



EMOTIONS IN SINDIWE MAGONA'S *MOTHER TO MOTHER*

BY

NATTAKARN SRISAKORN

AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS
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ENTITLED

EMOTIONS IN SINDIWE MAGONA'S *MOTHER TO MOTHER*

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ABSTRACT

Mother to Mother, published in 1998, was written by Sindiwe Magona, a female South African author whose work mainly evokes social and political concerns, particularly apartheid and post-apartheid in South Africa. This novel fictionalizes a real event that took place in South Africa in August 1993: a mob of youths perpetrated the brutal murder of Amy Biehl, a white American Fulbright scholar. This case became internationally controversial not only because of the crime itself but also because of the pardon that all of the murderers were given through the amnesty applied to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The novel also imagines the loss of the victim's mother in an epistolary form, and extends outwards back to the 1850s through the lives of the murderer Mxolisi and his mother Mandisa, instead of primarily narrating the murder. The eager attention *Mother to Mother* has received for raising certain questions towards the TRC makes it stand out. More importantly, the way in which the novel presents contradictory and messy emotional states during these historical processes engages my analysis of different traumas using the lens offered by affect studies. Through reading multilayered collective and individual traumas in *Mother to Mother*, this dissertation explores the novel's affective imagination through focusing on four prominent emotions: pain, doubt, confusion and grief in order to comprehend traumatic experiences for its

people. I consider pain as the most recognizable product of traumas prompted by apartheid; therefore, this dissertation observes how apartheid results in physical and psychological traumas in the affective form of pain passing onto black South Africans, particularly through Mandisa's account of forced removals. Furthermore, my analysis proceeds by contemplation of doubt cast upon South Africa's politics, especially democracy, mainly through interpreting Mandisa's virgin conception of Mxolisi. It is followed by a search for the meaning of confusion provoked by temporal restrictions implied in the non-chronological organization of the novel. Lastly, investigating Mandisa's one-way address to the victim's mother to read the relationship between these two mothers, the dissertation concludes by comparing Mandisa's grief attributed to personal losses with the other mother's grief, which connects the claim of grief Magona makes with inquiries about how the affect studies respond to a possibility of sharing grief between diverse people.

Keywords: South African Literature, Affect Studies, Apartheid, TRC, Trauma, Pain, Doubt, Confusion, Grief, Epistolary Fiction, Sympathy

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Nattakarn Srisakorn

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Of the many literary engagements made by South African writers with the reconciliation process after the end of the apartheid regime, Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother* stands out, not only for the amount of critical attention it has received for dealing with specific issues at stake in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)'s process of national reconciliation, but also for the way in which the novel presents a nuanced account of the contradictory and messy emotional states in which these historical processes have been apprehended. If collective history is where individual memory and body belong, the whole history of colonization and apartheid in South Africa has shattered the interdependence of its people's memories and bodies. Even though racial segregation had prevailed in South Africa for centuries, apartheid legislation which was introduced by the National Party in 1948 and lasted until the early 1990s institutionalized racial discrimination against non-white citizens. *The Population Registration Act No. 30* of 1950 enacted racial classification which placed all the South Africans into one of four racial groups: Whites, Blacks or Native, Indians and Colored or people of mixed race. Most basically, it enforced a special separation between people in these groups. The government also passed the Land Act, which systematically partitioned the land between blacks and whites, and appropriated the land formerly occupied by native populations for intense agriculture. The political dispensation of land in South Africa is, therefore, an origin from which major discrimination, violence and oppression emerged. The majority of the indigenous black South Africans were banished to infertile reservations later known as "Bantustans"; the apartheid government also enacted forced removals, which relocated blacks and other non-white racial groups from their homes to remote townships in rural areas, in order to maintain white dominance in city spaces and to reduce the whites' anxiety over African-induced threats. These experiences naturally linger in the memory. For black South Africans, who witnessed not simply loss but also a mix of devastating

affects, this eventually results in fragmented perception of identity both on personal and collective levels.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was therefore established after the end of apartheid. It incorporated in its aims opportunities for victims and witnesses of diverse violations to provide their testimonies and tell their stories, with certain statements held in public hearings. More importantly, a number of perpetrators who had committed crimes and sentenced were given amnesties by the TRC. In spite of the claim that it succeeded in healing “the past”, the TRC was widely criticized for re-wounding the victims and making them unable to shut the door on the past. It retold personal stories in collective consciousness, which makes possible the continuity of these narratives. Tracking how and why the TRC narratives became problematic, I have found specific critiques proposed by Meg Samuelson the most relevant to trauma and affect studies and Sindiwe Magona’s novel *Mother to Mother*, the focus of this dissertation. The conclusion of her reading of the novel allows her to propound weaknesses of the TRC and critiques of how the TRC defines “victim” in particular. Firstly, she offers a gendered critique by criticizing the TRC for inscribing women as secondary rather than primary victims because the roles women played in their testimonies differed from those of men: women mainly testified on behalf of their husbands and sons. The other critique was presented by borrowing Mahmood Mamdani’s idea of a “diminished truth”, which results from “the TRC’s focus on perpetrator (as state agent) and victim (as political activist)” (Samuelson, 2004, 128). Specifically speaking, the TRC said nothing about the victims of the forced removals:

The TRC excluded the victims of forced removals from their definition of ‘victims’ as sufferers of ‘gross human rights violations’. Arguing that the TRC defined the latter as ‘only that which was a gross violation under the laws of apartheid’, Mamdani claims that it ‘ignor[ed] everything that was distinctive about apartheid and its machinery of violence’ (Samuelson, 2004, 129)

The work of the TRC should thus be seen as a national project of remapping collective memory which is also one of the most predominant characteristics in post-apartheid literature. Specifically speaking, one of the recurrent features of post-apartheid literature, unlike apartheid-era works which aim at future hopes and exclude the implications of daily oppression, is its embrace of nostalgia and psychology of lived experiences. That is, it takes the reader on a time machine travelling back to the traumatic past through a psychological journey, rather than through superficial spectacles or exterior revelation. These strategies suggest greater complexity and hence allow the reader to be skeptical about time, space and history. Recounting the past in post-apartheid literature, consequently, interferes with history, which redeems loss and rupture as a result. The practice of recuperating the past, I argue, is not to imprison memory in the past, but to free it in order to discover new identities in the post-apartheid future. The reshaping of new identities by this method is achieved by maintaining the root or the originality, not by forgetting or forgiving the past.

It is evident that the TRC not only acted as an arena of struggles over memory and trauma, but it has also been adopted by post-apartheid authors as subject matter, or, in some literary works that do not talk about it directly, as insight from which the stories emerge. *Mother to Mother*, Sindiwe Magona's first novel published in 1998, also centers on a real event that was investigated by the TRC: in August 1993, a group of black youths took away the life of Amy Biehl, a white American Fulbright scholar who came to South Africa as an activist with compassion to help the previously-disenfranchised black population prepare for South Africa's first democratic election. In the novel's preface, Magona declares that her purpose in fictionalizing the murder of Biehl is to expose the global audience, after having always perceived the world of the victims, to "the other world" (Magona, V), anticipating better awareness of the perpetrators "whose environment failed to nurture them in the higher ideals of humanity and who, instead, became lost creatures of malice and destruction" (Magona, V). In addition to pointing out her aim in the preface, Magona's implication is to attribute the death of

Biehl to the legacy of apartheid, “a system repressive and brutal, that bred senseless inter- and intra-racial violence as well as other nefarious happenings; a system that promoted a twisted sense of right and wrong” (Magona, V-VI). Another reason why Magona chose this particular event, I deduce, is that it implicates the novel in the TRC: one of Biehl’s murderers was then granted an amnesty by the TRC, which can also be interpreted as forgiveness from Biehl’s parents and thus from “the world of the victim”. It is, therefore, not surprising that *Mother to Mother* is usually considered as a TRC novel and as a political response to it.

On the surface, *Mother to Mother* seems to imagine the loss of the victim’s mother in an epistolary form. Even though it is apparent in the novel that a mob of youths in the public commits the crime, the community ascribes the murder to only Mxolisi. However, the novel keeps the fact of collective responsibility, neither through the story of the victim nor Mxolisi’s, but primarily through Mxolisi’s mother, Mandisa. Mandisa mainly narrates the story in the first-person, whereas it is interesting to notice a great deal of second-person address to the victim’s mother, and sections, particularly at the beginning, where Mandisa tracks the victim’s movements in third-person narration. With these multilayered traumas, the novel demands the reader’s psychological identification with the characters in the narrative, not only in terms of concrete, collective history but also in terms of individual and domestic traumas. The novel, moreover, traces the thoughts and experiences of Mandisa, whose life resembles that of Magona in several aspects. Mandisa patterns her exploration of the other mother’s loss on her own suffering from childhood to adulthood. It seems that she injects into this framework the intimate yet sinuous narrative that characterizes the psychology of South Africa and its ordinary people under apartheid and during the transitional era. In other words, the fictional mask acts as Magona’s interpretation of the world in which she grew up. This is not to say that the novel is to be merely understood as Magona’s testimony of her own past, I argue. Yet, speaking through individual traumas, it depicts those shared by many communities of South Africa, which can trigger particular affects in

relationships both between the subjects whom the TRC was intended to heal and between the readers and their reading. This also echoes Samuelson's comment about the prominent role the character of Mandisa plays: "Magona's mother-as-witness allows the act of witnessing to extend beyond the lives of Mandisa and her son into the story of 'entire communities,' while simultaneously enabling the empathy between individuals that the TRC attempted to foster" (Samuelson, 2004, 131). Even though scrutinizing certain affects is not a prescription South Africa needs, it should serve as a means to untangle the complexity that arose as a result of apartheid and the transition.

