Traumatic Experience and Repressed Memory in Magical Realist Novels

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Speaking the Unspeakable

By

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My Parents

Wife

Son

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

TRAUMA, DIFFICULTY OF REPRESENTATION AND MAGICAL REALISM

Since traumatic events have a long-term impact on the human mind, it is quite difficult to represent them in a narrative form. Traumatisation is not suffered only by being directly exposed to traumatic events but also by indirect experience of those events. Victims and survivors of traumatic events find it extremely difficult to express their experiences. Their traumatic memories are unconsciously blocked and turned into repressed memories. While representing trauma or traumatic events in literature, victims and survivors find their experiences too gruesome to express through a realist narrative. This is where magical realism—which I propose as one of the modes of writing most effective in representing traumatic events—comes into play. By using magical realism, authors turn unspeakable events into speakable tales and reconstruct events which would be as agonising to forget as to remember.

The terms traumatic experience and repressed memory can be associated with the Holocaust, slavery, colonisation, war and other events. Victims of these events have horrible memories which they would like to forget but cannot; even if they want to tell their stories to others, they find them too cruel to express. Many authors regard magical realism as one of the most suitable means for representing victims' inexpressible thoughts in literature. As Langdon believes, magical realism has a strong and unique ability to represent traumatic and horrific events which are considered extremely difficult to express accurately or authentically using objective or realist narrative modes (Langdon 2011, 22). Christopher Warnes, for example, has limited his analysis of magical realism to a postcolonial context in *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence* (2009). Jenni Adams has attempted to show the representation of trauma and memory in the context of the Holocaust in

Magic Realism in Holocaust Literature: Troping the Traumatic Real (2011). Eugene L. Arva has included the Holocaust and slavery along with colonialism and war in *The Traumatic Imagination: Histories of Violence in Magical Realist Fiction* (2011). However, no one has yet actually dealt with trauma deriving from apartheid and the violent treatment of women during various historical traumatic events.

This book aims to discuss the potential of magical realism to analyse the brutality of oppression, trauma, horror and repressed memory in a way which is not completely possible in a realist narrative. While using concepts like trauma, repressed memory, transgenerational trauma, collective trauma and magical realism, my analyses focus on the literary representations of the individual and the collective trauma arising from the Holocaust, slavery and apartheid and the outstanding ability of magical realism to turn unrepresentable and unspoken memories into narratives. Besides depicting various kinds of atrocity, my project will also analyse trauma suffered by female victims—who face multifarious forms of victimisation—during and following those events. This book will focus on magical realism as a particular narrative technique as well as a genre of fiction able to represent the inaccessibility of trauma. Again, by dealing with the above-mentioned events, their specific historical context and universal meaning for humankind, my project aims to reveal a universal experience of trauma.

One important aspect of the novels I will analyse is that they all depict structural violence[1] which, unquestionably, affects people collectively. In my book, I will work on the literary representations of the Holocaust, slavery and apartheid in order to show that, through the suffering of an individual, these authors actually depict a systematic or organised form of oppression and industrial killing, the plight of an entire community, race or group of people, and thus convey the sense of collective trauma. The Holocaust is an example of systematic and pitiless killing where, for their attempt to exterminate the Jewish race, the perpetrators had the help of all the organs of society to identify and deport Jewish people. Slavery, especially in North America, was also a methodical form of subjugation of the black community in which any newborn baby in a slave family was destined to be a slave. Last but not least, the racial authority in South

[1] Structural violence refers to the "violation of normal right or values [through] customs and laws [which] create and perpetrate structures that curb the freedom of subjects unfairly or which discriminate unjustly against certain sections preventing them from attaining full citizenship". (Degenaar 1990, 78)

Africa imposed a notorious segregation system which shaped the lives of black and white people in completely opposite ways. People who are exposed to violence and are oppressed have the feeling that others cannot understand their reality. The collectiveness of their victimisation creates a reality of their own which turns them into the 'other' in the eyes of non-victimised people and perpetrators. What is magical or absurd to other people is a perfect representation of reality to the victimised; this demonstrates the otherness of the reality of the victims.

The concept of trauma has shifted from its original meaning of physical injury to that of psychological disorder and, recently, to that of cultural phenomenon. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*, Cathy Caruth defines trauma as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (Caruth 1996, 91). According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), repressed memories are hypothesised memories which are involuntarily blocked by the memory being engulfed by a high level of stress or trauma. Laurence Kirmayer proposes that trauma narratives are full of inconsistency and linearity and often show the "frailty and impersistence of memory" (Kirmayer 1996, 174).

