the fact that he is a child of rape and feels uncertain how to behave towards his mother, Lydia and Silas still struggle with the continuing presence of the name Du Boise. The tension between the married couple leads to a bitter argument and Silas goes away leaving his wife crying. When Mikey comes to comfort her, Lydia realises that she draws him to her “the way she had always wanted to draw a man to her, at her behest, for her own comfort and pleasure.” (162) She kisses him on the mouth and leads him to her bed in which he is lying down obediently. After Lydia’s rape, her husband could never provide her with the care she needed so urgently, but denies to talk about the rape and “makes [her] pain his tragedy.” (127) At one point Lydia even blames Silas for not having had the pride and courage to kill Du Boise for raping her. Furthermore, Silas additionally hurts her by betraying her with a colleague during his work underground. Mikey, on the contrary, is not initiated into her secret to the best of her knowledge and looks after her out of genuine love and concern. Although the young man is already on the verge of adulthood, Lydia cannot accept the thought of her son having sexual relations with women. It could be argued that she idealises Mikey and defines him as the special man in her life whom she does not want to share with any other woman. Although his main purpose is not revenging his mother, in the end it is Michael who fulfils Lydia's wish to have her rapist killed. After being consoled by her son, Lydia laments “[h]ow difficult it will be, from now on, to love him only as a son.” (162) Apparently, she really bears more than motherly feelings for Mikey in this situation and desires him for being the man Silas never has been. Nevertheless, she regrets her thoughts right away, fearing that she “kissed her son carnally” (167) and wonders what is going on inside her son, hoping that he does not think of the incident the way she does. While Lydia terribly worries about the embarrassing situation, Mikey seems never to speak about or even think of the delicate issue. He is occupied with processing his trauma and with planning his future in which neither Du Boise, nor his family has a place.

When he turns away from his parents out of the urge to establish a new identity, Mikey changes his nickname to his given name 'Michael'. While Silas accepts Mikey's wish, Lydia refuses to call her son 'Michael': "Michael belongs to someone else, *Mikey* is my son" (219). She clings to 'Mikey' who is the person Michael was before suffering from the great shock and starting to search for a new identity. She continues being extremely concerned about her son when his teacher calls and tells her that her husband's gun has disappeared directly after Mikey's visit. However, Lydia eventually withdraws from her son's issues, accepting that he "is nineteen years old, a man, a seducer of older women" (250f.), and therefore "should take responsibility for his actions." (251) Trauma causes that mother and son, who have enjoyed a loving relationship for nearly twenty years, are forced to distance themselves from each other and to treat each other's problems with indifference in order to be able to continue their lives.

Lydia has never told Silas that Mikey is in fact her rapist's son and wonders if her husband has ever questioned his blood relationship to Mikey. Since Silas himself descends from a black father and a white mother, his son's lighter complexion cannot be regarded as indicator of his true origins. Lydia's ritual of carefully sniffing at her boy rouses a feeling of uncertainty in Silas, so he "suspiciously [stares] at her, his fear and jealousy unspoken." (120) Now that the name Du Boise reappears among the Ali family and he finds himself in hospital after a seizure, this "distant fear came back to Silas, one that he rarely allowed to take shape in his mind – *Mikey is not my son, not physically*". (91) He has a disturbing dream about Mikey having long blond hair which reminds him of Du Boise's appearance, but immediately tries to fight off the uncanny thought. It becomes evident that Silas feels uncertain about his son's origins, but vehemently suppresses his fear of not being Mikey's biological father.

Although it seems that father and son hardly ever talk to each other, Mikey's feelings prove that they lead a healthy relationship. When the boy sees Silas after having read the diary, he still feels great affection for the man he has regarded as his biological father for eighteen years. "He has always been there, kind and generous in the main, even if somewhat preoccupied, a good father, Mikey would testify if the need ever arose." (130f.) Though Lydia regularly presses Silas to show greater interest in his son's life, Mikey's thoughts reveal that the boy feels loved and protected by his father. Silas' jealousy at Mikey and Lydia's most intimate relationship further indicate that he has always loved Mikey as his own son. The fact that he cannot be part of this close bond

makes him feel like an outsider. In spite of their mutual love, also Silas fails to support his son during the difficult phase the family goes through and refuses to talk to him as soon as he notices the changes in Michael's looks and behaviour.

Michael surprisingly looks for his father's Muslim family, who immediately recognizes their brother's need for personal and intellectual support and shows him respect and the willingness to discuss any topic however delicate it is. As soon as the young man has established regular contact to the paternal part of his family, he temporarily is in doubt about Lydia's "usually infallible maternal instincts" (186): "He feels immersed in his family, these are his people, these dark-face, hook-nosed hybrids; he longs to go and look in a mirror, seek confirmation of his desire to belong- Lydia must be wrong! How can Du Boise be his biological father?" (189) Michael definitely finds himself in a state of confusion and does not know what to believe. The lack of communication among the Alis prevents a resolution of the family crisis and rather supports Michael's fateful decision to put a drastic end to the extremely difficult situation.

5.3. The end: Michael the Avenger

Bitter Fruit ends with Michael taking revenge on the rapists, that is, firstly on Johan Viljoen, the father of Vinu who slept with his daughter when she was still a child, and secondly on François Du Boise, his own biological father. Michael does not act in the heat of the moment, but the crimes are planned in detail. He seduces a female teacher in her house and steals her husband's gun from its drawer. This is the second time Michael has sex with a woman the age of his mother to get what he wants. Sleeping with Kate helps him to receive the necessary data about Du Boise to seek him out; now he uses his teacher to get hold of the lethal weapon he needs to fulfil his self-imposed mission. The Muslim Ali family pulls strings to enable Michael to exchange the stolen gun for another one "from elsewhere" (241), which will make investigations extremely difficult for the police. Moreover, he has travelled the routes to the places of murder several times before and carefully chooses the moments in which the shooting will take place in order to attract as little attention as possible. Michael definitely is not willing to give up his freedom and to let the police arrest him for the crimes he has in mind. The young man desires to kill the two rapists and continue his life firstly in a hiding place granted

by Imam Ismail and later in India. In exchange for this favour, he provides the Muslim with a list of the government's anti-terror measures.

Michael has no doubts about killing Johan Viljoen and achieves to shoot him quickly and straight into the heart. Before leaving the scene he even observes the dead body falling backwards to the ground. The young man feels deep compassion for Vinu, who is a coloured victim abused by a white man, just like his mother. He condemns these rapists and their excuses, such as the false assumption that since Vinu "is coloured, she invited incestuous rape." (240) Apartheid has accepted and enforced innumerable crimes of such nature; therefore, it seems that Michael feels that his acts are justified. The killing of Du Boise though is not as easy as the young man expects. Despite the fact that Du Boise takes advantage of the laws of apartheid when abusing Lydia and other helpless women, Michael's thoughts suddenly begin to circle around his biological father's life and character: "So who is François Du Boise? Does he have a character, a persona, is he more than a white man, a former security policeman, a rapist and torturer?" (274) He thinks about the data of Du Boise's life which he received from Kate, such as his family, education, and marriage, as if mentally going through his biography. The cruel rapist starts to transform into a human being in Michael's mind. When father and son finally meet, Michael calls out his name and a thin man, covered in many layers of clothes which protect his cancer eaten skin, looks at him. Although Du Boise is horrified at first when he notices the gun in Michael's hand, he immediately relaxes and even smiles at his son. On the one hand, it is possible that Du Boise realises that Michael must be the product of his sexual assaults against women and expects that he has to pay for his crimes one day. On the other hand, he might be glad about the thought to be relieved soon from the pain resulting from his incurable disease when he sees the young man pointing a gun towards him. Michael cannot bear that his biological father is smiling at him and automatically shoots him twice into the face instead of shooting into the heart. This spontaneous action is caused by the sudden urge to "obliterate Du Boise's face, wipe away that triumphant, almost kindly expression, leave behind nothing but splintered bone and shattered skin." (276) The young man does not even dare to wait until Du Boise's body hits the ground, but immediately runs away.

Michael has not only obliterated Du Boise's identity, but has also destroyed his own "heritage [...] unwanted, imposed, [his] history, [his] beginnings." (276) Killing the two

men means that he can never again return home to his family and friends. Apparently, Michael has put behind his past, that is, his home, his parents and his studies, and decided to begin a new life giving himself a new name. “He, too, is going to a death of sorts. Michael is to die, Noor will be incarnated in his place.” (277) While Michael is an insecure person, who has doubts about his roots, Noor seemingly has cut all ties to his past – his real father is dead and his parents are forgotten – and creates a completely new identity. He starts a new life outside South Africa, where he will learn “about being a Muslim to perhaps become one.” (277) This is the end of the novel, therefore, the reader will never know if Michael achieves to become ‘Noor’, that is, a person free of his past and his trauma. It is not evident if the young man can overcome the trauma created by a crime through committing another crime. Although the rapist is already punished with an incurable skin cancer, Michael consciously decides take his life with one blow to give expression to all the disappointment, hate, and shame he feels. Perhaps he will one day regret that he has never found out if Du Boise repents his crimes, if Lydia is ever able to forgive her rapist, and if he himself is capable of forgiveness.

Du Boise is a representative of apartheid, in which it was acceptable for a white man to violate a black woman without legal consequences. Silas, on the other hand, fights for the new system under President Mandela and advocates the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in order to eventually create peace between black and white citizens. Du Boise turns to the Commission, requesting amnesty for the crimes he committed in the past, and even names Lydia as victim. When killing Du Boise, Michael metaphorically destroys the old system, but at the same time works against the principles of the new system. His crimes are acts of retribution, not of reconciliation. The events happening at the end of the novel imply that reconciliation is hardly possible due to the hatred that was created during apartheid and still exists between the different ethnic groups in South Africa.