Mother to Mother begins with "Mandisa's Lament", in which Mandisa directly addresses the victim's mother in the form of a letter, and asks for understanding about how her son has become what she calls "a monster" (Magona, 2). Consequently, Magona enters the world of emotional relationships between blacks and whites by allowing Mandisa to recognize the other mother's loss and to share her own loss within the same space. Undeniably, the fictional form of the narrative embellishes reality, giving the true story an extra emotional charge. Furthermore, Magona depicts differences in time between rapidly developing historical moments and the post-election perspective where the novel has been completed. While the novel neutralizes South Africa's image of itself as two worlds of masters and servants by making a horizontal link between Mandisa and the victim's mother as mothers, this affair suggests the state of traumas throughout the transition due to the legacies of colonization and apartheid. The first chapter is then followed by the date of Biehl's murder (25 August 1993) alternating between Mandisa's and Mxolisi's lives and flashbacks to earlier times in South Africa's history. These are mostly labeled with the places and dates of the events, "which is part of Magona's spatio-temporal mapping" (Graham, 78). The chapters regarding the date of the victim's death seek to assemble the journeys of both the victim and Mxolisi leading them to the final scene, in which she is driving her friends to their homes in the black township. The victim, a white American person turning up in Guguletu, where she does not belong at all, is stabbed to death in the fiction by Mxolisi

among a mob just leaving a political meeting and cheering ONE SETTLER! ONE BULLET!
(Magona, 209)

Although the novel is centered on Biehl's murder, the majority of it is devoted to a wide range of traumatic events and dispossessions, most of which obviously arise from oppression as well as repression in apartheid. The most crucial trauma in Mandisa's life is the forced removal in the form of the government's 'Slum Clearance' project, from Blouvillei, a well-knit community located spatially closer to Cape Town and the historical landing-point for internal migrants, to Guguletu, a more distant, more crowded, less diverse town. Surprisingly this trauma is one that has occurred during Mandisa's childhood, many years before the murder. She calls Guguletu a "howling place against our will" (Magona, 30) in her description to represent how haunting this place is and how the early colonialism also influenced the Cape long before the forced removal in her time. It is the degenerate youth including Mxolisi that these centuries of traumas and dispossessions engender. Such youth is also known as the "Young Lions", who promote the resistance to apartheid through school strikes, burning houses and chasing after the whites savagely as in Biehl's case. In this phase of the struggle, the radical youth groups were also turning much of their action towards their internal enemies within the resistance movement through other violent means such as necklacing.

Several critics of *Mother to Mother* claim that Magona as the author makes use of fictional space to explore different aspects of reality in South Africa, focusing on apartheid and the transition to post-apartheid in particular. Samuelson, for example, regards the novel as the space in which Magona feels less reluctant to scrutinize the more negative sides of being an African mother in oblique comparison with a white mother: "the space of fiction combined with a changing political culture does seem to allow Magona greater ease with which to explore the more negative aspect of the maternal role" (Samuelson, 2000, 235). This also resonates with one of Pearl Amelia McHaney's impressions of *Mother to Mother* in terms of its application of fictional space

to enable chronological fluctuation and thus the intertextuality of collective histories and personal stories. McHaney also acknowledges this kind of fictional space as “supplemental space for resistance” (in Homi Bhabha’s explanation) pertaining to “Magona’s recognition that beneath the media story of Amy Biehl’s murder that evoked international sympathy was a story of individual and personal empathy of motherhood, loss, cultural and political anger” (McHaney, 174). More importantly, among the most critical analyses of the novel is that *Mother to Mother* is not only coincidental with the TRC, but it also criticizes the TRC for its failure in overcoming traumatic effects on the victims of apartheid. Andre Brink, a South African novelist, views fictional space as part of the imaginings through literature in which the investigation of the TRC can be deepened as well as sharpened: “unless the enquiries of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) are extended, complicated, and intensified in the imaginings of literature, society cannot sufficiently come to terms with its past to face the future” (qtd. in Craps, 44). Without it, South Africa would have difficulty compromising the past to go towards the future. According to this analysis, *Mother to Mother* can be thought to act as a means to deepen and sharpen the work of the TRC through imaginings in the hope of enabling society to deal with the past and confront the future. In Stef Craps’s words, *Mother to Mother* as a truth-and-reconciliation novel “can be seen to supplement the work of TRC by critically revisiting its limits, exclusions, and elisions – and thus also to suggest a possible way for ‘traditional’ trauma theory to reinvent and renew itself” (Craps, 44).

What seems to me particularly notable in Craps’s proposal above is not just the role *Mother to Mother* might be argued to have played in supplementing the work of the TRC, but also the potential of this novel to reshape or transform trauma theory, which has always been derived from Europe and America. In other words, the novel is capable of bending the mainstream of the traumatic theory over the apartheid-colonial context of South Africa. So, what is the problem of the Euro-American concepts of trauma? To answer this question, I will suggest here that the trauma theory

conventionally bases its discussion and interpretation on events. That is, trauma discourse commonly involves historic events or moments which have caused the overwhelming effects on a huge number of victims. It frequently provokes wider public debates as it recounts deaths as well as depicts the juxtaposition of the dead and the survivors, which is referred, by Cathy Caruth, as “the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life” (Caruth, 7) in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. For these reasons, trauma discourse is more likely to highlight the scale of the event and the extent of violence it causes in order to classify it as a traumatic experience. It is even less likely to uncover gradual effects of daily or domestic violence and other events without fatal effects. To be clear, I do not object to the significance and the implication of the events when scrutinizing trauma, but trauma theory and thus trauma discourse should make use of the events as a stepping stone to better comprehension of different factors in the working of the inner faculty, even of the mind which has not experienced or witnessed the death. I would extend the limitation of the traumatic events and also take into account the non-fatal moments since each traumatic event (e.g. apartheid in South African) can involve fatal and non-fatal consequences simultaneously.

I would like to reflect on a common problem that all three of the TRC, the trauma discourse and black South African literature share due to their deployment of such the Euro-American concepts in the examination of apartheid-colonial situations. That is, the TRC has been denounced for its failure to politicize the lived experience and to attend to the legalized system of oppression which adversely affected the everyday lives of South Africans. Mamdani’s critique, for instance, “is centered upon the TRC’s failure to expose the systemic violence of apartheid on the level of ... the ‘ordinary’” (Samuelson, 2004, 128). Similarly, the current trauma discourse, when applied to the apartheid-colonial field, seems to be less favored because it neglects the daily injustices of apartheid and domestic abuses which can act as traumatic stressors as well. Likewise, it is the representation of spectacle that has been predominant in the history of black

South African literature. The literature is overwhelmed by transparent symbols of oppression in South Africa's social formation and a highly powerful, expressive form of literary representation. One of the spectacles in South Africa is the Soweto uprising and the consequent mass killings of 16 June 1976. But a new trend of the literature which came out of the painful aftermath of the uprising and the mass killings ceases the tradition of the spectacle. The new literary manner shifts the focus to redemptive transformation by embracing analytical thoughts and abandoning the obvious. Its chief aim is to approach new possibilities of understanding, and it is called "rediscovery of the ordinary", according to Njabulo S. Ndebele. Ndebele begins "The Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Some New Writing in South Africa" with a characteristic of black South African literature before the advent of post-apartheid literature:

The history of black South African literature has largely been the history of the representation of *spectacle*. The visible symbols of the overwhelming oppressive South African social formation appear to have prompted over the years the development of *a highly dramatic, highly demonstrative form of literary representation* [emphasis added] (Ndebele, 31).

Imagining the literature of post-apartheid South Africa in advance, Ndebele points out the emergence of depictions of ordinary problems which largely constitutes the public's active social consciousness in creative writing like fiction. In preference to an analytical approach to the social reality of apartheid, fiction which has rediscovered the ordinary "remind[s] us necessarily, that the problems of South African social formation are complex and all embracing; that they cannot be reduced to a single, simple formulation" (Ndebele, 51). This is to say, in other words, that "the ordinary daily lives of people should be the direct focus of political interest because they constitute the *very content* of the struggle, for the struggle involves people not abstractions" [original emphasis] (Ndebele, 52).

Applying the idea of rediscovery of the ordinary to *Mother to Mother*, I can neither say that Magona maintains in Ndebele's mode of the spectacular nor that she is

rediscovering the ordinary through the novel. However, what interests me is her practice of disengaging the spectacle or the obvious story of the Amy Biehl killing by fictionalizing it with the intervention of abundant stories of Mandisa's and Mxolisi's lives. It seems to me that in this practice Magona is making an argument about the nature of the ordinary during a time that has only previously been represented through spectacle by consolidating Mandisa's philosophies originating from concrete situations, and simultaneously undermining direct political consciousness. Specifically speaking, *Mother to Mother* seeks to immerse itself in ordinary concerns among the people who are democratic overtones while surrounding the concerns with South Africa's broad political atmosphere. Therefore, rather than asking "who is supposed to be the real victim between Amy Biehl, Mandisa and Mxolisi? or who faces the worst trauma and thus deserves sympathy?", this fusion encourages me to ask "how do the events in *Mother to Mother* as a text that engages with apartheid help me to proceed my analysis of the representation of trauma in apartheid-colonial South Africa?" and "how has my thinking been informed by my contact with some works on affects?" I rely on the term "affects" here because some works in the affect studies are useful for interpreting the characterizations in the aspect of ordinary and political responses to particular situations. However, the title of this dissertation focuses on "emotions" as the subsequent emotional consequences in inner faculty with which I tend to be more engaged. These two terms will be distinguished again in the analysis of pain since they both have meaningful effects on the response of pain. In asking the previous questions, I will offer a viable means to bring to light the truth about apartheid reflected in *Mother to Mother* by overcoming cultural bias as well as event-driven conception of trauma and by embracing non-Western subjects through the exploration of certain affects. As affects surround people's lives regardless of their races and cultures, contemplating them induces better awareness of the traumatizing effects of everyday oppression and detaches the traumas from the event-based model. However, specific affects can be

more noticeable as they dominate ordinary people's experiences and mainly resulted from prevailing phenomena in history.