These three historical events—the Holocaust, slavery and apartheid—are full of extreme and unimaginable violence; the Holocaust, in particular, is regarded by many as unique. Although the world has seen many instances of genocide before and after the Holocaust—and I do not intend to compare them—the unthinkable atrocities, combined with the extermination of Jews, political dissenters and many other ethnic groups such as the Romani during the Holocaust are far beyond human imagination. Instances of slavery cannot be limited by any geographical barrier because it has happened, and is still happening in some parts of the world, in different forms. However, when we talk about the brutal treatment of black slaves and the dehumanising effects of slavery, we mainly refer to the slavery in the United States and the Caribbean. Racial violence has taken place in different parts of the world but nowhere has it come close to the violence against, and inhuman treatment of, black South Africans during the notorious and bloody apartheid regime. Every day somewhere in the world women are either psychologically or physically humiliated or tortured. However, during various traumatic historical events such as war, genocide, racial segregation, slavery, and political, social and religious violence, women suffer from what can be termed 'institutionalised violence'. Women face a double victimisation of being not only Jews but Jewish

women, not only slaves but female slaves and not only blacks but female blacks. In order to portray the suffering of victims in literature, authors struggle to find a suitable narrative. They find that the traditional realist narrative lacks potential, and look for an alternative with subversive and transgressive potential. I propose magical realism as this alternative narrative for depicting the pain and horror of these events and giving victims a voice so that they can tell the unspeakable stories of their lives.

It is difficult to analyse violent historical events because of the horror they possess. Giving traumatic events a literary representation requires a profound sense of empathy and an act of imagination which is quite useful in establishing an association between trauma, alternative narrative and magical realist writing. Magical realist writing can well be considered one of the most efficient ways of coming to terms with painful experiences and repressed memories. Arva believes that a magical realist representation of trauma "creates empathy through images that recreate the unrepresentable by simulating the extreme affects that must have blocked representation in the first place. Paradoxically, coping with trauma might thus involve creating a virtual opportunity to re-live the same experiences that have caused it" (Arva 2008, 80).

'Magical realism'—the term was first coined by German art critic Franz Roh in 1925—has been used by writers all over the world as a narrative technique and/or literary genre; authors have used it in their individual ways to serve different purposes. The term is concerned with specific supernatural phenomena, particularly experiences that cannot be grasped or explained in logical terms. Critics like Lois Parkinson Zamora, Wendy B. Faris and Christopher Warnes have placed this particular literary language or narrative strategy at the very heart of postcolonial and postmodern writing, and done so from the perspective of the underprivileged and marginalised. Magical realism has become a common narrative style for novels written from the point of view of the politically, socially or culturally marginalised, and I believe that, because of its transgressive and subversive characteristics and its ability to evoke empathy in readers and writers, it has all the potential to represent violent historical events and the trauma arising from those events.

Traumatised subjects look for a suitable narrative to share their traumatisation, and I advocate magical realism as this narrative. According to Arva, in representing traumatic historical events, magical realism is better equipped than traditional realism because "magical realist images and traumatized subjects share the same ontological ground, being part of

a reality that is constantly escaping witnessing through telling" (Arva 2011, 6). Arva again says, "[B]y transgressing the boundaries of verisimilitude, the magical realist text may both *convey* the authors' empathy (through their narrators and/or characters) and at the same time *induce* empathy on the part of the readers—not by appropriating the victims' voices but, rather, by making them heard for the first time" (Arva 2011, 6). It can be inferred from Arva that although magical realism cannot represent violent or extreme events as a consistent history, it certainly attempts to reconstruct history and it thus provides the victimised and the traumatised an opportunity to include their stories which have been ignored by the dominant history.

Slavery, war, the Holocaust and apartheid are regarded as histories of extremely violent and traumatic events, hardly open to rational reflection or understanding. I argue that magical realism is a reconstruction of the above-mentioned catastrophic events, which cannot be properly represented or explained through the traditional realist narrative. It tries to present any brutal event in a graspable manner but does not really distort the truth of it. As Langdon comments, "[…] this narrative style makes those events appear more real, because it positions the reader to *feel* something specific to or closely aligned with the original experience of extremity" (Langdon 2011, 16). It can be inferred from Langdon that magical realism does not distort truth, but rather presents it to the reader in a way that does not entirely block understanding.

As mentioned earlier, this book will analyse the literary representations of three traumatic historical events: the Holocaust, slavery and apartheid. There will be three separate chapters on these three events, each of which will analyse two novels—one will focus on various kinds of atrocities and the other will deal with the oppression and victimisation of women caused by that particular event. Chapter 2, on trauma and repressed memory, deals with origins, definitions, symptoms, types and characteristics of trauma. It analyses contradictory views on the question of whether trauma can be healed or not. Apart from the relation between trauma and history, and trauma and traditional issues of representation, the chapter will also shed light on the concept of memory, particularly repressed memory. Chapter 3 deals with the necessity of an alternative language to depict different traumatic historical events from the perspectives of the oppressed and victimised; here I propose magical realism to be that alternative language. This chapter looks at the origin, development, definitions, features and types of magical realism. It also compares magical realism with other neighbouring genres, and analyses its (magical realism's) own potential as

an independent genre. It examines the term's association with postcolonialism, and its potential to be the voice of the oppressed and an alternative narrative in order to represent trauma, pain and horror.