Lydia and Silas hear about the murdered men in the media and fear that Michael could be involved; however, both are too much occupied with their own lonely lives as to reunite and seriously look for their son. While Lydia flees from her home in an attempt to escape from her broken marriage, Silas will most probably bury himself in work. Each member of the family goes their own way, carrying their “own burdens” (281) all alone.

5.4. Conclusion

Bitter Fruit depicts a black family that experienced the transition from apartheid into the presidency of Nelson Mandela. Mikey is the product of a helpless black woman raped by a white policeman who enjoys the freedom that apartheid grants him. Despite the pain she suffers, Lydia conceals the origin of her unwanted pregnancy and achieves to raise her son in a stable and warm environment. Nevertheless, Mikey discovers her secret when reading her diary and is deeply traumatised by the confidential information. The young man does not only alter his looks and character, but also changes his name with each drastic event happening in his life. Mikey is the innocent and happy boy whose life circles around family and studies. Like an average teenager, he establishes a certain distance to his relatives, but it becomes evident that he feels loved and protected by his family. Mikey exchanges his nickname for his given name 'Michael' after the terrible revelation of his true origins which results in a loss of identity. It could also be argued that the change of name signifies the transition into adulthood. Michael can be described as an unstable person who can no longer identify with his parents or with his old life. Lydia and Silas notice their son's distance, but both are too much occupied with their own problems as to intervene. Each family member has knowledge or suspicions about the rape and its consequences, but none of them ever talks about this extremely delicate issue. For that reason, Michael turns to Silas' Muslim family and enjoys the attention and respect they provide him with. Although he does not dare to talk openly about his trauma, his sense of belonging is strengthened and his plans are supported. His inner struggle results in the idea of killing Du Boise, as well as the father of his friend Vinu, who has been raping his daughter since she was a young teenager. After performing the acts of retribution, Michael becomes an absolutely new person who is free of his past, calling himself 'Noor'. Noor has cut all ties to his former life and leaves the country. Since the novel ends at this point, it is not obvious what the young man really feels. He has never processed his trauma, or strictly speaking, never told anyone about his discovery. Michael can never return neither to his parents, nor to the Imam Ismail and is forced to continue his life in exile. There is nothing he can cling to except for religion. It can be assumed that committing a murder does not aid recovery, but rather presents another traumatic incident which makes the condition of the traumatised person even worse.

The behaviour Mikey develops after learning the truth about his beginnings can be regarded as realistic reaction to such a tremendous shock. Since his mother is victim and his father involved in the sexual assault, they both lose their protective function in this particular situation. It is apparently impossible to break the silence that has been maintained for years. Due to the terrible revelation and the lack of communication among the family, Mikey becomes the bitter fruit, that is, the product of Du Boise's rapist seed forced brutally into Lydia's body. He transforms into a criminal not because of his biological father's genes, but because of the emotional trauma he goes through. The murder of the cruel rapist could be regarded as act of poetic justice, since Michael does not only obliterate his origins, but also revenges his mother. However, this motive would imply that reconciliation will never be possible in the new South Africa.

The novel shows how one rape can destroy the close bonds within a family and lead to severe traumatisations among the whole family, since not only the female victims are affected, but also their husbands or partners and of course the children that are created from such an act of brutality and humiliation.

6. Rachel Zadok: *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*⁶⁷

6.1. Is Faith a child of rape?

While mothers from the other books I analyse explicitly state that their children are the product of violation, in this novel, it is not plainly evident that Faith is a child of rape. The entire story is narrated by Faith, so the reader sees the world of the novel through the protagonist's eyes and is therefore limited by her perception and feelings. The first person narration is the main reason for ambiguity. When Faith is a child she does not fully understand why certain things happen. The depression of her mother and Nomsa's sudden death are the focus of her attention. As an adult, she represses the traumata she experienced as a child and only very slowly remembers the truth about the night that had caused the drastic change in her life. Another factor that obscures Faith's origins is the family's ethnic background. Since all involved persons are white, it is not immediately obvious that Marius might not be her biological father. Despite all doubts, there are several indications which strongly suggest that in fact Faith is a child of rape.

First of all, it can be argued that Faith's mother was traumatised in the past and has apparently never recovered from the horrendous event. One essential part of her life is an imaginary fairy world, which she also imposes on her daughter. According to Faith, the fairy world has always existed: "as long as I could remember, I'd been surrounded by fairies." (7) Since the girl grew up with the fairy tales, Bella seemingly had started creating the fantasy world in her head before her daughter was born, which would imply that the traumatising event took place at this certain point in time. It is very probable that she did not invent the fairy world in order to please or frighten her child, but that it is part of her mental illness that resulted from her violation. The creatures do not only form the basis of her stories, but Bella also uses them as models for her paintings. When she occupies herself with art, it seems that the traumatised woman is able to shut out all negative memories and emotions.

It could be assumed that the orchard was the spot where the rape took place. Bella sometimes goes there to paint, but she warns her daughter not to "go into the orchard alone" (7) in order to avoid being turned into a monkey child. Faith also observes her

⁶⁷ Unless otherwise indicated all quotes in this chapter are from Zadok 2005.

mother being “in one of her strange moods” (9) when she leaves her alone in the house and heads towards the orchard. Bella's behaviour indicates that this particular place is associated with dangerous fairies and evokes an uncomfortable feeling even when Faith is an adult.

Another indicator that points towards Faith being a child of rape is Marius' extreme reaction towards Bella, who leaves their child alone for hours on her birthday. He is calling her a “[s]tupid fucking bitch” (46) and a “[l]ousy fucking mother” (49) in front of Faith, which proves that he must have found out some horrible fact about his wife. However, this is not the first time that Faith hears her mother being called names. Another small girl from the town called Sannie du Toit teases Faith, telling her that her “daddy’s got a fancy-woman.” (37) Faith does not understand that the girl is calling her mother a whore, but realises that she is offending her family and wants to cry and run away. Sannie keeps teasing Faith about her father having left the family, since he only visits on weekends and neighbours hardly ever see him around. Since Sannie du Toit is still a child, it is not very probable that she knows what her words exactly mean, but might imitate a pejorative term her parents have used when talking about Bella and her family. It seems that people have been gossiping about Bella and assume that she was unfaithful towards her husband. Since the reader conceives the world through little Faith's eyes, it can only be guessed that some incident with another man happened in the past. However, Marius' outrage confirms this theory. He accuses Bella of leaving her child alone, punches her hard in the face, and would have continued hitting his wife if the small girl had not screamed at him to stop. On the one hand it seems that Marius wants to punish Bella for her irresponsible behaviour towards Faith, but on the other hand he appears unable to protect the child from a mother who is on the verge of insanity. He cannot stand wearing his wedding ring any more and brutally removes it from his hand “as if trying to rid himself of some constricting cuff.” (52) What he has discovered must have had such an impact on his relationship to his wife and his assumed daughter that the only viable solution is cutting all ties to them. He leaves his family for good and does not even return when hearing about Bella's mental sickness. Learning that Faith is not his natural child would explain the mixture of shock and aggression Marius is experiencing at this moment.

During one of her good moods, Bella strokes Faith's smooth hair wondering why she has not inherited her father's coarse hair. The mother is convinced that the girl is "a child of the fairies" (129) and remembers the day her pregnancy started: "I think the day I conceived, the fairies came and put you inside me. I used to wonder about that; your father wasn't even there, I think." (129) In this moment, Bella's constitution is influenced by a mixture of factors. Firstly, she is drugged by antidepressants and is therefore eventually in condition to talk to her child instead of locking herself up in her room all day. Secondly, she is still a deeply traumatised person, not only because of the abandonment of her husband, but also due to the event which caused her escape to the fairy world. She still suppresses the past events which were never treated by therapists, laying the blame on the fairies. It can be assumed that what she says contains a grain of truth, but the truth is grossly distorted by her fantasy. Apparently, Marius did not make her pregnant, but a person that did something horrible to Bella and was therefore transformed into a bad fairy in her mind. Obviously, this is the only way Bella manages to cope with her past.

When comparing her reflection with the painting of Dead Rex, Faith suddenly realises how similar their eyes look. She ascribes the resemblance to her imagination, but then she sees all the details she and the creature have in common: "There, in the painting, were the same long fingers, the same knuckles, the same knobby wristbone. Even the tiny freckle between the knuckle of my little finger and my ring finger was mimicked on his hand, on the hand of the most horrible fairy." (133) This shocking discovery gives reason to think that Dead Rex is the fairy version of Faith's biological father. Bella transformed her rapist into a hideous and cruel fairy and ascribes details of their child's appearance to him. Though Faith does never recognise any similarities between Dead Rex and Oom Piet, it is evident that he plays a special role in Bella's life. He is a married man known as the womaniser of the town and he is a friend of Marius. When mother and daughter meet him coming around in his car, Bella is extremely irritated by his presence. She is weakened by her mental illness and therefore incapable to provide any protection. Furthermore, her husband has left her, so there is nobody close-by to defend her and her daughter against an assault of sexual or any other nature. Her mother's helplessness arouses unknown and strong emotions in Faith. She knows that Piet does not belong to her mother's favourite acquaintances, so in this particular

situation, she experiences the urgent need to protect her mother from Oom Piet's advances.

In spite of her open dislike for Oom Piet, Bella eventually gives in and agrees to meet him out of resignation. She chooses a very decent dress, which, according to Faith, would only be apt for going to church, to avoid arousing the man. She considers committing herself again to a man in order to provide her child with care and protection. However, after their date Faith finds her mother dishevelled and drenched in tears in the kitchen, her decent dress torn. Oom Piet must have treated her violently and perhaps he tried to rape her again. His following sexual assault against Nomsa could be considered as unsatisfied desire. Since Bella refuses to sleep with him and defends herself against the penetration, he releases his sexual tension by raping the helpless black maid.