Moving on to the interpretation of *Mother to Mother* in the aspect of affects, I would like to call attention to Anne Whitehead, a rare critic who considers specific affects in the novel. She identifies "empathy" in her "Reading with Empathy: Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother*" while relating empathy to its political implication, especially in the TRC. She deduces that Magona criticizes the TRC for its failure to promote empathy across races and nations. Whitehead situates her analysis in Ann Cvetkovich's concept of an "emotional color line" (qtd. in Whitehead, 182), which distinguishes black sadness from white sadness. While Cvetkovich aims the emotional color line at the affective aftermaths of colonialism and their impacts on daily experiences of segregation, Whitehead uses the notion to explore *Mother to Mother* and thus to show how black sadness differs from white sadness, especially its association with motherhood. She also bases her analysis on two major critiques including Clare Hemmings's account of empathy's consolidation of existing power hierarchies and Sara Ahmed's question about strengthening injustice through affective conversion in narratives. Another interesting conclusion from Whitehead is that political and social changes have a strong influence upon people's affective lives, "especially upon the ways in which empathy might be felt, produced, and circulated across the 'color line'" (Whitehead, 184). Whitehead calls Magona's affective experience "insularity of the imagination" (Whitehead, 14) as a psychological result of apartheid, and it is evidenced by a lack of her empathy with the white people. Magona explicitly addresses in *Forced to Grow* her inability to share the feeling of empathy outside the black community: "[i]t seems strange now, of course, but the idea of, say, white people suffering bereavement never crossed [her] mind..." (qtd. in Whitehead, 184). In other words, it seems that empathy, for Magona, is limited only to the known and familiar, or among the black community. However, this insularity is an idea that is opposed to post-apartheid awareness of a likelihood of white people's suffering which is central to *Mother to*

Mother, particularly when the suffering of Amy Biehl's mother is recognized. Therefore, it can also be deduced from this observation that affect can be reshaped by political and social transformation.

One of the attempts to explain the reshaping of affects is the transition of empathy, which shows that cross-racial empathy is possible. This explanation is comparable to the essence of the TRC – national reconciliation across races. Whitehead claims that “Mandisa’s narrative can [...] be seen to satisfy ‘the TRC’s aims’ by bringing the families of victim and perpetrator into dialogue as a prelude to understanding” (Whitehead, 186). Whitehead’s claim deserves acknowledgement of a constant intention to make understanding of both mothers’ losses and the TRC’s aim. Whitehead further posits *Mother to Mother* as Magona’s emphasis on the continuing effects of the forced removals on society and her criticism that the TRC focuses too much on collective society instead of individuals. Individuals in Whitehead’s argument tend to be concerned with mothers in contrast to the forced removal and hence sadness. The novel puts up resistance to the stereotypical portrayal of black motherhood, and encourages us to consider it as a consequence of particular social and political conditions. Even if I would also embrace the circumstances into my analysis, it seems insufficient, if not unfair, to expect the novel to spontaneously represent a white mother’s understanding through a black mother’s sadness by taking only the crime of Amy Biehl’s murder into account. Pondering the complexities of the novel in the aspects of collective and individual histories, I am inclined to be intrigued by her comparison between a white mother’s sadness caused by maternal bereavement and a black mother’s sadness triggered by violent history and politics, but would part ways with her proposal by observing intricate traumas through affective lives as persistent responses to those histories.

The previous analysis leads to another observation concerning the principal emotion of the novel, sorrow or sadness. Whitehead proposes that *Mother to Mother* denies the possibility of cross-racial feeling on a universal level. Furthermore, the novel

performs a criticism of the TRC since it is different from the face-to-face encounter of the TRC, “emphasizing that literature is an imaginative mode of encounter that can open up different kinds of attachments to others” (Whitehead, 192). Whitehead concludes that there is no empathy between women with different races and in different classes, although they are bound in the same political environment. She supports her conclusion by giving a specific instance of the close yet alienated relationship between Mandisa and Mrs. Nelson (Mandisa’s white South African employer). Mrs. Nelson is less capable of sympathy because of the fact that politics requires a lack of understanding between the groups. It is obvious that sorrow or sadness is addressed to evaluate the likelihood of finding shared empathy not only between subjects across races and cultures but also among those in the same political environment like apartheid. However, I would argue that this approach is liable to exclude the fact that not every subject who takes part in the same political system is faced with the same political conditions. Alternatively, it serves the aim of such an address in that it obscures compassion for the ordinary as it attaches excessive importance to racial and cultural differences between subjects. In other words, re-routing the purpose to increase the awareness of affects as an organic relationship between characters, the ordinary undergoing everyday oppression, should be achieved.

Another interesting conclusion Whitehead makes is based on Sara Ahmed’s term “‘adjusting our relation’ to bad feeling” (Whitehead, 192) or “[staying] with and [accepting] the bad feelings long enough to make a personal sense of them” (qtd. in Whitehead, 192). The question about empathy is then discussed along with Mandisa’s address to Mrs. Biehl in the final part of the novel, and Whitehead finds that “[if] compassion becomes a gift that can be extended to others, the subject and object of feeling are therefore reversed in the course of the novel” (Whitehead, 193). Furthermore, Ahmed’s notion about good and bad feelings – “[t]he emotions that have often been described as negative or even destructive can also be enabling or creative, often in their very refusal of the promise of the social bond” (qtd. in Whitehead, 193) –

is expanded into an analysis of Magona's literary aims. That is, Magona considers that her novel's political promise is embedded in a reading of racial affect because feelings lead the reader to a different understanding of social and political injustices. Looking more closely at bad feeling and its relation to the truth about apartheid and how the ordinary people perceive it and thus the world through it, one of the most distressing feelings that is worth taking into account is "pain". Pain, even though it is often thought to be the source of sorrow, is more complex with its two dimensions, physical and psychological. If apartheid remains traumatic because of the wounds it has passed onto both bodies and minds, they come in both concrete and abstract forms of pain. For this reason, approaching pain as the most direct consequence of trauma in these two deeper aspects tends to provoke us into more realizations about South Africa.

I would like to touch on Samuelson's observation anew since she sheds light on key political and social relationships forged by South Africa's history whereas being less interested in collective affective lives like pain and sympathy. Her approach in "Reading the Maternal Voice in Sindiwe Magona's *To My Children's Children* and *Mother to Mother*" traces the maternal voices of Magona's characters in both autobiographical and fictional works and then points out shared characteristics of the autobiographical voice of Magona and the narrating voice of Mandisa. The most prominent similarity is that the stories in both these works are spoken by an "I" which Samuelson declares to be a maternal voice. This practice demonstrates how Magona emphasizes individuality which is one of the most notable features of black South African literature during the emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement. Samuelson thus regards Magona's writing as the act of self-(re)construction which is disguised in both of these maternal voices. Magona's act of writing by using the first-person point of view is considered as a private act which records personal history. Samuelson asserts that Magona utilizes the fictional maternal voice in *Mother to Mother* "in order to cross the all-intrusive racial barrier that saturated the consciousness of South Africa" (Samuelson, 2000, 232) by speaking directly to the victim's mother through

an epistolary form and referring to her as “my Sister-Mother” (Magona, 201). Therefore, Magona creates the character of Mandisa not simply to construct a new counter-character, but the application of Mandisa’s fictional maternal voice also allows Magona to reconstruct self and thus reveal it beneath the disadvantages of apartheid policies.

As the racial barriers encoded and enforced under apartheid disturbed the consciousness of South Africa, Samuelson claims that in *Mother to Mother* Magona has found a means to overcome it by speaking across cultures through the maternal voice. Unlike the way that the maternal voice in *To My Children’s Children* evokes cultural continuity, Samuelson argues that in *Mother to Mother* it acts as permission to bridge cultures and compromise the racial barriers, led by the defeat of apartheid. A further factor enabling the maternal voice in the novel to become more successful than that of the autobiography is the fact that Magona wrote it in the post-apartheid. Writing in this period allows her to create “a mother figure with a far more fluid identity” (Samuelson, 2000, 232), and thus to achieve “movement across the ‘dense texture of boundaries’ that had previously been set as immutable identity demarcations” (Samuelson, 2000, 232). I agree that making the maternal voice a center of attention can prompt a deeper response to the novel. Nevertheless, considering the maternal voice just because the novel is told from the first-person point of view of a mother may conceal the motivations which led Magona to adopt the voice of a mother and obscure the varied uses to which Mandisa puts her status as a mother. To illuminate the motivations for and the uses of the maternal voice is to observe Mandisa as a young girl believing that she has virgin pregnancy. Such a belief is the most basic dynamic of her traumas from adolescence to adulthood and from a domestic to a collective level – the times and the states with overflow of doubt, one of the main affects throughout the novel. Recognizing this doubt not only clarifies Mandisa’s maternal voice, but it can also uncover traumas which are possibly experienced in common with other women both in apartheid and South African patriarchal society.

While Samuelson considers Mandisa as a fictional maternal voice separately from considering Magona as an autobiographical maternal voice, McHaney views Mandisa as a combination of both in “History and Intertextuality: A Transnational Reading of Eudora Welty’s *Losing Battles* and Sindiwe Magona’s *Mother to Mother*”: “For *Mother to Mother*, Magona employs the autobiographical, first-person point of view of a loving but fragmented mother” (McHaney, 169). It can be understood from her argument that Magona represents her own experiences by borrowing the voice of Mandisa and the fictional space of the novel. Specifically speaking, *Mother to Mother* is a product of intersection of Magona’s experiences with other real-world events such as Amy Biehl’s murder, the recollected individual history and the recitation of the story of the Xhosa nation, from which personal loss with cultural and political anger bubbles to the surface. If certain real-world events matter to how the novel was produced, we should also be aware of the fact that Magona did actually know one of the murderers’ mothers and that the imaginative project of the novel began from noting how their lives had been similar.