Chapter 4, dedicated to the Holocaust, analyses Joseph Skibell's *A Blessing on the Moon* and D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel*. The Holocaust, which is characterised by ineffable violence, death, survival, love, betrayal and trauma, has, according to Arva, "challenged the established beliefs in the moral progress and superiority of the European civilization […] its 'intrinsic' goodness, and sense of justice" (Arva 2011, 217). Skibell aims not to give an accurate account of a gruesome event like the Holocaust, but rather to respond to it in his own way as the descendant of a victimised Jewish family. Thomas, on the other hand, depicts the personal trauma of the protagonist Lisa and the collective trauma experienced by the Jewish victims at Babi Yar.

In *A Blessing on the Moon*, Skibell employs magical realism using Jewish folktales in telling the story of one of his forefathers. By using supernatural elements and bringing dead Jews back to life in the novel, Skibell makes the victimised stronger than the victimiser. I will show how the protagonist Chaim represents the suffering of the entire Jewish race through his own grief, traumatisation and obsession with the past, and how Chaim becomes the mouthpiece of the Jewish people. I will also show how Chaim secures a future for the Jewish race—as depicted in the novel—even after a horrific event like the Holocaust by magically returning the moon to its proper place. Apart from depicting the protagonist Lisa's bizarre sexual fantasies, D. M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* also deals with the various significant political, historical and social issues of 20th century Europe. I argue that magical realism enables Thomas to convey Lisa's sexual torture and subsequent death and to speak for the dead, telling their stories and thus conveying the unspoken trauma. By using magical realist phenomena and grotesque sexual fantasies, Thomas foreshadows the future trauma of Lisa's rape and death at Babi Yar. Thomas creates a magical post-death world for Jews which seems to suggest the renewal of life even after the catastrophe of the Holocaust.

Chapter 5 deals with trauma arising from the horrific experiences of slavery, and the role of magical realism in representing those unspeakable experiences in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Maryse Condé's *Moi, Tituba, Sorcière … Noire de Salem* (*I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*). Whereas Morrison uses magical realism to reveal unspoken histories of black slaves and to enable them to reassert their identity, Condé employs the blend of

magic and reality as a means for the protagonist to survive both racial and gendered violence. By placing the officially recorded truth (history) into individual fictional narratives, both Morrison and Condé bring characters and events closer to the reader's world and imagination.

Apart from exploring the trauma of slavery suffered by Sethe and other black slaves who could not express their violent and inhuman treatment, Morrison, through the character of Beloved, ambitiously attempts an imaginative testimony of those who did not survive (Matus 1998, 104). I believe that Morrison blends the magical and the real in order to reveal the unspoken and silenced histories of black slaves, particularly the victimisation, both racial and gendered, of the protagonist Sethe and other female slaves. I aim to identify multiple identities of Beloved and show how she enables Sethe and other ex-slaves to reassert their individual and collective identity damaged by their experience of slavery. In *Moi, Tituba, Sorcière ... Noire de Salem*, Maryse Condé shows the racial and gendered subjugation of Tituba, and her attempt to find a voice and thus an identity. Condé deals with magic or witchcraft in a positive manner and uses it as a means of resistance for Tituba against both white and patriarchal society. She equips Tituba with different magical powers so that she can shake off her marginalised status. In other words, magic is used as a survival tactic on Tituba's part. By giving Tituba a voice, Condé gives the entire neglected Caribbean community a voice. I will also shed light on the fact that, unlike the ghost in Morrison's *Beloved*, Condé's ghosts and spirits are benevolent and are sources of relief and consolation.

Chapter 6 focuses on the atrocious treatment of black people during and after apartheid in South African history, and the representation of those atrocities in Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* and Zoë Wicomb's *David's Story*. Apartheid—the racial separation between black and white South African people—was full of violence, bloodshed, and detrimental treatment of black people. Both transition—the period between the fall of apartheid and the first democratic election in 1994—and the post-apartheid period were characterised by violence but this time it was black against white and black against black. By writing on apartheid violence, authors find opportunities to reimagine and rewrite South Africa's past which is significant in the process of reconciliation and identity formation.

In *Ways of Dying*, Mda attempts to expose the evil of the anti-apartheid movement and thus presents us a deromanticised version of it. By demystifying the liberation struggle, he comes up with an alternative history much different from the established one. Although Mda shows

many instances of brutal physical violence, he focuses more on the psychological aspects of trauma than on the physical aspects arising from these instances. Mda uses the supernatural to criticise violence and to highlight the bizarre extent of violence. He also shows the importance of the black people's communal solidarity and the influence of their ancestors' spirits and rural rituals on their lives in order to survive violence. In *David's Story*, trauma derives from Dulcie's rape by her fellow male MK[2] revolutionaries during the anti-apartheid movement where violence against women was more common. Although David wants to talk about Dulcie, he knows that doing so will expose the dark side of the anti-apartheid movement. By showing rape, sexual torture and other forms of suppressive actions against female guerrillas perpetrated by their fellow male guerrillas, Wicomb, just like Mda, condemns the evil of the anti-apartheid movement and thus provides an alternative story of the struggle. The arrival of Dulcie's ghost at the very end of the novel to disclose her story gives the plot a magical aura, and strengthens my argument concerning the potential of magical realism in representing trauma.