When Faith returns to the farm fifteen years later, she visits Tannie Hettie who is one of the very few acquaintances left in this place. Hettie suffers from dementia and was moved to a residence. She does not recognise Faith, but mistakes her for being Bella and warns her that “[h]e's a bad man, I told you that, Bella, he's a bad man” (288). Faith cannot make any sense out of the old woman's warning, particularly when being praised for doing something good for her child. While the reader might already guess that the bad man must be Oom Piet, the young woman only comes to the same conclusion when she remembers observing Oom Piet raping Nomsa in the maid's chamber. Hettie's concern shows that the man has a bad reputation among the women of the place and can be regarded as potential rapist. His sexual assault against Nomsa further proves that he is truly capable of committing such a crime.

6.2. Faith's relationship to her mother

Faith and her mother practically live alone on the farm. Some people have worked for the family, but all of them have either left voluntarily or have disappeared mysteriously. The father is a salesman and only visits his wife and daughter over the weekend. Hence, Bella is one of the few persons Faith has regular contact to. More precisely, she is the only person caring for the little girl. Faith grew up with the fairy tales her mother tells her, so Sillstream, Tit Tit Tay, the Tokoloshe and Dead Rex, the worst of all fairies, are

an inherent part of the mother-daughter relationship. Bella uses the fairies to educate her child. Faith hates eating gem squash, but according to her mother “Tokoloshe won’t come near you if you eat lots of gem squash.” (24) Faith cannot see the creatures, “[t]hey lived on the peripheries of [her] vision, well hidden from [her] curious eyes, but [she] knew they were there.” (7) She is young enough to believe every detail of the stories her mother tells her; furthermore, she lacks contact to her father, other families, and children of her age who could try to convince her of the ridiculousness of the fairy world.

Though in the beginning Bella cares for her daughter as it is expected of a good mother, there are moments when Faith is overwhelmed by strange feelings towards her. It is not unusual that Bella denounces childish behaviour as silly, for instance, when the girl cries, she mocks her. Faith tries hard to hold back her tears in order to avoid her mother’s sardonic comments. “Every time I cried she mocked me – ‘Cry-baby!’ – but still I could never stem the flow of tears that made me feel like I was, at those times, not her daughter.” (88) It appears that Bella wants her child to act like an adult as soon as possible. One reason could be that she feels terribly lonely on the farm due to the scarce visits of her husband and the lack of friends, so her daughter is the only person she can relate to. It can be argued that the mother-daughter relationship is based on a strong mutual dependence. Another factor that must be taken into account is the missing insight into Bella’s inner world. Assuming that Faith is the product of rape, Bella cannot permanently ignore what happened to her in the past. She obviously does not hate or abuse Faith, but the small girl senses the slight feeling of distance that exists between herself and her mother.

On her seventh birthday, Bella takes Faith out to have Coke and ice cream. When Bella goes to the toilet of the shop, hours go by without her coming back. The small girl does not give up hoping that her mother will return the next moment. She looks for her in the bathroom and wonders if her mother might have exited the moment she used the toilet. Faith refuses to believe that her mother has left her alone and waits in the shop until it is dark and the shop keeper throws her out. Later, the reader knows that her mother is on the farm, but it is not evident why she has left her child behind. It is her father Marius who has to come to fetch Faith. Back at home when they find Bella, he calls her obscene names and even punches her into the face. Naturally, the girl is momentarily

scared of her parent's fight, but this incident must above all have resulted in bitter disappointment over her mother's behaviour. Furthermore, this is the first time that Faith sees her mother cry, that is, seeing her exposing weakness. From that moment on, Bella's personality changes drastically. She falls into severe depression and neglects the farm, her child, and herself. Faith is gripped by fear when Bella's market neighbour Tannie Hettie declares that Bella is sick. The young girl cannot understand such kind of illness that does not show outside. "Her illness was mysterious and the thought of it made my hands clammy. Mother didn't get sick." (62) This radical alteration in her mother's behaviour is definitely a challenge too big for Faith. Before, the woman has always been strong and never showed any weakness, now she is not even in a condition to care for herself. A young child is certainly not capable of adopting the role of the head of the family and taking care of her own mother. While Faith is still completely dependent on a custodian, Bella finds herself in a mental state in which she shuts out everything that was dear to her, even her daughter. Therefore, Tannie Hettie sends the black maid Nomsa in support of the family to carry out the household chores, to provide the family with food, and to keep the small girl company. Nomsa fulfils her duties successfully; nevertheless, Faith starts to miss her mother terribly. Although she is around all the time, Bella's mind is absent and Faith is unable to reach her. The girl hopes that Nomsa's support would help to such a degree that "[m]aybe she would be Mother again." (82) Bella, however, is not very pleased about the presence of the black maid. Although she eats the food that is prepared for her, she accuses Nomsa of driving the fairies away and asks her to leave the farm. Faith, however, requires the help and company of the black maid during this lonely time: "Without Nomsa I would be alone. I wanted her to hug me, not to be cross with me. I wanted her to stay and save Mother from dying." (124) Since she does not understand the effects of deep depression, Faith believes that the evil fairy Dead Rex has stolen her mother's soul. If Dead Rex is regarded as the fairy form of Piet, the possible rapist of Bella, he metaphorically has stolen her soul.

What Faith feels for her mother seems to be a complete mess of emotions. Firstly, Faith responds predominantly with fear towards Bella's mental illness. On the one hand, she is constantly afraid that her mother could die and keeps alive the hope that she will be cured eventually. On the other hand, the child is horrified by the abnormal behaviour Bella displays, for instance, when she asks her daughter to leave everything behind and

come with her to the fairy world. Moreover, the girl is disappointed in and angry with Bella for causing her father to go and neglecting her duties as a mother. When Bella destroys her daughter's childish treasures, which includes Marius' wedding ring, the girl loses the last object that reminded her of her father. Faith starts a fight and violently bites and scratches her mother in order to retrieve the ring. This is the moment in which Faith ceases to feel sorry for her mother. She openly declares that she hates her mother and will never follow her to the fairy world. These emotions hint at the indifference that Faith pretends to feel towards her dead mother in the future. Only when Nomsa achieves to secretly administer the prescribed pills, Bella's condition and the troubled relationship between mother and child improve. Still, Faith is quite scared when she has to observe her mother weeping and asking for forgiveness for everything that happened. Normally, it is the child who cries and the mother who consoles it and Faith is simply too young to change role with her mother. She cannot cope with the weakness of a person who used to be strong and whose duty is to care for her and protect her. However, there is one situation in which the young girl has the impression that their roles have changed. When Oom Piet visits the farm to check Bella's condition, Faith feels "an overwhelming urge to protect her" (144) from the man she usually treats with disdain. Therefore, the girl is outraged when her mother finally agrees to meet Oom Piet and to let him in their house, but she soon notices that Bella "was not getting better, she'd just given up." (162) The decent dress Bella chooses to wear at their date does not serve its purpose of keeping Oom Piet at distance, but two acts of violence follow. The next morning, Faith finds her mother completely dishevelled in the kitchen. Her make-up is smudged, her dress is torn and she is crying, "look[ing] at me with such sadness it made me cry." (167) The girl is again confronted with the weakness of her mother who considered dating her rapist as a last resort to secure her and her daughter's future. Moreover, the police come to collect Nomsa's corpse and to arrest Bella, who is accused of killing the black maid. Due to the terrible shock, Faith is incapable of remembering that she accidentally shot Nomsa during a failed attempt to save the maid from being raped by Piet. She does not realise that her mother takes all the blame and from this moment on believes that Bella is a murderer.

Fifteen years later, Faith lives in Johannesburg together with Mia, an old friend of her mother and Molly, Mia's daughter. At the age of eleven, she stops visiting her mother in prison and attempts to ignore her existence, although she has problems fitting into her

new family. When she feels the urge to remember happy moments of her childhood, Faith prefers to conjure up Nomsa instead of her mother or father and she seeks to keep a clear picture of the black maid in her mind. During New Year's Eve celebrations, Faith receives the message that her mother has died. The distance between mother and daughter has grown to such an extent that Faith seems indifferent about her mother's death and feels extremely annoyed by the fact that she is obliged to organise the funeral. She chooses the cheapest coffin, but would have preferred to "let the state bury her in one of those prisoner graves marked with a concrete slab and a number." (175) Who has once been the only source of love and security for the girl is now regarded as cold murderer who does not even deserve a proper funeral. The young woman is deeply convinced of her mother's guilt and refuses to forgive her, even when she sees the emaciated corpse lying in the coffin at the funeral: "God forgive her. I can't." (177) Bella's behaviour caused the gradual disappearance of all beloved persons from Faith's life. During the strange night at her seventh birthday the girl's dog Boesman was shot and her father left farm and family for good. His outrage indicates that Bella must have been the reason for his departure. As soon as the girl has learned to love her new companion and caretaker Nomsa, the maid disappears and Faith's mother is taken to prison. Bella's mental illness and alleged crime eventually result in being separated from her daughter, so Faith has to leave the farm and with it everything that has been familiar.

Despite her determined attempt to treat her mother's death with indifference, it is inevitable for Faith to be confronted with the past. She realises that Bella did not spend the last fifteen years in prison, but was moved into a mental hospital due to her poor mental condition, where she was kept locked up until her death. When her foster sister Molly insinuates that she has regrets about having ignored her mother, Faith even considers that "[her] stopping visits could have been what pushed her over the edge, made her lose hope and stop fighting the madness" (185) and is moved to tears. Back at the farm, Faith finds Bella's paintings and sketches, which all depict her young self in different poses and activities. Even all the fairies have Faith's face, which makes her "realize just how isolated Mother was, how lonely she must have felt." (297) The young woman eventually feels pity for her mother and regards her as innocent when her memory slowly comes back and reveals that it was Piet who abused Nomsa. When Faith confronts the man with his crime and declares that she cannot believe that her mother

went to prison in his place, he clarifies that “[s]he didn’t protect me, girlie, she protected you.” (316) In the end, Faith remembers every detail of the fateful night and recalls her awkward attempt to save Nomsa from Piet’s brutality, which resulted in the maid’s death. Bella took the blame in order to protect her only child. Even if Faith is a child of rape, it is obvious now that her mother must have loved her daughter so deeply that she was willing to sacrifice her own freedom in order to give Faith a better life.