Intertextuality inserts double layers into the text – historic moments as well as personal experiences. McHaney calls this practice “ambi-intertextuality”. She cites Julia Kristeva, Roland Barthes and Graham Allen to discuss the definition of intertextuality. All of these thinkers prompt a recognition that intertextuality is not equal to source materials or allusion. A significant distinction is discussed by Kristeva in particular: intertextuality is ultimately transposition. It is a transposition from which meaning emerges when it is analyzed by scholar-readers within linguistic or psychological areas. Besides, psychological complexity would not be achieved if it was not for the advantage of fictional discourse (unavailable in nonfiction discourse) in which the chronology of both individual and collective histories can be omitted or twisted in order to generate subtler emotions: “[w]ords, stories, and histories proliferate in the novel’s world” (McHaney, 177). We would not hear the story of an ordinary life like that of Mandisa if it was not for the fictional world which grants any possibilities to prosper

and finally move the reader, in my interpretation. McHaney's description here reinforces skepticism concerning the psychological subtlety that results from certain traumatizing events in history and then unfolded through words and stories. To shed light upon the psychology of *Mother to Mother*, the affect of confusion should not be excluded. McHaney also draws attention to a source of confusion; that is, missing parts in the novel become a literary technique adopted to cast light on confusion. Those ambiguous circumstances do not simply give rise to a range of questions inside and around the novel, but they also lead to how people there actually lived and felt, which might be neglected by historians and cannot be found in any history books. However, in addition to missing parts that scatter confusion over the novel, there are other instances, especially the forced removals, which are packed with confusion.

Therefore, I would propose that considering the ordinary people's affects can act as a means to chronicle specific historic moments. Renee Schatteman is one of the critics of *Mother to Mother* who draws attention to history in terms of literary development. She begins "The Xhosa Cattle-Killing and Post-Apartheid South Africa: Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother* and Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*" by discussing South African writing after the end of apartheid. Black South African writing after the end of apartheid embraces the more distant past in order to explore traumatic moments with their effects on the present, whereas the writing during apartheid focuses on the present and the future. Besides attending to problems arising from individuals, Mandisa chooses to tell the story of the Xhosa Cattle-Killing of the late nineteenth century, one of the most traumatic events in the Xhosa's history. It allows the novel to explore its implication in the post-apartheid context. The emergence of violence, coupled with both physical and mental abuse resulting from colonialism, is central to the novel because all of these represent the transition years during which it is set. By asserting such an abrupt change into the distant past, Magona may also want to mark the development of Mandisa's thinking about wider causes and complicity in sympathy.

A characteristic that both the moment of independence in South Africa and the Cattle-Killing share is concerned with ambiguity and uncertainty:

Magona's interest in this historical moment go[es] beyond mere artistic curiosity; *their Cattle-Killing references enable them to foreground the ambivalences and ambiguities of South Africa in the last years of the twentieth century*, [...] focusing on a unique challenge of post-independence life [emphasis added] (Schatterman, 277).

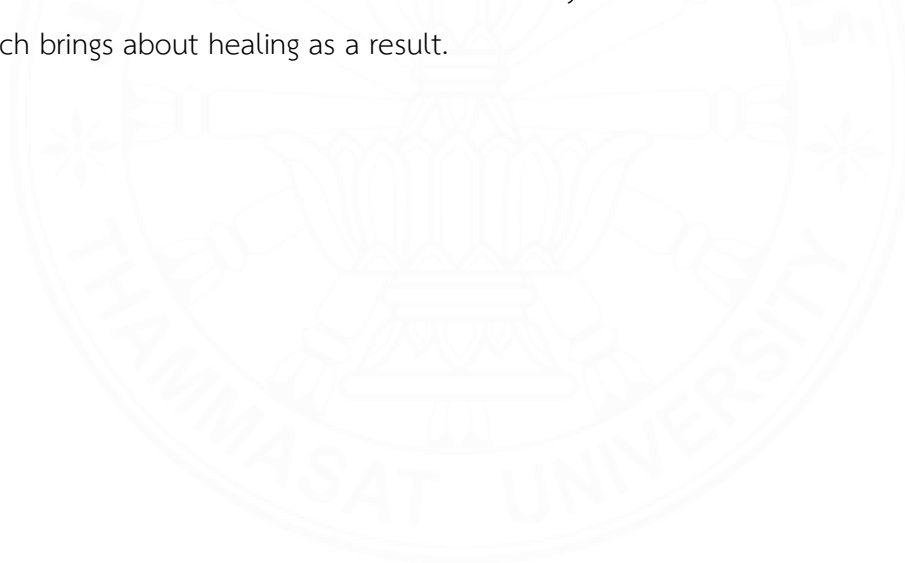
Despite being set in the transition years and raises a critical question of how to alleviate the wounds imposed by the explosion of violence during the years namely Third Force killings and the necklacing of child activists, *Mother to Mother* also aims at relieve the long history of physical and mental brutality in South Africa. I concur with Schatterman that both moments have a common ground, but I will suggest that different political conditions in each event can be read as different kinds of instability in which different consciousnesses are embedded. I am also eager to consider in the following chapters the question of how these differences in consciousness can lead to new yet better understanding of each moment.

The novel seems to accept the fact that “guilt and innocence can co-exist without resolution” (Schatterman, 278), and Magona's use of the Cattle-Killing heightens the intensity of moral ambiguity. Moral ambiguity in this case refers to the way that Mandisa disapproves and applauds the Cattle-Killing prophecies simultaneously. A series of personal memories in both the main story and the back story pave the way for the Cattle-Killing story, which is recounted through Mandisa's grandfather. The Cattle-Killing is central to the novel, according to Schatterman, since it is structured prior to two main features of the novel: its climax in which Mxolisi's action and guilt are revealed as well as its denouement in which Mandisa returns to Mrs. Biehl as her Sister Mother. If moral ambiguity is most apparent in the Cattle-Killing, it is also important to ponder questions of other profound affective responses in the two preceding moments. One of the affective responses which arouse curiosity and interest

is “grief” since the revelation of Mxolisi’s guilt and Mandisa’s call for Mrs. Biehl as her Sister Mother are undoubtedly personal, and thus contain even more inner and critical faculties. In this dissertation, I hope to answer these questions in order to uncover feasible solutions to how grief can be given, taken and accepted between mothers through engaging with the series of affects related to trauma in *Mother to Mother*.

Before proceeding to further discussion about trauma, I would prefer to foreground the etymology of “trauma” to uncover what is inside its meaning and origin. The term “trauma” comes from Greek *trauma*, which means “wound”. Its origin is therefore evocative of a physical wound or an injury causing an open wound. It is since the late of the nineteenth century when it has extended its reference to a psychological or psychiatric wound or a wound inflicted on the mind. This is not simply the turn of its meaning but also of its implications of the traumatic discourse. Injuries inflicted on the body might be completely healed, but scars left on the mind can still be felt. Scars on the mind are obviously invisible, unlike those on the body. For this reason, it seems that the journey towards understanding of traumatic experiences is bound for the unknown or the intangible. This fact has intrigued me, and inspired me to contemplating viable means to see through such the intangible force inside and around the ordinary people affected by certain conditions like apartheid. In this individual study, I explore *Mother to Mother*, the text of literature which speaks of trauma and speaks for the ordinary victims of traumatic circumstances in both apartheid and post-apartheid. My interpretation is derived neither from explicit references to actual case studies nor from the psychiatry of trauma. Alternatively, it perceives the complexity of trauma through specific affects: pain, confusion, doubt and grief as the device for visualizing the intangible force of trauma. Since I view pain as the most prominent product of trauma triggered by apartheid, my observation of how apartheid results in trauma in the affective form of pain passing onto black South Africans’ bodies and minds will become the prelude to the dissertation, primarily through reading Mandisa’s account of the forced removals. After the discussion about political actions as well as

reactions towards pain, my analysis proceeds by an exploration of doubt cast upon the politics, especially democracy, through interpreting Mandisa's virgin conception of Mxolisi. Next, questions about time in terms of history and reality will be raised through analyzing temporal restrictions implied by non-chronological arrangement of the novel which leads to the emergence of confusion as my most initial reading experience of the novel. Lastly, I utilize an examination of grief as the epilogue because it is even more fascinating to conclude the dissertation by inquiring about what claim to grief Magona makes in the novel and to what extent affect studies care about the equivalence of grief between diverse people, through examining Mandisa's one-way address to the victim's mother as well as reading the relationship between these two mothers. The literary resonance of these affects, despite the lack of strict theoretical knowledge of psychology and psychiatry, remain sufficient dynamic to be applied to affect and trauma studies and others in order to simultaneously bear and lose witness of the wound, which brings about healing as a result.



CHAPTER 2

PAIN

As indicated in the introduction, *Mother to Mother* fictionalizes a real event taking place in South Africa in August 1993: a mob of youths perpetrated the brutal murder of Amy Biehl, a white American Fulbright scholar whose purpose of working as an activist in South Africa was to assist the previously-disenfranchised black citizens in the preparation of the nation's first democratic election. This case became internationally controversial not only because of the crime itself but also because of the pardon that all of the murderers were given. The fact that it had been viewed as a racially motivated case, rather than a politically motivated one, made the amnesty that the convicted applied to Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) unlikely at first. The TRC was established in 1995, with the hope of healing the country and promoting the reconciliation of its people after the end of apartheid by allowing those classified as victims of human right violations resulting from apartheid to provide their testimonies. The work of the TRC can thus be considered as a national project of remapping collective memory which is one of the features in post-apartheid literature as in *Mother to Mother*, which involves a great deal of nostalgia and psychology of lived experiences.