Victims and survivors of traumatic events are either unwilling or unable to talk about those events because of the brutalities they entail and the lack of a suitable narrative. Expressing traumatic events in literature requires political awareness and, according to Arva, empathy, responsibility and the courage to face what is left uncaptured by reason and logic and what official history and public discourses have considered an unsuitable issue (Arva 2011, 22). In dealing with those issues, writers have to swim against the stream of logic and explore something beyond common perception. In other words, they need to think outside the box. The relationship between trauma and the magical realist writing depends on this sense of empathy and the desire to give a voice to the oppressed and neglected. Magical realism makes it possible for authors to let the silenced voices be heard and to transform those voices into an accessible story or narrative.

[2] Co-founded by Nelson Mandela, MK or Umkhonto we Sizwe functioned as the armed force of the African National Congress during the anti-apartheid movement.

CHAPTER 2

TRAUMA AND REPRESSED MEMORY: CONCEPT, DEVELOPMENT, TYPES

Trauma entails both physical and mental wounds, which can be individual, cultural, communal and even transgenerational. The origins, causes and symptoms of trauma have been analysed by different academic and scientific disciplines. Trauma has persistently forced those who are affected by it to rethink their past and their identity, to rewrite their history and to anticipate a future which will remain distressingly void and meaningless without an understanding of the past. The attempt to provide literary representations of traumatic events—personal, collective or historical—raises the question of what kind of narrative one should use without insulting the memories of victims and survivors and/or distorting the truth. It raises the question of whether one should stick to the traditional realist narrative of the dominant power or invent an alternative language from the perspective of the oppressed and victimised.

Developing Trauma as a Field of Research

The term 'trauma' is derived from Greek *traûma* which can be translated as 'wound'. It was originally used in the field of medicine to refer to "an injury inflicted on a body" (Caruth 1996, 3). Initially, the term referred to what we now know as 'whiplash injury'[3] or what people in the 19th century called 'railway spine'[4]. By 1885, the concept of trauma had been transferred from the physical to the psychological sphere "when a French medical thesis on trauma could routinely have a chapter on *traumatisme morale*" (qtd. in Hacking 1996, 76). The term altered its meaning and from then on meant "a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (Caruth 1996, 3). "Jean-Martin Charcot, Freud's mentor in [Paris], had already used the term 'traumatic hysteria', which the Berlin doctor Hermann

[3] A type of injury generally associated with motor vehicle accidents.
[4] It was used to describe severe back injury taking place during train accidents without any visible injury to the back.

Oppenheim later renamed 'traumatic neurosis'" (Arva 2011, 29), "keeping the idea of 'psychic shock' but expanding the range of symptoms" (Farrell 1998, 9). However, it was Freud's earlier essays that played a significant part in defining "psychic trauma as different from and, in principle, unrelated to, physical trauma" (Onega and Ganteau 2009, 9). The recurring evocations of the original event which echo Freud's description of the "compulsion to repeat" activities of repressed impulses (Freud 1955, 30) became established in the writing of Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub, Shoshana Felman, Judith Herman, Ruth Leys and others in the 1990s.

The study of trauma first gained importance after various 19th century wars, especially the Crimean War (1854−1856) and the American Civil War (1861− 1865), when soldiers returning from the war started to demonstrate varieties of mental disturbances including phobias, nightmares, nervousness and such like. In the aftermath of World War I, the term 'shell shock'[5] was coined; during World War II, studies in the US started to focus on the term 'combat fatigue'[6]; finally, in the 1970s and 1980s, in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, this concept received growing interest among scholars of different fields, and led to the beginning of trauma research and theory. In the 1980s, the American Psychological Association accepted that a psychological condition prevailed in soldiers of the Vietnam War and called it 'posttraumatic stress disorder' (PTSD)[7]. According to Schauer, Neuner and Elbert, trauma was consequently termed 'posttraumatic stress disorder' in the field of psychiatry and was explicitly described in the Diagnostics and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Schauer, Neuner, and Elbert 2005, 8). The American Psychological Association acknowledged for the first time that "a psychiatric disorder could be wholly environmentally determined and that a traumatic event occurring in adulthood could have lasting psychological consequences" (Whitehead 2004, 4). This quotation highlights the long-lasting effect of trauma. According to Anne Whitehead, "It is at this point that […] the

[5] A term coined to describe the reaction of some soldiers to the trauma of battle in World War I. (Hochschild 242)

[6] A severe reaction which results from the stress of battle that reduces the fighting skill of soldiers.