6.3. Faith's multiple traumatic experiences

Gem Squash Tokoloshe might be regarded as novel which depicts very clearly how the traumatising of a mother can lead to severe traumatising of the child. First of all, it is the mother herself who presents an unstable caretaker and is therefore unable to look after her child properly. At the beginning of the novel, the reader notices that Bella sometimes acts strangely towards her daughter, who feels anxious in these situations. Apart from the fairy tales the mother imposes on Faith, she uses her penetrating gaze to discipline her: “I couldn’t take my eyes off her, fearing that if I did she would turn into something bad, something that was not my mother.” (15) Faith’s concern soon becomes reality and her mother turns into a madwoman. Bella’s rape can be considered as starting point of a whole series of traumatising events which do not only affect herself, but also her daughter.

The first significant incident is the disappearance of Marius. Young Faith loves her father dearly and cannot await his return home after a working week or even longer, because without him, the family is incomplete. It pleases the girl to remember watching sunsets together with her Papa before he started working as a salesman. The parents’ fierce fight and Marius’ final decision to abandon his daughter and wife is a great shock for the girl; however, it seems that Faith manages to come to terms with the loss of her father. Apparently, she is used to his regular absence and expects to continue her life on the farm together with her mother. Bella, on the contrary, suffers from another traumatising and falls into deep depression. As discussed in the previous chapter, the mother-daughter-relationship deteriorates drastically due to Bella’s mental illness and is marked by neglect, anger, and disappointment. So it is not Marius’ act of leaving the family which affects Faith to such great extent, but rather the ever-lasting absence of a

father whose duty it should be to protect his young daughter from an irresponsible mother. Nevertheless, young Faith's opinion about her parents is clear; she regards her father as the innocent one and her mother as the 'freak'. When she becomes older, Mia reveals that before their marriage, it was Marius who had madness in his eyes, most probably because he had been serving in Angola. The foster mother explains that the couple somehow "swapped eyes" (233) after their wedding. While Marius might finally have recovered from his experiences during war, Bella's eyes changed because she was raped at that time. Faith feels the urge to defend her Papa against Mia denouncing him to be the reason for Bella's insanity. Although the young woman cannot understand why her father has never sought to establish contact with her, she is incapable of blaming him. Only when she discovers a letter he wrote soon after leaving, her emotions change drastically. In his letter, Marius explains that he will never come back and bids his daughter to take care of herself and of her sick mother. Faith supposed that her father has never found out about Bella's sickness and therefore refused to come back and to help his family. Finding out the truth triggers the sorrow that had burdened Faith since the day her Papa left:

A pain, buried so deep inside me that I didn't know it was there, constricts my breath. I feel a convulsion stiffening my body. My hands spasm into tight fists, crumpling my father's letter. I squeeze the page, screwing it up into a tight ball in my stiff hand, and when I can get it no smaller, I let out a scream and hurl it across the room. (241)

Faith cannot believe that her well-being was of so little importance to her father that he left his only daughter with an insane mother. He could have been the solid rock in Faith's life when Bella's unstable personality changed to the worse; nevertheless, he chose the easy way out of this extremely problematic situation. The young woman is deeply disappointed in her father and feels unloved and abandoned.

If Marius had returned and had looked after his sick wife instead of leaving her with a seven-year-old child, Nomsa would probably not have been killed and Faith would have stayed at the farm together with her parents. However, the young girl suffers a great loss when all beloved persons gradually disappear from her life and she is forced to abandon her home in order to move to Johannesburg to live with Mia. From day to day she has to become accustomed to a new mother, a new sister and a completely unknown city. While Mia spends the nights working in a club, Faith and Molly struggle to come to terms with each other, since "[e]very night [Faith] would wake up screaming and

thrashing about, while Molly yelled at [her] and delivered blows with her pillow and her small fists.” (181) The girls’ fight takes a little time, but eventually they realise that they both feared being left on their own and Molly becomes Faith’s closest confidant. Nevertheless, such friendship is not sufficient for a substantial recovery to take place. The girl has been traumatised several times during an age, in which love and a sense of security are vital for a healthy development of the self. In addition to the regular nightmares, she also attempts to distance herself completely from the traumatising event she has experienced.

I was finding it progressively more difficult to bury myself and my feelings. When I went to the bathroom I would only look at the floor, in case I caught a glimpse of myself in the mirror. I wanted to pretend I wasn’t me, that everything that happened has happened to somebody else. As long as I didn’t see myself or hear my voice, I could hold on to the belief that I was someone else. (182)

During the next fifteen years, Faith achieves to suppress her fears and tries hard to lead a relatively normal life in Johannesburg together with Mia and Molly. Still, it becomes obvious that the young woman is a shattered person. Her incapability of feeling genuine love and of leading a stable relationship becomes particularly clear when she seduces her boss Ketso and lets him use her. The sexual act lacks pleasure but rather is marked by brutality and anger and happens out of an urge to be punished. It can be assumed that the several traumata she had to live through, transformed Faith into an unloving and frigid person who does not dare to establish a close relationship out of fear to lose the beloved person again. Moreover, she could never accept Johannesburg as her new home, and still feels “displaced, unsettled, homeless” (203), although she has spent a considerable amount of time in the city.

Faith definitely has developed into a volatile person, but she achieves to keep her anxieties under control. The sudden death of her mother, however, lets the effects of her multiple traumata re-emerge. The persons who Faith achieved to shut out from her life reappear in terrible nightmares and daydreams. Phantasmal figures in the forms of Nomsa and Bella haunt her and awaken dim memories and “unsettling emotions” (202) from the past. The blind herbalist’s allusion to bad spirits that are buried and can only be freed by “go[ing] home” (230) suggest that Faith finally has to return to the place of trauma to process the traumatic events she lived through as a child. The considerable shock caused by her father’s letter on the one hand leads to the realisation that Faith’s

life “lacks meaning, direction” (242), but on the other hand eventually prompts her to step out of her misery and make a change.

6.4. The end: Faith's healing?

In the end of the novel, adult Faith narrates her return to the farm and gradually remembers the traumatic events from her childhood. What had been distorted and spooky nightmares about Bella and Nomsa before, transform into clear and vivid memories from the past. Faith dreams about herself as a child approaching Nomsa's room, noticing that “[s]omeone's crying. Someone's moaning.” (290) The young woman has not yet grasped the full meaning of her dream, however, the following encounter with Oom Piet raises a certain feeling of suspicion in her. He keeps inquiring about the memories of the fatal night fifteen years ago and grows fairly nervous in spite of Faith's amnesia. Her next dream reveals the scene of Oom Piet brutally raping the black maid in her chamber, which seven-year-old Faith was able to observe through a slice in the door. The memories which have been locked away deep inside young Faith come flooding back and the young woman is now convinced that the man did not only violate, but also murder Nomsa. She searches for him in his butchery and confronts him with the fact that she finally recalls the past. Faith has not yet realised that it is impossible to take revenge on Oom Piet since he knows the secret that the girl has buried deep inside her and that Bella took with her to the grave. So it is Oom Piet who provides the last missing part when he reveals that Bella did never protect him, but her daughter. Faith slowly becomes aware of the role she played during the night which changed her life forever: “I peel my hands away from the sticky floor and turn them over and I look at the blood that stains my palms red and I wonder why I never saw it before.” (317) Back at the farm, Faith enters the maid's former room, where she finds the missing painting of Dead Rex. Her body reacts violently when she revives the complete memory of the fatal night:

The scream builds up from a place that is deeper than my gut, making my innards feel like they will explode with the pressure of it. Inside me it grows, expanding outwards until I feel so tight I'm sure I will burst. There is a pop, pain slices through me like I'm being cut with a butcher's knife, and I open my mouth to let it out, but nothing comes, only the dry rasp of expelled air. (318f.)

Faith is completely overwhelmed by the truth she just has discovered and finds herself in a trance-like state during the following days. It can be assumed that the people around the young woman are Petrus, a black man who cares for the farm, and one of the women who live with him. The guilt she feels manifests itself in the form of fairies which torment her, calling her “[k]iller” (319) and trying to retrieve the swelling thing Faith keeps inside herself. She refuses to free herself of the lump which represents all the traumatic events that have happened and all the negative feelings the woman has harboured during her life. Since trauma has always been part of her life, Faith believes that “releas[ing] it would mean I no longer am” (321) and therefore clings to the past.

The African woman who takes care of Faith and tries to feed her soup is convinced that only a witchdoctor is able to help and insists on calling one. Within the next three days the black old man achieves to retrieve the swelling lump from Faith’s body and leaves as soon as the young woman regains consciousness. Faith compares herself with “an empty shell, hollow and vacant”, but at the same time she feels “free”, like a “blank canvas” (323). Eventually, she understands that she herself can determine her future without being influenced by past events. This is the first time that she does not shut down emotionally, but consciously mourns all the persons she has lost, letting “[t]he tears flow easily, for Papa and Mother and Nomsa, for Ouma and Grandma English and Tannie Hettie, for Boesman, for Molly, for the fairies, and finally for my small self that died with Nomsa.” (324) Her new self, that is free of the terrible pain she endured for more than a decade, recovers soon and Faith feels “whole and healed and more than [she] ha[s] ever been” (325). She develops the ability to love and trust people and calls Mia and Molly whom she accepts now as her family.