The case was then investigated by the TRC while the Biehls had thought that there should be some accountability and had thus opposed the amnesty at first. However, they honored their daughter's vision of forgiveness and reconciliation so that they decided to publicly support the TRC work later and did not object to the amnesty: Biehl's father expressed his thought, "To us, forgiveness is opening the door to a full and productive life. We can honor Amy, be true to her convictions, and can carry on with her work and ours. Forgiving is liberating" (Gish, 240-41). On July 28, 1998, the young men who had taken away Biehl's life were granted amnesty by a unanimous decision of the amnesty committee by explaining that:

[... the convicted] all submitted to the slogan of one settler, one bullet. To them that meant that every white person was an enemy of the Black people. At that moment to them, Amy Biehl was a representative of the white community [...] By intensifying such activity the political pressure on the government would increase to such an extent that it would demoralize them and compel them to hand over political power to the majority of the people of South Africa. When the conduct of the applicants is viewed in this light, *it must be accepted that their crime was related to a political objective* [emphasis added] (Gish, 238-39).

The case of Amy Biehl is therefore widely understood as something that highlights forgiveness from her parents and more importantly from “her world”. Magona, on the other hand, utilizes the fictional space of *Mother to Mother* to give “lessons to be had from knowing something of *the other world*” [emphasis added] (Magona, V). It is the other world “whose environment failed to nurture [the murderers] in the higher ideals of humanity and who, instead, became lost creatures of malice and destruction” (Magona, V). In other words, Magona’s implication is to attribute the murder of Biehl to the legacy of apartheid:

A system repressive and brutal, that bred senseless inter- and intra-racial violence as well as other nefarious happenings; a system that promoted a twisted sense of right and wrong, with everything seen through the warped prism of the overarching *crime against humanity*, as the international community labeled it [original emphasis] (Magona, V-VI).

It is important to keep “otherness” in our consideration for close reading and observation of *Mother to Mother* because Magona not only wrote it as an epistolary novel whose narrator Mandisa is a murderer’s mother writing to the victim’s mother, but she also wrote the pain of apartheid for the post-apartheid era by remaining the apartheid prominent attribute of inequality through issues of time, space, community and individual and collective identities. In the real world, these political pains and

traumas have been addressed through forms such as the TRC, in which the sharing of painful experiences, and the pain that results from that sharing, has been a major point of contention. One case in which this has been especially important is the case of Amy Biehl, the real-world inspiration for Magona's novel. It is not surprising that there are two opposing sides of critics viewing the novel as playing different roles in the TRC work. Renee Schatteman, for instance, recognizes a correspondence between the novel and the TRC's chief aim: she suggests that the novel acts as an advocate of the TRC by generating a space in which voices of both the criminal and the victim coexist and can hence serve the TRC's agenda:

[...] the novel's presentation of Mxolisi's story can be seen to represent the essence of the TRC. Mandisa's narrative, after all, with its detailed accounting of Mxolisi's life and its speculations about Amy's thoughts and actions on the day of her death, satisfies the TRC's aims to promote reconciliation [...] (Schatteman, 19).

The other side, on the contrary, regards the novel as Magona's critique of the TRC for its failure in subduing traumatic effects on the victims of apartheid. Anne Whitehead, for example, concurs that the novel represents a reaction against the potential of the TRC to relieve the victims' suffering from apartheid. More importantly, she becomes one of the rare critics who consider the novel as a connection between politics and affective identification. In "Reading with Empathy: Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother*", while Whitehead uncovers the representation of black motherhood and marking the violation of the maternal role under apartheid as the violence that was abandoned by the TRC, she also emphasizes that Magona renounces the TRC's claim to promote cross-racial empathy. Specifically speaking, the black mother's affective life dominated by the political and the social history of violence is beyond the white mother's empathetic reach. Furthermore, the TRC also fails in its attempt to develop sympathy across races since telling one's story, or providing one's testimony in the TRC's terms, has nothing to do with the national recovery, nor with the affective

transformation. In order to approach the distinctiveness of black sadness in *Mother to Mother* and distinguish it from white sadness, Whitehead draws on Ann Cvetkovich's notions of an "emotional color line" (Whitehead, 182) and of the "varying tonalities of sadness on either side of the 'color line'" (Whitehead, 186), which makes cross-racial empathy more complicated to answer the question: "does it [...] too easily equate the sadness of Mrs. Biehl's maternal bereavement with Mandisa's sadness, caused by a long history of political disenfranchisement?" (Whitehead, 186). Looking more closely at Whitehead's deduction, I can see such the complex relationship between South African traumas and the national attempt to heal the victims. But a gap between the understandings needs to be fulfilled. While becoming or being a black mother, she remains a South African citizen with wounds inflicted by apartheid and dispossession and with unique affective life shaped by such the history. Therefore, I would like to suggest that we should also observe the lived experience of pain as both the personal interior affect and as the collective exterior affect. When we can appraise a more complicated working of these two forms of pain, we will be able to grasp how pain plays an important role in shaping South African affective lives and in transforming their perceptions towards their environment as a result. After that, we will become able to answer the question of the affective transformation under the social, cultural and political restrictions as in South Africa.

This chapter is therefore about imagining pain in *Mother to Mother*, which is not simply centered on a true story but is also inundated with such the most aversive sensation across times and between people. In addition to the stated purpose of her writing – to demand understanding of how "her world" has shaped her son Mxolisi as a murderer, Mandisa devotes the majority of the narrative to her own traumas. Mandisa's traumatic experiences from childhood to adulthood permeate the entire novel and thus add more complexity to the imagining of pain, which will be present throughout this chapter. Moreover, my analysis of pain in this novel proceeds by appraising the relationship between the narrator Mandisa (the murderer's mother) and the addressee

(the victim's mother whose name is not explicitly revealed in the novel) as well as by reading the narratives of forced removals, one of the South African Apartheid government's enactments which forced people with different races: Whites, Blacks or Native, Indians and Colored or people of mixed race to live separately. The forced removals are key to considering pain under the apartheid conditions since they relocated blacks and other non-white racial groups from their homes to remote townships in rural areas, and the whites' communities remained in city spaces, and thus they not only shattered the blacks' "solid, well-knit communities" (Magona, 29), but they have also rooted institutionalized racial discrimination in South African history and have traumatized its people in terms of their bodies and memories, especially those for home.

Before returning to the issues above, it seems necessary to define pain as the way we identify it could help us to become aware of its working. Pain is generally described as a negative sensation or feeling. This particular sensation, however, has complicated layers of both physical and psychological effects on lived experiences. Therefore, we could begin by exploring how pain is defined and how its definition is institutionalized.

Sara Ahmed, an independent feminist scholar and writer whose interest is a combination between philosophical inquiry and feminist, queer and color critiques, adopts the definition of pain from The International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) as follows:

- (a) pain is subjective; (b) pain is more complex than an elementary sensory event; (c) the experience of pain involves associations between elements of sensory experience and an aversive feeling state; and (d) the attribution of meaning to the unpleasant sensory events is an intrinsic part of the experience of pain. (qtd. in Ahmed, 23)

Referring to this definition, I would argue that pain is not simply an adverse sensation or feeling as well as beyond physical damage, but what it means to be in pain is

intertwined with different personal “experiences” and sometimes other negative feelings.

Zoe Norridge in her book *Perceiving Pain in African Literature* discusses the meaning of pain derived from the British Pain Society: “Pain is what the person feeling it says it is” (qtd. in Norridge, 2). Relying on this description, Norridge emphasizes a paradoxical attribution of pain – the subjectivity and the otherness. Addressing such the unique feature of pain, I observe that the working of pain is not only concerned with what the subject experiences, but it is also about how the object of the experience is represented. In other words, the representation of pain is dependent on the relationship between the subject and the object of pain.

I have chosen these two definitions since they distinguish pain from being a solitary experience as well as opening up important questions relating to the representation of pain through written words in order to evoke both individual and collective responses. My own interest in reading pain is in fiction, and the narratives are therefore indissociable from history in several aspects including cultures and politics. To explore pain in *Mother to Mother* is hence to take a psychological journey to South Africa’s cultural and political history as well as to examine its people’s struggles over memory and trauma. My focus cannot exclude the historical and political aspects of South Africa partly because the history of pain infliction in South Africa is predominant, ranging from the slave trade, colonialism, and apartheid to even more recent suffering caused by all of their legacies. But these aspects of South African history inevitably risk making pain homogenized in the form of spectacle, especially in media and in the marketing of pain. In addition to pain as being incommensurable, it is true that pain is often interwoven with the depiction of trauma and its preponderance. However, from my perspective, trauma theory is largely based on events so that their catastrophic impacts are just evaluated from the number of victims and the extent of violence, fatality in particular. This kind of engagement tends to detach the determination of trauma theory from quotidian violence which even inflicts on the smallest unit of

ordinary people such as individuals in a family or a community, and which does not cause deaths. For these reasons, considering trauma discourse in an event-based model is a foundation for understanding both bodily and psychological damages, yet I argue that scrutinizing pain as the working of the inner faculty of South Africans should also take into account non-fatal moments because diverse traumatic events can simultaneously involve gradual effects of non-fatal consequences on ordinary people or survivors. So, I also contemplate pain in certain non-fatal moments including those in the forced removals, which are among the most traumatic wounds resulting from apartheid, in order to reveal its sociality and politics.

It is also important to discuss how affect or sensation differs from emotion. On the one hand, affect or sensation is usually viewed as an experience taking place before it enters conscious recognition. In this sense, what “is not consciously experienced may itself be mediated by past experiences” (Ahmed, 40), and is thus considered as direct feeling. Affect “may not be about conscious recognition and *naming*, but this does not mean they are ‘direct’ in the sense of immediate” [emphasis added] (Ahmed, 40). Emotion, on the other hand, seems to involve more responses to past histories or memories. Therefore, when my analysis adopts the term “affect”, it refers to certain bodily or physical responses to one’s experiences. Nevertheless, it is mainly associated with emotion as the title of the dissertation suggests because it is reliant to wider dimensions or more dynamics of those experiences. That is, personal feelings are originated by the contact with a situation, and those feelings can be resumed or metamorphosed into new inner responses by the contact with a new situation. The intertwining between the past and the present states of mind, or the interconnection between the memories and the immediacy, includes affects, yet beyond affects until it becomes emotions. In other words, both the terms are between the line of interchangeability since the former is only initial part of the latter, but the latter is more dynamic. Above all, discussing pain more critically in the context of *Mother to Mother* becomes a challenge in the respect of the distinctions between affect

and emotion, yet I would argue that both are inseparable since being disengaged with either of them in the context of pain tends to obscure the lived experiences of “being and having a body” (Ahmed, 40). I have chosen “affect” in this chapter because the lived experiences in South African history that I am going to examine, mainly those under the forced removals and the context of losing home, are what its people have experienced either without conscious recognition of pain or with delayed feeling of pain.