[7] It is a term consisting of a series of symptoms, which usually manifest as a "preoccupation with the traumatic event in the form of nightmares, flashbacks, or persistent thoughts about the trauma that intrude into everyday affairs; and a general dysphoria, a numbness that takes the meaning out of life and makes it hard to relate to other people". (Tal 1996, 135)

concept of trauma is transferred from medical and scientific discourse to the field of literary studies" (Whitehead 2004, 4).

In general, trauma refers to a disorder of the mind as well as the body, resulting from horrifying and life-threatening experiences. Trauma's concrete nature and features have been discussed rather differently since the 1980s. However, one characteristic is mentioned in almost all publications on trauma—the fact that the experience of trauma cannot be incorporated into the victim's consciousness. In *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Cathy Caruth, one of the most prominent contemporary trauma scholars, describes the unassimilated nature of trauma. She states that a traumatic event is experienced "too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (qtd. in Caruth 1996, 4). What Caruth suggests is that because of the suddenness of any traumatic event, victims fail to realise the significance of the event when it takes place. The event is repeated either in dreams or the actions of victims, and only then do they begin to grasp that significance.

In the introduction to her collection of essays *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Caruth remarks that the pathology of PTSD resides exclusively in the reception of the traumatic event, which, unassimilated when it occurred, comes to possess the experiencing subject through repetition. She concludes, "To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Caruth 1995, 4−5). Ruth Leys speaks about a disorder of a victim's memory deriving from a traumatic experience, and her work focuses on the concept of 'dissociation', which means that the mind of the victim divides in the course of traumatic experience and that trauma separates itself from the common process of memory: "Therefore, the traumatic events cannot be remembered in the same way as ordinary events, but are instead dissociated from the person's autobiographical memory" (Leys 2000, 2). Thus, it can be asserted that the primary nature of trauma is associated with the inability of the victim's mind to incorporate the painful experience into ordinary consciousness.

Symptoms and Types of Trauma

Trauma can originate from both physical and psychological violence. Kai Erikson, who approaches trauma in terms of the analysis of its sources, states, "[…] in order to serve as a generally useful concept, 'trauma' has to be understood as resulting from a *constellation of life experiences* as well

as from a discreet happening, from a *persisting condition* as well as from an acute event" (Erikson 1995, 185). Arva, however, believes that the structure of traumatic experiences is mainly associated with the actions regulating its forgetting, remembering and repeating, and does not have that much to do with its sources (Arva 2011, 31). In his essay "Recollection, Repetition and Working Through", Freud states, "It seems to make no difference whatever whether [any traumatic event] was conscious and then was forgotten or whether it never reached consciousness at all" (Freud 1959, 368). Freud again states that a trauma victim "reproduces [forgotten and repressed events] not in memory but in his behaviour; he *repeats* it, without of course knowing that he is repeating it" (Freud 1959, 369). It can be surmised from these statements that trauma originates not inside human perception but rather from outside it.

Quite a large number of scholars working in the field of psychiatry, psychology, medicine and literary studies have described the symptoms and characteristics of trauma, some of which are commonly accepted and frequently discussed by the majority of professionals. One basic characteristic of individual trauma is the act of 'dissociation' where victims are unable to permanently repress traumatic memories. This inability to repress traumatic memory gives birth to another essential and permanent characteristic of trauma, its 'self-repetition' which, according to Gobodo-Madikizela and Van der Merwe, suggests that the repressed experiences start to harass trauma victims and repeat themselves in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, hallucinations and other invasive phenomena (Gobodo-Madikizela and Van der Merwe 2007, vii). Since victims of traumatic events are unable to remember the events, they "lose personal sense of significance, competence, and inner worth" (Van der Kolk, MacFarlane and Weisaeth 1996, 197). Individual and collective traumas derived from historical calamities last for a long time, and thus victims suffer an intense loss of their self and identity. According to Schauer, Neuner and Elbert, one significant symptom of trauma is 'avoidance' in which traumatised persons usually evade situations, places and people that remind them of their traumatising events, and thus become alienated from others (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 2005, 9). Another important symptom of trauma is 'hyperarousal' which, according to Judith Herman, implies that trauma victims overreact even at the slightest disturbance, and often suffer from frustration (Herman 1997, 35).