It could be argued that the ending of the novel is too abrupt. As discussed above, Faith experienced several traumatising events when she was only a small child and it becomes obvious that she has severe problems as a young woman. In the end, she learns not only that – strictly speaking – she committed a murder, but also that her mother was innocent when she spent fifteen years locked away in a mental asylum only to protect her daughter. She ought to feel immensely guilty after regarding her mother with utter contempt for killing Nomsa and after refusing to visit her. Although young Faith intended to help the black maid, she accidentally killed her and actually has to live with that fact for the rest of her life. It is not very probable that a witchdoctor can heal such a

deeply traumatised person as Faith in such a short period of time. It is questionable if a person suffering from a mental breakdown can be helped in such a small amount of days which separate the shocking revelation of Nomsa's death and the visit of the witchdoctor. Naturally, the actions carried out by the witchdoctor could be regarded as metaphor for the healing process a traumatised person goes through. At first he covers the swelling thing in Faith's belly with a black liquid and then extracts the hardened lump with his own hands. Victims also have to distance themselves from the traumatic event and overcome the constant fear in order to continue their lives. Nevertheless, it is suggested that Faith is a completely new person after her treatment and can start a new life without anxieties and depression. The final lines of the novel describe the woman's healing: "Mosetsana's fear-hate finished now. Dead Rex drops the hard shell to the ground, crush it under splayed foot into tiny bits that disperse like dust on the wind." (328) Usually, it takes a long time of treatment and hard mental work to accept one's past and overcome such horrible trauma. Additionally, it is not proved if victims will ever be able to be entirely liberated from anxieties caused by trauma. Therefore, Faith's quick and complete recovery seems to be rather unconvincing.

Moreover, Faith has just found out that Oom Piet, whom she regarded as kind of a family friend, raped Nomsa brutally before she was killed and the young woman should also become aware of the fact that he abused her mother before releasing his sexual tension when violating the black maid. Although Faith was not prosecuted for unintentionally shooting Nomsa, she suffers terribly when she is forced to move to Johannesburg after losing her home, both her parents, and her caretaker. Oom Piet, on the contrary, is a cruel rapist who might never be punished for his crimes if it is assumed that Faith has accepted her past and made peace with herself and her mother. Furthermore, the protagonist might never establish the truth about Bella's initial trauma and Marius' true reason for leaving the family for good.

6.5. Conclusion

Gem Squash Tokoloshe tells the story of an assumed child of rape who never learns of her roots, but suffers immensely from the far-reaching consequences of her mother's violation. Bella is obviously a deeply traumatised person and there are several indicators

which suggest that Marius is not the biological father of Faith, however, first person narration prevents the reader from discovering what really happened to her in the past. Although the first part of the novel focuses on the mother-daughter-relationship and Bella's mental breakdown after being abandoned by her husband, the possible rape is not the centre of the story, but the fatal night in which the black maid Nomsa is abused by Oom Piet and accidentally shot by Faith. Amnesia saves the girl from a total breakdown, but the loss of everything familiar constitutes the peak of her traumatising. The second part is set fifteen years afterwards and deals with Faith's adult life, her return to the farm, and her reconciliation with the past. The young woman has lost the ability to love and trust other people and struggles constantly to give meaning to her life. She has cut off all ties to her mother whom she blames for killing Nomsa, but is forced to tackle the past when Bella unexpectedly dies. It is suggested that trauma can exclusively be overcome through returning to the place where the traumatising took place. Only when Faith enters Nomsa's chamber, she remembers every detail of the terrible happenings and is paralysed by the tremendous shock. The novel ends with Faith's healing thanks to the help of a witchdoctor who removes a hard lump – the representation of her trauma – from her body. Her trauma started with a fairy world imposed on her which belongs to the traditions of the native black community in South Africa and is finished through the magic of a black witchdoctor.

Gem Squash Tokoloshe does not make conception through rape subject to discussion, but rather depicts the difficult relationship between a traumatised mother and her child and presents the challenges the child encounters in the future. Bella's traumata result in an inability to take proper care of her small daughter who starts to harbour feelings of disappointment and anger towards her mother. One disaster leads to another and as an adult, Faith despises her thoroughly. Throughout the second part, the young woman begins to feel sympathy for her mother and realises how lonely her life had been at the farm. In the end, it becomes evident how much love Bella felt for her daughter when she took the blame for Nomsa's death. However, Faith fails to respond to this huge amount of motherly affection, because it seems that she has simply processed and accepted all painful memories and events that she experienced before the visit of the witchdoctor.

In conclusion, the novel demonstrates that a child of rape inevitably suffers from the traumatising of the mother, since the effects will not only affect the mother-child-

relationship, but will also have an impact on the relationship to the husband of the victim and probably on other dear persons from the family's social surroundings. However, *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* also presents the possibility of the child's reconciliation with the past and the final recovery from trauma.

7. Zakes Mda: *The Madonna of Excelsior*⁶⁸

7.1. Is Popi a child of rape?

The story told in *The Madonna of Excelsior* covers Niki's life as a young woman, her participation in the orgies with white men, and Popi's beginnings, without leaving any information gaps the readers have to fill with their own assumptions. The novel gives insights into the thoughts and feelings of various characters, which includes Niki; therefore, it is difficult to determine if Popi can simply be classified as a child of rape. On the one hand, it can be argued that Niki voluntarily offered her body to Stephanus Cronje, but on the other hand, there are various indications which suggest that the events happening between the black women and the white men in the barn can be labelled as cases of rape. Generally, the laws of apartheid supported "white farmers whose great sport was to waylay black girls in the fields." (16) One of these white men is young Johannes Smit, who achieves to persuade Niki to become his "masturbation gadget" (20) through giving her the money she badly needs to support herself and her alcohol addicted father. The girl is traumatised when she becomes a victim of rape: Johannes Smith throws her on the ground, impatiently removes her undergarments, and slaps her when she screams out of fear. Furthermore, she is disgusted by his hairy body and semen, which she immediately washes off weeping silent tears when she returns home. The white farmer, however, enjoys the power he has over the black girl who partially depends on his money, which is strongly reminiscent of prostitution. Niki's humiliation peaks in Johannes Smith's achievement of eventually penetrating her. From that moment on, the young woman decides to stop taking money in exchange for offering her body.

Similarly, Stephanus Cronje takes advantage of the power white people hold during apartheid, when he and other "pillars of the local Afrikaner community" (10) participate in the "partner-swopping orgies" (52) organised by white men in a barn, where they use young black women to fulfil their sexual fantasies. The butcher has already been "[r]aping her with [his] eyes" (40), when Niki was forced to undress completely in front of Cornelia Cronje when being accused of stealing meat. Niki agrees to sleep with Stephanus Cronje out of the desire to take revenge on Cornelia Cronje who inflicted

⁶⁸ Unless otherwise indicated all quotes in this chapter are from Mda 2002.

such great humiliation on her. “She did not see Stephanus Cronje, owner of Excelsior Slaghuis. She did not see a boss or a lover. She saw Madam Cornelia’s husband. And he was inside her. She was gobbling up Madame Cornelia’s husband, with the emphasis on *Madam*. And she had him entirely in her power.” (49) Niki uses the white man to exercise the power she has never possessed before and feels great satisfaction when being penetrated in Cornelia Cronje’s bedroom. Furthermore, it can be argued that the traumatising moments together with Johannes Smith in the sunflower fields have an influence on her willingness to sleep with other men. Niki feels ashamed and guilty and develops a low self-esteem. Since she has already lost her dignity when Johannes Smit achieves his goal to penetrate her, the young woman considers offering herself to Stephanus Cronje as means of taking revenge on his wife. If she had not been traumatised by her first rape, she might be proud and self-confident enough to resist the white man’s advances. It can also be assumed that Niki’s self-consciousness caused by her trauma is the reason for modelling naked in front of the trinity, who received his name for uniting the three roles of “man, priest and artist” (4) in one person. He paints distorted but beautiful images of black women who very often have their breasts and genitals exposed. Though the priest respects his models, it can be claimed that he is nevertheless a white man, known as “the man who loved women” (6), who uses art as a pretext to be able to look at naked black bodies.

Many of the black women become pregnant during their sexual activity in the barn and are arrested for breaking the Immorality Act, which forbids white and black people to have sexual relationships. However, none of the white men tries to help neither the women, nor their natural children, in order to escape punishment. Stephanus Cronje avoids Niki as soon as he learns that she is pregnant and is “busy plotting ways to stop the news from reaching Cornelia’s ears.” (61) When the white men are called to defend themselves at court, the butcher and mayor of Excelsior does not even try to prove his innocence, but commits suicide. It seems that love does not play a role at all during the orgies, but it is obvious that mere desire and the display of power are the driving forces. Naturally, the black women are not completely innocent, since they repeatedly fulfil the desires of the white men; nevertheless, they have neither the bodily power, nor the financial resources, nor the credibility in court in order to fight back the insatiable desire of Excelsior’s elite. Although Niki assumes that she has immense power over Stephanus Cronje, she ignores the fact that she is sexually abused and completely left alone when

she is arrested. Due to the lack of love and the unequal power relations it can be argued that the sexual acts performed in the barn can be regarded as equal to rape. Niki has always been a victim used by white men, who take advantage of their powerful positions to secretly fulfil their desire for sleeping with black women. Also the black community that partly narrates the story uses to refer to these events as cases of rape in their “post-apartheid euphoria” (225), presumably to emphasise the guilt of the white men and at the same time stress the innocence of their female members.

7.2. Popi and Niki

Popi’s birth is complicated and Niki is completely exhausted from being in labour for many hours, but as soon as the mother holds her baby girl in her arms, “[a] flood of love overwhelmed her. She wanted to hold her tightly against her breast. And to protect her fiercely against anyone who would dare question her reason for existing.” (57) While Niki receives her daughter with joy, the midwives already wonder at her light complexion and blue eyes and immediately recognise the resemblance to Tjaart Cronje. Although she accepts her daughter the way she is, Niki is forced to shave her child’s almost blonde hair and to darken her skin by holding her over the fire in an attempt to hide her light complexion from the police who prosecute the mothers of children with mixed blood. Popi’s colouredness is the reason why she and her mother are held in prison for a longer period of time, since her existence proves that Niki has broken the Immorality Act. Like many other black women being held in prison, Niki does not receive any support from her male connections, since Stephanus Cronje has recently committed suicide and her husband Pule works hard in the gold mines without returning home for many months. Also after being released, the woman raises Popi and Viliki all on her own.