To cope with pain in *Mother to Mother*, it seems necessary to explore what pain does in the narrative. “My son killed your daughter” (Magona, 1) is how the novel and Mandisa’s lament simultaneously begin. This sentence is a self-contradictory narrative. It generates two sides: self and otherness; there is “my son”, yet there is “your daughter”. However, it creates unity; the narrator and the receiver of this information are both mothers – the one mother and the other mother. More importantly, when it comes to a literary form like this novel, the narrator’s and the other mother’s pain operate through language. The language of the beginning of the novel reminds us that it is directly addressed to the victim’s mother, yet also inevitably to the reader. How the pain is passed onto the other mother and the reader evokes both individual and collective pain through language. Pain is reflected through this sentence, through the crime of a mother’s son, and through the death of the other mother’s daughter. “My son” is named as a criminal with an illegal image, threatening the narrative and thus making it unfamiliar. The unfamiliar narrative deserves an equal opportunity to be carefully observed as other familiar ones; it convinces the reader to adopt the others (my son, your daughter) in order to work on affects and emotions running inside and around the narrative. The process is recognized by Ahmed as the politics of pain. That is, when lived experiences of pain are shaped by the contact with others, the pain becomes political. Why does the transformation of pain into the politics matter to the novel? The fact that the novel does not allow the other’s mother to respond makes it explicit that the reader’s affective responses are also targeted; the fact that the other mother’s response is silent constructs the reader’s responses instead

because the reader is expected to become capable of feeling and thus witnessing pain through reading experience:

The reader is presumed to be moved by the injuries of others, and it is this movement that enables them to give. To this extent, the letter is not about the other, but about the reader: the reader's feelings are the ones that are addressed, which are the 'subject' of the letter [emphasis added] (Ahmed, 21).

Ahmed's emphasis on the reader's potential to "give" after being moved by others' pain can be interpreted as compensation for the pain or as "sympathy" in Whitehead's word. If the novel calls for reconciliation or sympathy, it raises another problem: from whom does the novel expect to obtain sympathy? When the narrative is in the form of literature like this novel and thus is made in public, it is more likely that the reader is not only Amy Biehl's mother but also "any" reader. Likewise, the narrative is created by Magona's imagination of the murderer's mother, so it can be generally assumed that the narrative aims to ask for her ears. Therefore, "your daughter" at this point turns any reader into a mother whose daughter has been killed by the narrator's son and also a mother whose ears are being asked for by the murderer's mother. In other words, it changes the other mother's pain into the reader's. Consequently, it is a task for the reader to feel the pain of the murderer's mother. This strategy encourages the reader to work on the pain of the murderer's mother instead of the victim's mother.

The question above can be extended more specifically to see if it succeeds in inducing not simply the victim's mother but also the reader to share pain and have sympathy for Mandisa and her son Mxolisi as a result. Through the reading experience, the reader of *Mother to Mother* may become sympathetic towards both mothers and even to people sharing their histories. Such a debatable essence is captured interestingly by the novel and shown through the narrative of the forced removals which have left wounds and scars on Mandisa and other bodies. The process in which "their" pain becomes "ours" is discussed by Ahmed as "an appropriation that

transforms and perhaps even neutralizes their pain into our sadness” (Ahmed, 21). This point can lead to another question: how can Magona succeed in appropriating and neutralizing Mandisa’s and Mxolisi’s pain into the reader’s sympathy while it is naturally the most difficult task to ignite sympathy for a murderer? One of the strategies Magona adopts to achieve the conversion of the other’s pain into joint pain between Mandisa and Mxolisi and the reader is to initiate the narrative into the politics by deploying the story of the loss of Mandisa’s childhood home and using it to convince the reader to feel and touch the pain. Most importantly, in terms of literary dynamism, it is the forced removal that makes the painful novel parallel to painful reality in South Africa’s history, that makes fictional pain real, and that makes personal pain collective.

The deprivation of home in *Mother to Mother* plays with uncertainty and confusion; moments when Mandisa and her community have been informally informed about the forced removals and believed that the government’s decision is just a rumor or an impossibility intensify the extent of how the forced removals become far more traumatic because they are traumas that nobody has expected before. In other words, the sudden revelation of truth in the later time is an extremely bitter blow to Mandisa and her people. While this state of mind is noted as the emotion of pain in Ahmed’s explanation, it is considered by Sigmund Freud as “fright” or “fright with a factor of surprise”. Even though arguing in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that people develop psychic wounds as resistance to neuroses, Freud emphasizes that the traumatic neuroses mainly result from fright rather than from fear and anxiety. He distinguishes these three different states of mind: fright refers to “the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it; it emphasizes the factor of surprise” (Freud, 6), while fear “requires a definite object of which to be afraid” (Freud, 6) and anxiety is “a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one” (Freud, 6). That is, he disagrees that anxiety can be a source of a traumatic neurosis because “[t]here is something about anxiety that protects its subject against fright and so against fright-neuroses” (Freud, 7). Based on

Freud and his explanation, a survivor from a traumatic event like Mandisa, who has survived from the forced removal, tends to be wounded without prior expectation or knowledge. In other words, Mandisa is not fully aware of the traumatic wound at the time of occurrence of the event, but the wound is later recalled or repeated constantly in some of her own actions:

Fire! The house was on fire!

I leapt out of bed, to run for the door. Shack fires were common in Blouvlei.

Hands grabbed me. Strong arms enfolded me to the not familiar, tobacco-smelling chest of my father.

Tata? Tata, hugging me? I knew the situation was far worse than a burning house. Something terrible had happened.

Then, it came to me: I was either dead or dying. Why else would my stern, never-demonstrative father be hugging me? Tata was no dog that romped around with puppies.

‘Mandisa’, Tata said, still shaking me by the shoulders. I was fully awake now and saw that Mama and Khaya [Mandisa’s brother] were in the house.

Their movements were not frantic. There was no fire. There couldn’t possibly be. But then, what was the problem? my foggy brain asked.

‘Abelungu bayazidiliz’ izindlu zethu. Whites are pulling down our houses.’

Tata said the words gently, with no hint of emotion whatsoever [emphasis added] (Magona, 64).

This bridge between the formal announcement of the forced removals and its happening is a brief space connecting attempts of Mandisa’s community to make appeals and delegations with their failure and the beginning of the forced removals. Before the rush to pack and move starts, there are at least two quick changes. A quick change is presented through “a fire”. The other quick change then takes place suddenly through “a hug”. These changes work in double depths. On the one hand,

the gestures of the fire and the hug symbolize the apartheid or the forced removal and the reconciliation respectively. The latter one, on the other hand, seems to represent pain passing on from one body to another since Mandisa expresses her feeling after she realizes that her father is hugging her that “[t]hen, it came to me: I was either dead or dying”. Therefore, it can be argued that the act of reconciliation equals the act of passing on pain to other bodies. More specifically, borrowing Ahmed’s description about the process of transferring pain to others, we can understand that the hug of Mandisa’s father is an act of transferring pain and of waking her from nightmare to face the more painful reality which has forever left a traumatic scar in her life. Mandisa, even though telling the story in her adulthood and having been away from the origin of pain, still feels the pain as if it were happening in front of her eyes because:

the sensation of pain is deeply affected by memories: one can feel pain when reminded of past trauma by an encounter with another. Or if one has a pain one might search one’s memories for whether one has had it before, differentiating the strange from the familiar (Ahmed, 25).

When it comes to the relationship between an individual and the national experience of pain, an interesting analysis of the truth revelation is likely to appear with an observation by Ahmed’s account. She adopts the case of Tony Martin, “a man sentenced to life imprisonment for murdering a 16-year-old boy who had attempted, along with one other person, to burgle his house” (Ahmed, 47). Martin’s case is interesting since there is an implicit argument about defending one’s home by killing and its morality; Martin’s home is symbolically transformed into a sign of injustice of his sentence. If Martin’s crime can be viewed as a just action because the burglar whom he kills has committed a crime first, is it possible to read Mxolisi’s crime justly by seeing it as a symbol of defence of home and right? Let’s consider the following factors. If the white people are foreigners and the government becomes a criminal, the body of Mandisa’s home becomes the body of the nation whose well-being is threatened by being pulled down into pieces. Ahmed compares “foreigners” in this case to “asylum

seekers”, and proposes that “the nation...has the right to expel asylum seekers...who as burglars are trying to steal something from the nation, otherwise the nation itself will become ‘the shell’” (Ahmed, 48). The shell means an empty and barren place, which is comparable to townships where are assigned to people in the forced removal. Then, “[t]he moral of the story becomes: if we let them in, they will turn nation ‘into a shell’, and take the land [or home] on which ‘we have worked’” (Ahmed, 48). That is, when considering these discourses together, we can realize that the moral of the story emerges; the townships can be seen as a sign of injustice of the forced removal, so home becomes a sign of justice. Now we are reading the crime of the one mother’s son and the death of the other mother’s daughter symbolically; the body of the criminal is the nation and the South Africans while the body of the victim is the invasion and the whites. Therefore, it can be said that the relationship between the criminal and the victim is reversed. The reversal not only allows the forced removals to turn into injustice, but it also makes Mandisa and Mxolisi deserve sympathy through the acceptance of their pain.