Regarding various violent events such as massacre, war, slavery, racial violence, colonisation and other differing forms of political, social and cultural mass oppression, it is important to explore trauma not only on an

individual level but also on a collective level. When people from any group suffer from a traumatic event—Jewish people from the Holocaust, black slaves from slavery or black Africans from apartheid—they find themselves in a position of helplessness and anxiety, they do not really want to remember the event; they are dissociated from their past and thus suffer from an identity problem. In "The Next Chapter: Consequences of Societal Trauma", Volkan identifies five psychosomatic occurrences experienced by victims as a result of communal trauma. First, the members of a victimised group suffer from a common "sense of shame, humiliation, dehumanisation and guilt" (Volkan 2009, 14−15); second, because of this humiliation, traumatised groups face difficulties in expressing their feelings which turn into a sense of frustration and anger (2009, 17); third, "an identification with the oppressor" (2009, 17); fourth, "a shared difficulty or even inability to mourn losses" (2009, 23). Volkan asserts, "Because of the continuation of shame, humiliation, dehumanization, guilt, helpless rage and identification with the oppressor, their mourning process becomes complicated and unending" (2009, 23). The entire community suffers from a never-ending helplessness and frustration.

These four consequences of collective trauma result in the fifth, "the transgenerational transmission of trauma" (Volkan 2009, 14− 15). The concept of transgenerational trauma implies that if trauma is not settled by the real victim(s), it can be passed on from generation to generation. Thus, confronting the traumatic past and coming to terms with it is crucial in order for the past not to invade the present and disturb subsequent generations of victims or survivors. Scholars like Neil J. Smelser argue that trauma is impossible to remove and is a constant threat to the victimised group(s) (Smelser 2004, 54). According to Alexander, "The experience of collective trauma, however, shatters both the external and the internal representations of culture and thus leads to the collective loss of meaning. With the destruction of its values and beliefs as well as the roles and rituals of the community concerned, its members are left disempowered, disoriented and unable to make plans for the future" (in Pöschl 2011, 32). This quotation refers to the loss of the culture and meaning of a community where its members feel powerless and alienated, and fail to assert both their individual and communal selves.

Although most trauma scholars have agreed on some specific aspects of the concept, they have, on the other hand, presented contradictory observations on it—whether trauma occurs from a single exposure to any traumatic event or it needs multiple exposure being one of the issues of debate. Schauer, Neuner and Elbert, for example, believe that apart from

originating from the single exposure to a particular event, trauma may also be caused by multiple or frequent exposure to catastrophic events (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 2005, 8). This broader definition of trauma is very important for the purpose of this book because I believe traumatisation originating from various violent historical events—the Holocaust, slavery, apartheid—can hardly be described properly by reducing them to the experiences of a single traumatic event. Since these historical events were characterised by repeated instances of violence and concerned the majority of the population, many people developed trauma even without being the direct victims of a particular traumatic event.

Narrating Memory: Concept, Development, Types

Memory does not record the past directly, rather it (re)constructs past experiences. According to Antze and Lambek, memory is also the particular point of the flimsy balance between fact and interpretation, or remembrance and understanding (Antze and Lambek 1996, xxvii). According to Pierre Janet, memory has not only a containing capacity for experience but also a processing capacity which is always organising and synthesising the incoming information based on previous integrated memories (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 1995, 159). Janet differentiates between narrative memory and actual memory, and according to his definition, "[n]arrative memory consists of mental constructs, which people use to make sense out of experience" (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 1995, 160). In showing the differences between narrative memory and traumatic memory, Arva states:

> By analogy, one may infer that narrative memory (usually attributed to the author) can never be identical with traumatic memory (belonging to the subject of the narrated event) even in cases where the author and the survivor-subject of the story are one and the same entity. For one thing, narrative memory is a social act—that is, in the presence of an audience willing to listen, it may be integrated into a collective memory—while traumatic memory lacks any addressee except maybe the victim himself. (Arva 2011, 56)

It can be inferred from Arva that unlike narrative memory, which can be assimilated into a collective memory, traumatic memory belongs to the subject of the narrated event and finds no audience except the victim himself.

In psychology, the issue of 'repressed memory' can be interpreted in multiple ways. Victims of traumatic events try not to remember their

memories, and thus avoid narrating or sharing their experiences of anxiety, sorrow, guilt, depression, shame and such like. Van der Kolk and Van der Hart state that the concept of repression "reflects a vertically layered model of mind: what is repressed is pushed downward, into the unconscious" (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 1995, 168). Gradually, victims fail to remember traumatic events clearly, but rather in a fragmented manner. According to Paul R. McHugh, "There has also been significant questioning of the reality of repressed memories. There is considerable evidence that rather than being pushed out of consciousness, the difficulty with traumatic memories for most people are their intrusiveness and inability to forget" (McHugh 2006, 45–46). McHugh's quotation thus highlights how victims find it impossible to forget traumatic memories. According to Jennifer Freyd, "[…] victims may need to remain unaware of the trauma not to reduce suffering but rather to promote survival" (Freyd 1994, 307).