When her children are still young, Niki permanently shouts at them. “Even when she was happy, she shouted and talked to them in stern tones.” (106) Even though she seems to have recovered from the traumata she suffered from in her youth, it can be assumed that the events have left marks on her soul which will never disappear. As a young girl, Niki is robbed of her childhood since her mother died early and her father is an alcoholic who beats her on a regular basis. Furthermore, she practically is a single

mother who has to work as a nanny for a white woman to have enough money to grant her offspring a carefree life. So, it seems to be understandable that she is harsh on her children. Her neighbours use to point the finger at her for having slept with a white man and Niki is constantly confronted with a community which will never accept her daughter. Therefore, she withdraws from social life, refuses contact to anyone except for her children, and starts a life in isolation and quietness. In spite of her slightly odd behaviour, she truly loves and tenderly cares for her children. She definitely does not want her daughter to be exposed to even more mockery and therefore warns her not to touch white boys, let alone sleep with them. However, Popi expresses her open disgust at leading a relationship with any man. She prefers spending all her life with her mother, caring for her when she is old. It can be argued that the attitude of the citizens of Excelsior towards Popi has transformed her into a frigid person who prefers to dedicate her future to the only person who has always appreciated her for her personality and accepted her appearance to marrying. Having children would further mean that Popi's offspring is exposed to the contempt and scorn of the community. Although Popi herself suffers most from their rejection, she certainly perceives how much Niki is hurt by seeing her child being judged by their relatives and neighbours.

On Niki's fortieth birthday, her daughter expresses the profound gratitude she feels towards her mother:

She wished her mother a very long life. And thanked her for all she had done for her and for Viliki. Life had been kind to them, for rarely did they sleep with empty stomachs. All because Niki was the kind of mother who would sacrifice everything for her children. She was like a hen that protected its chicks under its short wings in the face of swooping hawks. (127)

Popi's words prove that she has always felt loved and protected by her mother. Also the black community notices that the "motlopotlo" which is "the invisible cord that tied the child to the mother" (221) is very strong between Niki and Popi. Although Niki regrets having participated in the orgies with the white men, she is grateful for the "sweet harvest" (222), that is, her beautiful daughter, who is the result of her past affair with Stephanus Cronje. Whatever happens, mother and daughter care for each other, treating each other's wounds or simply keeping each other company.

Knowing that Tjaart Cronje is Popi's half-brother and having been the boy's nanny for several years, Niki advises her daughter to be friendly to him. Niki feels attached to all

her children and cannot stand the thought that Tjaart is exposed to danger when joining the army. Moreover, she is very concerned when both her natural children become politically active and become members of the town's council after the era of apartheid. "Niki had given up on her with the final mutter that they were trying to take her children away, without really elaborating on the identity of *they*." (162) Popi ignores her mother's worries about her own political engagement, but is filled with anger when Niki shows compassion for Tjaart, who is her opponent in the council. Though Niki has always been a loving mother to her, the girl cannot bear the thought of sharing her love with Tjaart whom she openly despises and refuses to understand how Niki can protect a person who fights her so fiercely.

Popi passionately engages in the politics of Excelsior and devotes a lot of her time to her work in the council. Therefore, she hardly ever sees Niki, who has completely withdrawn from society, although they live together in their shack. Nevertheless, whenever Popi needs a rest from her intensive and time consuming work, she spends time with Niki. When being together with her mother, the young woman can be herself and feels completely free from all strain, pressure, and prejudices she encounters in everyday life. "She reserved her laughter for Niki. She could afford to be carefree when she was with Niki. She became a child again. Replaying the childhood that she missed." (153) Her decision to live together with Niki and to join her in order to take care of the bees after she has resigned from the council shows the deep affection Popi feels for her mother. Niki's unconditional love and acceptance certainly support Popi to bear her life as an outcast and definitely contribute to the healing of her trauma.

7.3. Popi's longing for acceptance

Since her birth, Popi is different from all the other children in the black community of Excelsior and is therefore treated like an outsider. Already in hospital, when the girl is recently born, people wonder at her fair complexion and blue eyes. Although she cannot remember, Popi's existence is considered as a crime during apartheid. Therefore, she and Niki are arrested, while the newspapers report about the scandalous cases of "miscegenation" (87) in the town. When young Tjaart Cronje meets Niki with her small girl, he accuses her of having stolen her, because her skin colour differs from her

mother's and adds that "[s]he looks like a hotnot child. Like a boesman." (11) Also the other children use to call her mean names and refuse to play with her. Popi feels immensely hurt and disappointed about the children's behaviour, but soon gives up trying to join them and withdraws to her home, feeling that "[s]he did not deserve to play with other children in the street." (107) Her deepest wish to be like all the other black children in order to be accepted in the community is repeatedly denied and soon the girl feels inferior to the citizens of Excelsior. Apart from her mother and brother, who love and accept her unconditionally, Popi is treated with contempt by nearly everybody in the community, so she prefers to play with younger children who are not conscious about the colour of skin and do not judge her for being different. Her schoolmates think of her as "too proud to mix with them because she was a misis – a white woman" (114) and therefore avoid her company, too.

There are black people living in the town possessing a fairly light complexion; however, people immediately notice Popi's golden-brown locks and her blue eyes. From an early age on, the girl tries to hide her fair hair. As a young child, she considers to ask her mother to shave her head bald as she did when fleeing from the police. During puberty, she dyes her hair black in order to adapt at least her colour to her class mate's hair. When she reaches adulthood, Popi covers her head with a colourful doek, which should not only hide her hair, but also divert from her blue eyes. Her hairy legs present another problem which must be hidden by slacks and long skirts, since they additionally reveal that she is a coloured person descending from a white father. Usually, black women have smooth legs and only white women have to shave. Her appearance is different from her mother's and from other black girls' bodies, which makes her feel immensely insecure. For that reason, she hates mirrors, condemning them as an "intrusive invention" (111) which "exposed her to herself for what she really was. A boesman girl." (110) As long as the majority of people in the community laugh at her appearance, the young woman is apparently not able to accept herself. Even her relatives shun her and only visit when Popi achieves to join the Young Women's Union. Furthermore, she notices how raising coloured children is regarded as "bringing shame into [one's] home." (112) Nevertheless, instead of sympathising with other coloured persons in Excelsior and creating a sense of solidarity, Popi openly expresses her dislike for the Seller of Songs who is the daughter of one of Niki's former friends involved in the scandalous events and becomes the lover of Viliki who has always admired the beauty

of coloured women. “She hated her for calling attention to her colouredness, which in turn would call attention to Popi’s own colouredness.” (146) As long as she is dissatisfied with her own exterior, Popi cannot bear the sight of other coloured people, especially if they can cope with the fact that they are different. Due to her bitter frustration, Popi hardly ever smiles, but wears “a permanent frown like a badge of honour.” (111)

When being hurt during a demonstration without participating, Popi decides to become engaged in politics like her brother who has already worked underground for several years to fight the system. She belongs to the first black members of the council after the era of apartheid and fiercely fights for equal rights for the black community in Excelsior. This is the first time that she belongs to a group of black people that works hard together to reach their goals. Popi can engage in activities to improve living conditions in the township of the city and prove her worth to her community. Moreover, the council meetings finally enable the young woman to give expression to the anger she has accumulated throughout her entire life. Her rage is particularly directed at Tjaart Cronje, who is appalled at the loss of power of the white community and demands an independent state exclusively for Afrikaners. He fuels Popi’s anger when he assumes that she is uncultured due to her hairy legs. In spite of their regular encounters, Popi and Tjaart never notice what the people of Excelsior have already recognized at Popi’s birth: “They looked as if they had hatched from the same egg. Popi was just a darker version of Tjaart. We also noted that Tjaart did not see himself in Popi. And Popi did not see herself in Tjaart.” (147) Generally, the young woman refuses to learn anything about her origins and never asks her mother about her past. From an early age on, she accepts Pule as her father and never questions who her natural father is. When she is young, Popi prefers to live an isolated life in the shack, just like her mother, keeping out the insults of the community, as well as any information on her beginnings. Her unconditional acceptance of being raised by her black single mother and willingness to call Pule her father is the result of her desire to become eventually a part of the black community of Excelsior.

7.4. The end: healing and reconciliation

Although Popi puts a lot of energy into the work of the council, regularly sings at the funerals of her black fellows, and is admired for her slender body, the members of the black community admit that “we continued to laugh at her for being a boesman [...] [u]ntil she lost all hope that we would ever accept her.” (137) The young woman particularly blames her golden locks, which are so different from the hair of the African people, for being excluded from society. It can be assumed that for this reason, the trinity’s pictures contributed to her healing process. Already as a baby Popi visited the priest together with her mother in order to serve him as models for his paintings. The people on the paintings are distorted versions of the models the priest depicts. Popi also sees herself as ‘distorted’ mixture of black and white people, who does not fit to belong to either group, and can therefore not accept her appearance and love herself for what she is. When she recognises the beauty of the priest’s works, she is suddenly able to see her own beauty and worth. Eventually, she is enabled to release all the pain and anger that she has been filled with, crying genuine tears which take her bitterness away. “Yet an emptiness remained in what she imagined to be her heart. Anger had dissipated and left a void.” (229) The young woman is able to fill this void through harvesting cherries, which presents a meaningful work combined with physical exertion. Moreover, she participates in the soothing activity of caring for the bees together with her mother. Finally, Popi feels at peace with herself and the citizens of Excelsior, even with Tjaart Cronje who has fallen terribly ill due to the bitter anger he feels at the desperate situation of the Afrikaner in South Africa. While other white citizens have already accepted that living in peace is only possible in a united South Africa, governed by black and white people together, Tjaart insist on a separate state for the Afrikaner until the very end. Popi, on the contrary, learns to understand that coloureds are an inevitable result of a state in which different ethnical groups with different skin colours live together. Instead of avoiding mirrors, she forms a new habit of admiring her newly discovered beauty, even loving her hairy legs:

Lately Popi spent all her mornings looking at herself in the mirror, admiring her blue eyes, and brushing her long golden-brown hair. She no longer hid it under huge turbans. She wondered why she had been ashamed of it all these years, why she had never noticed its beauty. [...] She loved her yellow-coloured face and her long neck that had the spot where the skin continued to peel off. She loved her body and everything about it. (256)

It can be argued that it seems unrealistic that Popi suddenly recovers completely from her trauma in such a short period of time. Furthermore, it is questionable if her community will learn to accept her, now that she starts to love herself. Nevertheless, it can be assumed that Popi's story ought to be ascribed symbolical meaning. The ending of the novel enhances the beauty and worth of coloured people in South Africa. When Popi works at the cherry farm, she wonders why farmers grow yellow cherries in addition to the red ones. The farmer explains to her that “[i]t is for the purpose of pollination. Red cherries need yellow cherries because yellow cherries are the best pollinators.” (239) In other words, mixing the two kinds of cherries results in a fruitful harvest. This statement can be regarded as metaphor for the South African population, which will bring forth healthy and beautiful children when ‘miscegenation’ takes place.