Considering *Mother to Mother* in terms of aesthetic or literary value, the reader can definitely enjoy Magona’s techniques and plays on words and narrative organization. However, reading it politically, its literary value remains since its political aspects shine through the literary strategies Magona uses, particularly within the narrative about pain. I am not encouraging us to forget the wounds and the past traumatic events. Nor do I support the forgetting as a means to heal the wounds. To provoke reaction towards pain is to remember how the bodily surfaces including both individual and communal bodies become wounded in the first place. Definitely, remembrance takes various forms. I concur with remembrance in Ahmed’s aim: it is not to stick pain with the present, but to stick it out of the present by changing it into political action. In other words, considering both past and present simultaneously is an inevitable process of considering pain as both different timeliness are parallel to each other; they coincide in different space and time.

CHAPTER 3

DOUBT

Pursuing the contingency of pain in the first chapter, I have become aware of other affects either emerging from or resulting in pain, or even arising simultaneously. One of the affects that is worth exploring in terms of South Africa's traumatic history as well as *Mother to Mother* is doubt. What the history and the novel seem to share with respect to doubt is that there are moments in which this affect arises, remains and coexists with other affects, especially pain, throughout their courses. More importantly, those moments have had considerable impact on South African politics because we are kept cultivated by doubt as a valuable affect towards democracy, which I may sometimes refer as law – since law can be viewed as a representative of democracy and direct enforcement in the apartheid and the transitional era. While the transition era from apartheid to post-apartheid may require black South Africans to consider themselves as democratic citizens, the abrupt changes in the politics and society alter their way of life into a skeptical way of life. Can the skeptical way of life be a politically responsible one and facilitate democratic citizenship?

Democratization has internationally been believed to become a victory over other leading politics for the past century. Applying this belief to South Africa's political history, I would propose that democratization arrived on friendly terms with the country in the wake of apartheid, while The Truth and Reconciliation Commission or the TRC also acts as a friendly healing during the transitional era. Therefore, I would argue that the political implications of doubt construct conditions of political and civic cultures in South African apartheid and post-apartheid, and vice versa. In other words, the democratic politics and the TRC in South Africa shape the politics of doubt among its people. This chapter will investigate incidents and characterizations in *Mother to Mother* which demonstrate the emergence and the continuity of doubt in order to contemplate its politics, and to observe its coexistence with other affects.

This chapter will also invite the reader to appraise doubt through the characters' lives, mainly Mandisa, in order to unfold doubt interwoven with social and political changes from her childhood to adulthood. Doubt is as interestingly intricate as pain since it is an affect that can be expressed through concrete forms such as bodily responses and language while it can also have psychological effects and thus shape individuals' inner faculties. My interest in doubt as one of the most thought-provoking affects towards the working of the inner faculty among black South Africans began when I was delving in pain; I have gradually become aware that the processes of democratization during apartheid and the transition, ranging from the forced removals to the TRC's work, have exposed this group of South African citizens to doubt and finally to inner wounds.

On the surface, doubt is usually mistaken as confusion, but doubt can be distinguished by its characteristic of uncertainty. Adapting doubt into the blacks' psychology shown in *Mother to Mother* makes it more coherent that people experiencing different levels of changes, domestically and nationally, could face moments of uncertainty so that they could also lose the meaning of their lives as a result. Unlike doubt, confusion is a lack of understanding, resulting from being given too much or too little knowledge, which I will explore further in the following chapter. While the previous chapter about pain takes a psychological journey to South African history and allows us to observe its people's struggles over memory and trauma, this chapter about doubt will take another psychological journey to the same memory and trauma, yet in order to see their struggles over uncertainty brought by democracy. I would consider the first democratic election in April 1994 as the first time South Africans were granted democracy; it not only marked the end of apartheid, but it was also the first general election with the universal adult suffrage. In other words, all adult citizens were given right to vote regardless of restrictions including races. Their doubt over democracy, I would like to suggest, reflects traumatic wounds left by the legacy of

apartheid, and hence ignites a wider range of domestic changes as well as political actions afterwards.

Here it is relatively evident that my analysis will be concerned both with the fiction and the reality because South Africa's first democratic election in 1994 is a critical juncture in both *Mother to Mother* and in the national history. Therefore, I encourage myself to clarify both these two positions in my observation on the politics of South Africa and of doubt. With regard to the fictional aspect, contemplating doubt and its politics in *Mother to Mother* cannot continue without considering one of the most prominent conditions for the novel, the fact that Amy Biehl, as a scholar and an activist, travelled to South Africa with the hope of working directly with its black citizens who had been deprived of rights to vote and more importantly to help prepare its first democratic election. This fact increases complexity of the working of doubt in different aspects, especially the aspect of morality because what these black citizens had also been deprived of during the apartheid were beyond voting rights, and became certain root causes of individual and collective traumas engendered by skeptical mentality. In the matter of reality, the TRC, besides the first democratic election, also acts as a device used to represent the national transformation and the attempt to verify the status of a democratic nation. In a nutshell, one of the most fundamental keys to democracy is transparency, so the way that the TRC broadcast the hearings and the testimonies via public media including newspapers, television and radio can be viewed as an attempt to demonstrate transparency of its aims and processes.

Perusing Amy Biehl's case as well as the TRC is undeniably relevant to any analysis of *Mother to Mother*, but it can be argued that assessing the TRC's broadcast hearings and testimonies is unnecessary. However, I am prevailed upon to recognize the significance of the TRC's hearings and testimonies since the public hearings, apart from the electronic relay of the TRC's work, also included audiovisual transmission of witnesses' words, recording and translation. The fact that the individual hearings were made public by being broadcast live on television or radio and were also documented

by being transcribed facilitates the narrative exploration disclosing the effects of those stories on South African history of the transition. In other words, the public hearings serve as a medium through which the narratives in the form of testimonies are portrayed. *Mother to Mother*, in terms of narratives, can also be deemed to be a form of testimony, from my point of view. After that, all these narratives are suspended until they are verified. This idea is put another way by Mark Sanders in *Ambiguities of Witnessing*: “what we call the literary actually depends on the law suspending its procedures of verification in order to hear the narration of the witness” (Sanders, 6). On top of that, the narratives allow us to explore the way in which they speak about and speak through profound traumatic experiences whereas *Mother to Mother*, instead of straightforwardly reporting a collection of case studies, elucidates similar stories through fictional characters as if they were recorded from the TRC’s testimonies. For these reasons, it is not surprising that the work of the TRC has been seen as law and literature simultaneously. Interestingly, what turns the novel superior, from my observation, is the fact that the fictional space uncovers more dimensions of the reality than the testimonies did. That is, the TRC heard only specific stories which had been chosen, but the novel embraces traumatic experiences by entangling associated history as well as the language of trauma, part of which manifest as affects such as doubt.

I would like to make more sense of my argument by showing the process of transforming testimonies into narratives in a form of fiction like *Mother to Mother*. Perceiving the testimonies through media consumption is more likely to take on trust of the contents which are predominantly believed to be the truth just because they are delivered by exact people who are claimed to have direct experiences. In contrast, absorbing the same kind of stories through fiction prompts more ambiguity about the truth since fictional characters depend on literary nature themselves, leaving the door open for more questions about relevant histories and circumstances. This could contribute to extended capabilities of telling more relatable stories that cannot be told by law, and therefore initiate the dependence of the law on literature. What is so

interesting here is how *Mother to Mother* recreates doubt surrounding the truth in the history of apartheid experienced by black South Africans as in Mandisa's childhood to adulthood and in its legacy during the post-apartheid experienced by those as in Mxolisi's generation.

One of the life-changing conflicts in Mandisa's childhood is her virgin conception of Mxolisi. Certain critics of Magona find Mandisa's virgin conception unique in different terms. Among other stories that Mandisa tells is, suggested by Pearl Amelia McHaney, "the phenomenal conception of her son Mxolisi" (McHaney, 174) or "a virgin with child" (McHaney, 174):

[This allows Magona to] create her own intertextuality of histories and stories – national with familial, Mxolisi's with Amy's, her own with Mrs. Biehl's, current pandemonium with that of the past – to illustrate the personal tragedies that history does not record and to give these individual stories sufficient relativity and context to be understood as a significant part [...] of history writ large (McHaney, 174).

The intertextuality in McHaney's analysis acts as what Bhabha calls translation: "translational actions create supplemental spaces for resistance" (McHaney, 174). To convince her readers of "the other world", the world that is excluded from the mainstream media, Magona chooses "a story of individual and personal empathy of motherhood, loss, cultural and political anger" (McHaney, 174). Besides McHaney, Renee Schatteman dissects Mandisa's virgin birth by borrowing Meg Samuelson's interpretation. Samuelson views the virgin birth as Magona's attempt to connect it with Christian imagery. Firstly, it is equated with the Virgin Mary: "Mandisa's anomalous conception of Mxolisi – a virgin birth – locates the lament with which Mandisa opens the novel within the tradition of the *Mater Dolorosa*" [original emphasis] (qtd. in Schatteman, 281). Secondly, Magona's use of the virgin birth imagery transforms Mxolisi into a Christ figure "who can stand next to the human sacrifice of Biehl" (qtd. in Schatteman, 281). Referring to these two pieces of Samuelson's interpretation,

Schatteman proposes that Mandisa's conception without penetration creates "another model for understanding Mxolisi's position in the novel as a person both responsible for the killing and yet also the victim of mistakes made by the adult community and of the crimes perpetrated by the government" (Schatteman, 281).