Unlike ordinary memory, traumatic memory occurs by a process that Janet terms "restitutio ad integrum", that is, "when one element of a traumatic experience is evoked, all other elements follow automatically" (qtd. in Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 1995, 163). It shows the inter-connectedness of traumatic elements in a traumatic event. Van der Kolk and Rita Fisler state that "traumatic memories may be encoded differently than memories for ordinary events, perhaps via alterations in attentional focusing, perhaps because of extreme emotional arousal interferes with hippocampal memory functions" (Van der Kolk and Rita Fisler 1995, 508− 509). Because of its "dissociation from consciousness and voluntary control, traumatic memory [forces] the trauma victim to revisit the violent event as long as his or her control over it is unsatisfactory and until it (the traumatic memory) can be turned into narrative memory" (Arva 2011, 56). Arva thus focuses on the importance of transforming traumatic memory into a narrative. Ruth Leys, following Janet's study of trauma, distinguishes traumatic memory from narrative memory by saying, "[Narrative memory] *narrates the past as past* [whereas traumatic memory] merely and unconsciously *repeats* the past" (Leys 2000, 105). What Leys wants to say is that narrative memory narrates past events in a linear, chronological way so that it can give them new meanings. Traumatic memory, on the contrary, repeats the traumatic experiences without realising the significance of those events.

Healing Traumatised Memory

According to Berliner and Briere, understanding the impact of trauma on memory is complicated by the fact that unproven self-reports often constitute the only possible and accessible data concerning specific historical events (Berliner and Briere 1999, 5). In some cases, survivors of traumatic events seem to forget substantial aspects of their experiences which include being ill-treated, seeing disfigured bodies and witnessing murder (Berliner and Briere 1999, 5). Since they sometimes forget key aspects of their experiences, their testimonies or narratives become inconsistent. Van der Kolk and Rita Fisler divided the impact of trauma on memory into: "traumatic amnesia" which talks about the loss of memories involved with traumatic experiences (Van der Kolk and Rita Fisler 1995, 509); "global memory impairment" which makes it very complex for victims to create an exact account of their history—both past and present (1995, 510); "trauma and dissociation" which refers to the fragmentary aspect of memories (1995, 510); and "the sensorimotor organization of traumatic experience" which states that trauma is organised into memory on sensorimotor and affective levels (1995, 512). Concurring with them, we can infer that since the content of traumatic memory is fragmented, trauma narratives cannot be consistent and linear. In order to provide a literary representation of trauma, traditional narrative, which is linear, has proved to be insufficient. Authors look for an alternative narrative which is non-linear and fragmented. I strongly argue for magical realism as this alternative narrative.

There are contrasting views concerning the fact of whether trauma can be worked through and healed or whether it is never-ending and ineffaceable. Trauma scholar Cathy Caruth argues that since a traumatic experience can never be fully grasped, it is also not possible to express it to others. If it cannot be addressed or expressed, it cannot be healed (Caruth 1996, 153). Judith Herman has argued that although it is possible to come to terms with trauma, it can never be fully resolved (Herman 1997, 155). However, in her "Trauma Narratives and the Remaking of the Self", Susan Brison opines that it is possible to heal or come to terms with trauma through narration: "By constructing and telling a narrative of the trauma endured, and with the help of understanding listeners, the survivor begins not only to integrate the traumatic episode into a life with a before and after, but also to gain control over the occurrence of intrusive memories" (Brison 1999, 46). However, although converting traumatic memory into a narrative memory is a prerequisite for healing traumatised individuals and communities, this transformation is a difficult process mainly because of

the lack of a suitable language to narrate the events in a tangible way (Gobodo-Madikizela and Van der Merwe 2007, 25−26). It is observed quite often that trauma victims are either unwilling or unable to talk about their victimisation, making it unspeakable. It is essential for trauma victims to confront and thus remember their traumatic events, to share them with others, and to transform them into narratives so that they can regain control over their experiences and initiate the healing process. Brison opines that narrating traumatic events helps to restore memory and brings order to the events until they can be reintegrated into the life narrative of the victim(s) (Brison 2002, 71−72). It also re-empowers trauma victims and helps them reassert their devastated identity.

It is important to mention that just like individual trauma, collective trauma can be healed through the telling of traumatic experiences. Regarding the issue of structuring traumatic experiences through narration and thus gaining control over those experiences and over life, Gobodo-Madikizela and Van der Merwe argue:

> Turning trauma into literary narrative means turning chaos into structure. A narrative has a topic, and normally keeps to that point; the plot of the story usually creates a causal link between different events; characters act according to their identities, and their actions show some kind of continuity; and patterns are created and repeated to indicate central themes. In all these ways, the shattering effect of the trauma is transformed by the author into (relative) coherence and unity. (Gobodo-Madikizela and Van der Merwe 2007, 60)

The above-mentioned quotation focuses on the importance of turning trauma into narrative, and thus coming to terms with it (trauma) and gaining control over life. Schauer, Neuner and Elbert argue that whereas the experience of trauma is characterised by the powerlessness and helplessness of victims, the conscious narration of the events means that they gradually regain control over their experiences (Schauer, Neuner and Elbert 2005, 2).