7.5. Conclusion

The Madonna of Excelsior explicitly responds to both the breach of the Immorality Act and the existence and issues of coloured persons in South Africa. The novel's heroine is the coloured child Popi who is born into the era of apartheid, becomes politically engaged in the movement against racial segregation, and forms part of Excelsior's city council as an adult. As a child, when she spends all her time among the black community of the town, her neighbours and schoolmates avoid her company due to her bodily features inherited by her white father. The white community, on the contrary, would neither accept her in spite of her blue eyes and almost blonde locks due to her mixed blood. However, after the abolition of apartheid, the Afrikaners in the council regard her as a member of the new threat presented by the black population in South Africa, while the native community still makes fun of her for being a “boesman”. In the end, Popi expresses what many coloured people in South Africa must feel, namely “that in the old apartheid days I was not white enough, and now in the new dispensation I am not black enough” (250) to belong to the ethnical group being in power.

The Madonna of Excelsior further treats the troubled relationship between white farmers and black natives in South Africa and their struggle to live side by side after apartheid. It becomes obvious that the Afrikaner community feels genuinely attached to the country and regards South Africa as their home land in the same way the native

population does. The city council can be regarded as representative instance in which black and white citizens have to come to terms with each other so that both communities can live together peacefully. Furthermore, it is emphasised that interracial relationships inevitably happen (in this novel, the sexual relationships between white men and black women are the product of dependence and mere desire; however, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that genuine love is the driving force for an interracial relationship). The existence of coloured children proves such claim. Popi's story shows that these children are born into a rather hostile environment which is created by the rejection by both the black and white community. Popi is traumatised neither by Niki's behaviour, nor by the knowledge that her mother had sexual relations with a white man, nor by the fact that she does not know her biological father. However, she is immensely disappointed at and angry with the people of Excelsior for not accepting her. She blames her appearance for her unhappiness and permanently hides her hair. Even though her mother and brother have accepted and loved her the way she is from the beginning, the black community secretly envies her for her beautiful looks, and although even one of the white female council members respects and admires her, Popi refuses to love her body until the very end. She eventually recognises her own beauty and learns to accept her appearance. The novel gives a positive outlook on the personal life of Popi, who could possibly be regarded as role model for all coloured people who still have to recognise their own worth. Although it is not apparent if the community will soon stop to look down on coloured people, self acceptance is the first step that must be taken in order to change the negative attitude of others.

8. Conclusion

If a child is the product of rape, this means that its mother has become the victim of a severe crime. Rape shatters one's sense of security and autonomy and leaves the concerned person helpless and overwhelmed. Severe depression, social disintegration, and, in the worst case, suicidal thoughts are only a few of the possible effects rape victims might suffer from. Being raised by a depressed mother can have fatal consequences for the mental health of a child. It is very probable that a traumatised mother will pass on the traumatisation to her offspring, particularly if the trauma is connected to the existence of the child. Especially newborn and very young children are vulnerable to neglect and to the lack of love and interaction. Maternal behaviour proves decisive for the child's development of trust and self-esteem. Older children might develop feelings of shame and guilt towards their strangely behaving and possibly isolated parent. While the mother struggles with depression and nightmares, the child is overwhelmed with separation anxieties and feelings of helplessness. It is possible that a change of roles between mother and child takes place, so that the child is forced to carry out the necessary duties and chores, which the depressed parent is unable to fulfil due to lack of motivation.

In the particular case of South Africa, it can be argued that its deep racial history is closely linked to the high rape rates measured in the country. Already the first Dutch settlers fathered a great amount of mixed race children, whose mothers were bought and baptised. The children who were engendered in these intermarriages might have enjoyed good housing and a proper education, but they always stood behind their white siblings and were never fully accepted by the white society. In the course of the centuries, the former colonialists' sense of superiority grew to such a degree that the discrimination of the black population was defined by law. During apartheid, white men were able to rape and abuse black women without having to expect legal consequences. Black men very often raped out of the urge to prove their male strength undermined by the white oppressor. Even after the end of apartheid the cycle of violence has not stopped. It can be clearly seen that in all periods of South Africa's history women have always suffered most. They have to come to terms with the fear of being raped and raise the children who might be the result of violation.

J.M Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* addresses the controversial issues of the racial history, racism, violence, and also the psychological effects of trauma in contemporary South Africa. It is suggested that the end of apartheid does not signify the end of violence between black and white citizens, but that the crimes committed in the past lead to the continuation of violent activity in the present. The female protagonist Lucy desires to stop the perpetuation of mutual hostility by the attempt to come to terms with her rape instead of taking legal action against her perpetrators. The child who is engendered during the gang-rape is supposed to be raised in a peaceful environment on Lucy's farm; even though this implicates that the young woman submits to the will of her black neighbour Petrus. It is suggested that one ethnic group has to stop harming the other in order to bring about reconciliation. The story ends before the baby is born; however, Lucy is convinced that she will learn to love her child.

The four novels *What Kind of Child*, *Bitter Fruit*, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, and *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* begin where *Disgrace* stops: the child of rape is already born and the mother has to come to terms with the difficult situation. Although the various books present different storylines and character constellations, there can be found one or several aspects in each novel, which are reminiscent of *Disgrace*. Therefore, the books can be regarded as examples of realistic rewritings of J.M. Coetzee's novel. Ken Barris's *What Kind of Child* is obviously most similar to *Disgrace* with regard to story and characters. The author displays two mentally instable mothers who have never achieved to overcome their traumata and whose deviant behaviour is highly detrimental to their children. Luke is raised in complete isolation and has hardly any contact to the world outside his home. Similarly, Rachel Zadok tells a story about a girl being brought up by a mentally ill mother on a farm remote from the big cities. Although *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* can hardly be linked to *Disgrace*, since the mother's rape is not evident and racism and reconciliation between the ethnic groups of South Africa only play a minor role, it can be argued that Faith is the perfect example of a child of rape being brought up in isolation with a mother who still suffers from the effects of her trauma. Lucy gives up her dignity in order to be allowed to live on her farm, where she will also raise her child as soon as it is born. If she fails to cope with her delicate situation, the child will hardly be able to escape the consequences of structural trauma in this isolated place. The focus of *The Madonna of Excelsior* lies on the problems coloureds have to face in everyday life. Popi's major source of traumatisation is not Niki's behaviour, but the fact

that neither the black nor the white community fully accepts her. Lucy's coloured child might be faced with similar problems since it will live among a white family and black neighbours. With regard to the allusion to Christianity, Zakes Mda's and J.M. Coetzee's novels show one similarity: while Lucy becomes a Mary figure through her aim of aspiring reconciliation by taking all the blame accumulated during white supremacy, Niki is presented as Madonna figure by the artistic priest, holding her coloured child like Mary holds the baby Jesus. This would imply that both Lucy's child as well as Popi are regarded as coloured saviours of South Africa. Dangor, on the contrary, challenges the thought of reconciliation between black and white people with his novel *Bitter Fruit* and suggests retribution as final solution. Thus, Mikey, the child of rape, firstly attempts to overcome his trauma by making room in order to build a completely new identity and secondly fulfills his mother's innermost wish to take revenge. Furthermore, a different type of mother is presented. Lydia has achieved to love her son in spite of his father. She shares her deepest emotions about the fatal event with her diary and only discusses the rape with her husband, keeping it strictly away from her child (and the rest of the family). However, she has developed into an overprotective mother who cannot even tolerate a woman at Mikey's side. After suffering the shock of learning that he is a child of rape, Mikey interprets his mother's excessive care and display of love as feelings of guilt. He does not share his traumatic experience with his loving mother, but decides upon life and death all on his own. It is possible that Lucy achieves to become the loving mother she wants to be. However, the mother's love does not always prevent the child's traumatising. Finally, both novels stress men's incapability to understand a woman's rape and how to behave properly and aptly. In all four cases, the children of rape are traumatised through factors such as deviant maternal behaviour, lack of love and care, isolation, poverty and dependence, the revelation of their origins, and not being accepted by the society they are living in. It is very probable that Lucy's child of rape will become the victim of one or several of these possible consequences.