Representing Trauma in Narrative Text

It is very significant to note that transforming traumatic memory into a narrative is not a simple issue, but rather "a highly complex process marked by the paradoxical relationship between language, memory, and trauma" (Kopf 2010, 43). It may take quite a long period of time and a huge amount of effort until traumatic memories can be reintegrated into the victim's life narrative. Apart from this, transforming trauma into

narrative also requires empathetic listeners or readers. Martina Kopf, for example, explains that "active listening and witnessing are of as much importance as the act of narrating itself. […] it is also significant for the reception of literature and art that deal with traumatic experience, as well as for acknowledging their specific contribution to the integration and transformation of traumatic memory" (Kopf 2010, 43). Therefore, it is crucial that traumatic experiences are not only recounted but also listened to and acknowledged by others. Laub states, "[…] if one talks about the trauma without being truly heard or truly listened to, the telling might itself be lived as a return of the trauma—*a re-experiencing of the event itself*" (Laub 1992, 67). It can be surmised from Laub that the act of telling might itself be dangerous if the speaker is not properly listened to and acknowledged.

Regarding the representation of trauma in literature and art, Martina Kopf states: "[L]iterature and art contribute to the social recognition of personal suffering and traumatic reality" (Kopf 2010, 56). They are, therefore, ideal fields for the re-establishment and formation of personal and collective identity (Kopf 2010, 56). Literary representation of trauma may do the healing but may also establish a notion that trauma is collective. In other words, collectiveness comes from literary representation because of the involvement of the group of readers. The reader should not only rewrite or actualise the text but should also be involved and be transferred magically into the realm of a text, a process Jon Thiem has labelled "textualization" (Thiem 1995, 235). Thiem sees the textualisation as something that dissolves the reader's detachment from the literary text:

> The world of the text loses its literal impenetrability. The reader loses that minimal detachment that keeps him or her out of the world of the text. The reader, in short, ceases to be reader, ceases to be invulnerable, comfortable in his or her armchair, and safely detached, and becomes instead an actor, an agent in the fictional world. (Thiem 1995, 239)

To speak plainly, Thiem underpins the notion that readers should turn themselves into character actors and thus attach themselves to the story. In trauma narratives, Arva says, readers are drawn into the language game and find themselves "traumatized by vicariously re-living the narrated events" (Arva 2011, 50). Trauma, loneliness, contempt and hatred suffered by a survivor can be healed when the reader reads a trauma narrative and empathises with that survivor. He is not isolated, weak and alone anymore; rather he acquires the magical feelings of becoming the member of a group of people.

In his "Postmodernism as Mourning Work", Thomas Elsaesser comments, "[…] what makes trauma different from more traditional issues of representation […] is the idea that trauma also suspends the categories of true and false, being in some sense performative" (Elsaesser 2001, 199). According to Arva, any approach to the representation of trauma needs to have two bases: first, a truthful depiction necessarily assumes the ability to recreate the event which was not grasped or understood at the time of occurrence; and second, "representation can never replace the experience itself" (Arva 2011, 42). No matter what kind of language we use to deal with trauma, it always produces new meaning, provides an alternative reality or truth, and thus differs significantly from ordinary usage (2011, 42). It is mentioned by many critics that traumatic events can only be revisited in their literary representations but cannot be recreated. According to Kali Tal, "The horrific events that have reshaped the author's construction of reality can only be described in literature, not recreated" (Tal 1996, 121).

Regarding the nature of representation, Dominick LaCapra asserts that trauma may also cause "a dissociation of affect and representation: one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbingly represents what one cannot feel" (LaCapra 2001, 42). Is it possible to turn a traumatic event into a narrative without distorting the truth and, if so, how? Which language should we use to deal with various historical traumatic events including extraordinary events that are categorised by many as unique, such as the Holocaust? Language is well associated with power struggle, and is an instrument of dominant and oppressive power structures. In dealing with various traumatic historical events, we have to decide whether we continue to write in traditional narrative—an objective and factual form of representation from the standpoints of dominant authorities (perpetrators, colonisers, oppressors and slave-owners)—or employ an alternative narrative full of emotion, myth and magic and which has subversive and transgressive qualities from the perspectives of the oppressed and marginalised (victims, colonised and slaves). I propose that for the literary representation of violent historical events, the magical realist narrative has the potential to be that alternative language or the narrative for the victimised.

Living with trauma does not mean being engulfed or crushed by it. On the contrary, it means to confront the past, to narrate its stories either in speech or in writing, to regain control over it, and to reassert torn identity. The only way to overcome a traumatic past is not to escape from it but to face it courageously. The language used by the trauma victims may

traumatise the witness, listener or speaker; it is, however, almost essential for their recovery. The alternative language of the victim is able to turn an ungraspable experience into a graspable event, make the invisible visible and make the silence heard. I propose that magical realism has the potential to be the alternative narrative and an instrument of the oppressed with its imaginative power and magical ability to capture the painful qualities of traumatic experiences and to convert traumatic memories into narrative memories.