It is clearly shown that mothers who are married and live in a stable community are more likely to regain mental stability and therefore achieve to cope with their problems without burdening their children. Both Niki and Lydia are this kind of mothers. Although they cannot really process their traumata within the community and continue to suffer immensely from their rapes, their children are cared for properly and feel loved. Lydia has never dared to tell her family about Mikey's origins and even though

Silas is present during the rape, he can only guess that he is not the biological father. Furthermore, her husband tends to turn her trauma into his suffering and can therefore hardly support Lydia. Nevertheless, Lydia's family relieves her by caring lovingly for Mikey. Even though their presence seems to annoy Lydia from time to time, her family is there when needed, for example, when Lydia is hospitalised. The woman is able to follow a career as a nurse without being forced to overwork, since Silas also provides the family with a stable income. Niki finds herself in a similar situation. Although she has no parents who support her, she can rely on the other members of the black community to help in case of an emergency. When she finds herself in prison for having broken the Immorality Act, it is the mother of a friend who takes care of small Viliki without having been asked. Although Niki is abused by her husband Pule – especially when he finds out that she has a child with a white man – he provides the family with money. Together with the income Niki earns as a nanny she is able to grant her children a home and enough food. In spite of their traumata, both Lydia and Niki dearly love their children and regard them as important part of their lives. The mothers are willing to raise their offspring in a secure home together with other people who care for them. Furthermore, they feel the urge to protect their children from any harm. *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* displays a mother who is married, but becomes incapable of caring for her child when she is left by her husband and suffers a mental breakdown. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that Bella and Faith are most of the time alone on the farm since Marius works as a traveling salesman and hardly ever pays visits to his family. Bella behaves strangely even before she is abandoned and imposes an imaginary fairy world, which she has developed in the course of her trauma, upon her young daughter. When she additionally falls into deep depression, Faith is completely overwhelmed and totally depends on the help of Nomsa. First person narration allows the reader to plunge into the confused emotional world of the young girl. On the one hand, Faith suffers from separation anxiety and is afraid that her mother could die from her illness; on the other hand, she feels disgusted and ashamed at her mother's unkempt appearance and strange behaviour. The most dramatic cases of harmful maternal behaviour are shown in *What Kind of Child*. Both mothers Caitlin and Xoliswa are not only raped once, but have to endure constant male abuse and aggressiveness in order to survive and to protect their children. They have to fend for themselves and do not receive any support from outside, neither financially, nor emotionally. Caitlin has a father who accuses her of excluding him from her life; however, it soon becomes obvious that the unkempt, alcohol addicted

man is not really capable of being a great help. Due to all these burdens, Caitlin seems to be more dead than alive, punishing her son with long periods of silence most of the time. Xoliswa and Malibongwe are additionally challenged by the great poverty they are living in. The children of rape suffer from lack of love and social interaction from the very beginning of their lives and are very soon forced into adulthood.

The three novels *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*, *What Kind of Child* and *The Madonna of Excelsior* give insights into the childhood and adulthood of the children of rape. However, while Popi's life is told continuously from her very beginnings until she finally makes peace with herself as an adult, the stories of Luke and Faith are divided into two parts with a gap of several years in the middle. When regarding their adult lives, the consequences of the childhood traumata can be clearly seen. Both characters have a low self-esteem and cannot build stable relationships to other persons. They are incapable of developing their characters and of setting and pursuing goals. Instead of dealing with their pasts, they try hard to suppress the shame, guilt and pain that are connected to their childhood memories. In the end, Faith is healed by a native witchdoctor just after remembering that she is the murderer of Nomsa and that her mother took all the blame, while Luke survives an attempted suicide and recognises that he has never really moved forward due to his trauma. Changing their lives is only possible as adults when they are free from the grip of their pasts in which their mothers play a crucial role. They have to cope with and to heal the traumata their mothers were not able to deal with and transferred to their children. Mikey is the only child of rape who is not a victim of structural trauma. He has developed into an intelligent and critically thinking teenager who loves his family until he accidentally discovers his mother's diary which contains her innermost feelings about her rape and the following pregnancy. The sudden loss of identity leads to his distancing himself from his parents. The presence of Du Boise results in a breakdown of the whole Ali family whose members are too occupied with themselves as to being able to help their son in this critical situation. In the end, Mikey gives himself a new name and establishes a completely new identity. It can be argued that Niki from Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* is the only mother who is able to contribute to the healing of her child. She fully accepts Popi's origin and appearance right from the beginning and is always willing to encourage her daughter whenever she is confronted with hostility from both the black and the white communities. It takes Popi many years to develop self-esteem

and self-acceptance, but in the end, she has learnt to adore her looks and to love herself. In comparison to the other novels, it seems that Popi enjoys the most optimistic outlook for the future. Faith, who has suppressed her pain and fears and has struggled with feelings of guilt for years, also achieves to overcome her trauma (although it might be argued that her healing happens too quickly) by the help of native African medicine. Her trauma starts with the fairy tale creatures, originating from native African tradition, and it ends with support from the same culture. After her treatment, she finally feels free from the burden of her past and learns to be grateful for the care of her foster family. In the cases of Luke and Mikey, it is not sure how their lives will continue. Luke experiences a moment of understanding and Mikey tries to free himself of his traumatic past by obliterating his natural father's identity; however, it is not obvious if these accomplishments lead to the healing of the two male characters. Malibongwe definitely faces the most cruel and bitter end, perishing in the streets of Cape Town as a young child. Barris paints a very dark picture of poverty, cruelty, and death, but at the same time offers a glimpse of hope by the survival of Luke. In sum, it can be argued that healing a trauma passed on from mother to child can be possible. Nevertheless, it must be stressed that it is a very long and difficult way to reach this goal, given that the issue is extremely personal and the pain very deep. Since the traumatising happens in the early childhood and is therefore an inherent part of the victim's life, the person concerned apparently never considers therapy. In these circumstances, it might also be too painful and embarrassing to discuss one's childhood trauma with a stranger.

The aim of the heroine of *Disgrace* is to end the violence between black and white citizens of South Africa and to achieve reconciliation. The unborn child is supposed to become the symbol of her high ambition. *The Madonna of Excelsior* ends in a very positive way, namely with Popi's reconciliation with both her black and white origins. She is furthermore admired by a white female member of the council, secretly envied by the black community, and even makes peace with her rival and half-brother Tjaart. It seems that Popi's self-acceptance symbolically stands for the developing mutual acceptance of black and white citizens in Excelsior. In *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* a white girl is traumatised, but also healed by black native traditions, which could be interpreted as final reconciliation, not only with her mother, but also indirectly with the native culture of South Africa. In *Bitter Fruit*, the thought of reconciliation is completely rejected and the novel ends with an act of retribution. The TRC is mocked by the fact

that Silas works for the organisation, but that his son decides to carry out the execution of the rapist himself instead of granting Du Boise amnesty, as the TRC has done. The two protagonists of *What Kind of Child* have both a certain attitude towards their white fellow citizens. While Malibongwe regards them as potential sources of money, Luke admits his preference for white sexual partners. He has developed a blind eye to his brown skin colour; however, it is not an unreasonable assumption that his predilection for white women is rather a result of his complex relationship to his mother than of subliminal hatred towards his biological father. The personal traumata of the characters are closely connected to the collective trauma the whole country suffers from and tries to overcome. Some of the novels suggest that recovery is possible, but that it is still a very long and painful way to reach this goal.

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11. Abstract

Die Diplomarbeit *Children of rape in the contemporary South African novel* behandelt die Situation von Kindern, die aus einer Vergewaltigung hervorgegangen sind, im zeitgenössischen südafrikanischen Roman.

Der erste Theorieteil beschäftigt sich mit den folgenden drei psychologischen Fragestellungen: Welche Auswirkungen hat Vergewaltigung auf das Opfer? Wie entwickelt sich die Beziehung zwischen dem daraus hervorgegangenen Kind und der depressiven Mutter? Welche Reaktionen zeigen Kinder auf, die von einem psychisch beeinträchtigten Elternteil großgezogen werden? Es stellt sich die Frage, ob das Trauma der Mutter zwangsläufig an das Kind weitergegeben wird und ob es dem Kind gelingen kann, sich unter dem mütterlichen Einfluss körperlich und geistig gesund zu entwickeln.

Im zweiten Theorieteil wird auf die spezielle Situation in Südafrika eingegangen. Um die heutigen Konflikte des von Gewalt geprägten Landes zu verstehen, ist es unbedingt erforderlich, Einblicke in die Kolonialgeschichte und in das politische System der Apartheid zu geben. Die Mischung von europäischen Siedlern und afrikanischen Frauen ist außerdem ausschlaggebend für die Entstehung der 'coloureds', der Farbigen mit jeweils einem weißen und einem schwarzen Elternteil. Diese Bevölkerungsgruppe hat bis heute Probleme, sich in das zweigeteilte ethnische System einzugliedern und vom Großteil der südafrikanischen Bevölkerung anerkannt zu werden.

Als Ausgangspunkt für die zu analysierenden Romane ist J.M. Coetzees viel diskutierter Roman *Disgrace* zu betrachten. Der Autor verbindet das Schicksal von Mutter und Kind eng mit der Geschichte Südafrikas, besonders mit den Untaten, die während der Apartheid vollzogen wurden. Das Buch endet bevor das in einer Vergewaltigung entstandene Kind auf die Welt kommt und lässt offen, ob die Mutter ihr Ziel erreicht, das Kind in einer liebevollen Umgebung großzuziehen und gleichzeitig Frieden mit ihrem schwarzen Nachbarn, der möglicherweise in das Verbrechen verwickelt ist, zu schließen.

Als Veranschaulichung der schwierigen Situationen solcher Kinder, dienen die Romane *What Kind of Child* von Ken Barris, *Bitter Fruit* von Achmat Dangor, *The Madonna of*

Excelsior von Zakes Mda und *Gem Squash Tokoloshe* von Rachel Zadok. Der Fokus der Analysen liegt auf der teils problematischen Mutter-Kind-Beziehung, der Weitergabe des Traumas, der Entwicklung des Kindes und der Möglichkeit, das Trauma zu bewältigen. Obwohl sich die Analysen vor allem auf die persönliche Ebene und die Psyche der Protagonisten beziehen, ist es im südafrikanischen Kontext unerlässlich, darauf einzugehen, ob und bis zu welchem Grad der Autor oder die Autorin Lösungsvorschlägen bezüglich der Wiedergutmachung zwischen den ethnischen Gruppierungen des Landes gegenüber offen steht.

12. Curriculum Vitae

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