I would like to make another remark concerning Mandisa's pregnancy without penetration. I agree that it plays a key role in her childhood, but, more importantly, it also persists and foreshadows doubt throughout *Mother to Mother*. Doubt works in many different levels towards many different characters who are involved with Mandisa's pregnancy, which posits reproduction of doubt cast among black South African community upon democracy and the process of democratization in South Africa, I propose. If democratization is reflected through the TRC's work, the most obvious image of black South African women which is adhere by the testimonies is being grieving mothers and wives and secondary victims because most of them testify on behalf of their sons or husbands. While Samuelson deems "witnessing" to be a new characteristic Magona adds into Mandisa in order to replace the old image, I think of being "doubtful" as a new identity Magona inserts into Mandisa, in terms of both a black woman and a black mother, to criticize against the TRC and thus to release her from that stereotype. In other words, Magona attempts to free Mandisa from the stereotype by changing her into the antithesis, a witnessing mother overwhelmed with doubt, rather than a weeping one overwhelmed with tears. I would regard Magona's creation of this new identity of black women as the act of catharsis as if she releases her own doubtful mentality upon apartheid and democracy through her fictional characters, especially Mandisa. The narrative demonstrates that Mandisa's manner of remembering her pregnancy is filled with doubt: "Ferociously, I defended my innocence, despite the evidence that pointed so clearly and unambiguously to my guilt" (Magona, (111)). The juxtaposition of "innocence" and "guilt" sheds light upon deep consistent uncertainty she has collected since her pregnancy. The coexistence of feeling innocent and guilty has also been the case since her childhood, when she is exposed to the forced

removals. The unexpected pregnancy and the forced removals both change her. Even though these two situations affect her life differently, they share “the force to change” that leaves doubt not only with her but also with her black community:

In Guguletu, the new houses changed us [...] In the brand-new brick house of the townships, with their glass windows, concrete floors, bare walls and hungry rooms, *new needs were born. But how to satisfy these needs?* The wages of fathers had certainly not been augmented. Soon, all our mothers, who had been there every afternoon to welcome us when we returned from school, were no long there. They were working in white women’s homes. Tired, every day when they returned. Tired and angry. *In time we did not remember coming back from school to mothers waiting with smiles* [emphasis added] (Magona, 66-67).

The use of plural forms such as “houses”, “new needs”, “fathers” and “mothers” alters Mandisa’s personal experience into shared communal memories. Likewise, the newness arrives with doubt.

Furthermore, when the public could witness the same crimes, it does not simply mean that they could experience those crimes together, but they were also expected to remain responsible for the reconciliation as if the right to forgive was allocated to all equally. Is it possible that the public who have perceived the testimonies would be feeling uncertain about the crimes reported and thus about the right to which they were handed? Would it be the case if the hearings and the testimonies were not transparent as they were presented through media? Or were the stories shaped in particular ways when they were told in order to make them at law? When those giving testimonies had stories imposed on them, could their dominant sentiments see law so repressive that they developed resistance, silence or lies on their witnessing? Were the experiences perceived through media reliable? What if the public who lived in their truly hard times did not see the same pictures captured by the TRC broadcasting? Finally, what if they desired to give their voice and have their own

testimonies? Is it something democracy grants them the right to do? Dealing with the context of *Mother to Mother*, which involves individual traumatic stories, especially Mandisa's, I would propose that the novel grants Magona the right to hold her own testimonies for South Africa. Specifically speaking, Magona adopts the fictional space of *Mother to Mother* to criticize the work of the TRC for its failure to heal the wounds as well as to promote democracy. More importantly, with regard to the use of fictional space, the way Mandisa presents her testimony by testifying to violations not only done to herself but also done to her son becomes literature. Now the reality and the fiction appear to be intertwined with each other, so the present chapter will also work as parallel analysis between these two different cores.

Returning to the principal tendency of the interpretation of the TRC, I would argue that one of the most significant factors in its failure is initiated by the state of uncertainty from the colonial history and apartheid enforcements, which leads to cynicism in democracy as a result. Strictly speaking, the TRC has been criticized mostly for its testimonial procedures which allowed insufficient stories and only certain kinds of stories to be told. This approach of the criticism leads to further notions of the unrepresentable or silence which tends to be triggered by traumatic events. The unspeakable or silence has a huge impact on testimonies in terms of recollection, especially among witnesses whose memories are shattered by traumatic experiences.

When it comes to the testimonies of black people in marginal communities attributed to apartheid, it is also worth considering that the constant marginalization of black women can be linked not purely to structural, political and economic violence of apartheid but also to legal modernity in a form of democratization. Even though the TRC's report attempts to emphasize the issue of such violence, the testimony of women makes the apartheid remembered not simply as a human rights violation but also as a conspicuous subset of human right violations, which I would call circadian rhythm of doubt – since the stories to which women testify direct not only to themselves, but they also matter to others in their lives.

In the previous chapter about pain, I have suggested that to heal the wounds is to remember how the wounds have been formed in the first place. For this reason, I urge recognizing the wounds as a coincidence of both past and present. The past is what apartheid is, and the present is how apartheid is remembered. These two questions also initiate Sanders's thought about remembering apartheid. I concur with him that the essence of apartheid prominently depends on the historical contingency of remembrance.

A role that *Mother to Mother* and the testimony seem to share, from my observation, is that they reveal more than the actual events did or more than they are expected to. It does not mean that the novel mimic the TRC in order to show admiration towards it. Instead, the novel does so to show its higher success in its ambition to reinscribe the nation's traumatic history which asserts complexity to the picture of apartheid and which gestures, through symbolic instances, mourning and forgiveness, how it might be possible to repair the wounds. To achieve that, it is undeniable that the exploitation of doubt in violation plays a role.

It is not purely the case of morality in a crime and in democracy, but it is also the case of demands on democratic citizenship beyond the terms of voting rights and citizen participation as voters. In my interpretation, Mandisa and Mxolisi are certain instances of both the cases. More specifically speaking, the nature of democratic citizenship that *Mother to Mother*, through the characterizations, attempts to show its approval is a combination between two opposing democracies: one for liberalism and the other for communitarianism. On the one hand, democracy for liberalism is that law promises its citizens rights, essentially the rights to vote as Judith Shklar considers what was demanded by women and descendent of African slaves in their quest for citizenship: "the marks of [the core of social standing] are inclusion in the polity through voting, and the absence of barriers to work and earn. On her view, citizenship is characterized not by qualities that citizens possess but by the guarantee of their equal opportunities" (Hiley, 10). Democracy for communitarianism, on the other hand, focuses

on civic spirit citizens need to conserve autonomy as Michael Sandel inspects such the need: “[m]ore than a legal condition, citizenship requires certain habits and dispositions, a concern for the whole, an orientation to the common good” (qtd, in Hiley, 10). Such habits and dispositions derive from communal, familial, religious and associational attachments. There could possibly be a debate against communitarianism that it excessively values the common good. However, the key natures of black South African society *Mother to Mother* highlights and my analysis uncovers – the natures of “solid, well-knit communities” and of significantly diverse citizens that have been scattered by apartheid – make it undeniable that their lives have been interwoven with domesticity, community and diversity. A potential path to practical successful democracy in such a diverse country is a faithful participation in agreement with collective interests by responding to them instead of shaping them, I would propose. To propose so is to favor Magona’s criticism towards the TRC’s work: certain testimonies were chosen to hide or to escape from many more aspects of traumatic experiences adhered not only to the quest for democratic rights but also for human rights in certain communities, families and beliefs.

Mxolisi starts to participate in political movements and activities so that he is hardly found at home, like thousands of other students at his age in Guguletu as well as throughout the country. Despite all this politics, Mxolisi, before his crime, has been seen as a hero to everyone by his deeds; Mandisa notes to the reader that “[...] I could hardly walk anywhere in the whole of Section 3 without being stopped by people whose mouths had no other words to say besides singing Mxolisi’s praises” (Magona, 162). A particular deed Mxolisi has done and thus impressed people is when he helps a girl from a rape, and therefore people praise not only Mxolisi but also Mandisa. However, people’s reactions against Mxolisi then provoke doubt in Mandisa’s mind about how certain one’s deeds, like her son’s, can be. In other words, Mandisa tends to be skeptical about what indicates one’s merit and if such indicator can change over time: “But now, some of those same people look at me as if I am the one who killed your

daughter. Or expressly told Mxolisi to go and kill her” (Magona, 163). In respect of this scenario, I would be able to assume that one’s merit is not only a matter of oneself, but it is also something that intersects socially with others.

To which consequence does doubt in democracy lead? My endeavor at interpretation in various parts of *Mother to Mother* that provoke my thoughts about doubt is not just an attempt to tie the characterizations and their affects with the politics. But my main endeavor is also to detect “the culture of distrust” which has been developed in South African blacks’ and their descendants’ psychology by apartheid and democratization, the changes they are forced either to experience first-hand or to live with the legacy. Distrust is not an undue consequence, particularly when we are considering democracy with polarized ideals of how to tackle moral issues and cultural values. The divisions can be deepened by the direction of the media which reduce the diverse public into a struggle for domination or majority. The simplest psychology influenced by the media is that the majority make the winners and vice versa.



CHAPTER 4

CONFUSION

Although the previous chapter has demonstrated a brief definition of confusion – a lack of understanding, resulting from knowing too much or too little – this chapter will pursue its etymology in order to trace its depth which will impel my analysis of this particular emotion amidst the traumatic atmosphere of South African apartheid and post-apartheid within the scope of *Mother to Mother*. The etymology of “confusion” suggests a trace from “con-” and “fusion”, which means mingling things or ideas together. Confusion, consequently, gives a sense of entanglement rather than intelligibility: one is confounded with so many ideas that she becomes unable to distinguish them. Applying this etymology into my interpretation of political aesthetics in South African post-apartheid literature, I can delve into its characteristics ranging from nostalgia to collective memories and psychology of lived experiences. Alternatively, scholars of confusion tend to reject “ideas of stable, separate subjectivity in the name of a more fundamental communal or ethical relation. In other words, *confusion* as it is repeatedly mobilized in this debate captures more than a being-stunned or being-cognitively-stopped” [original emphasis] (Baker, 5).

The notion about confusion having its own political aesthetic in literature emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, when the world was gradually offering an idea that necessary things should come with the functioning of a free society. Likewise, since then, the aesthetic practice has brought fiction into an aesthetic debate with two opposing beliefs: while the one favors a concept that fiction is “a space of free choice” (qtd. in Baker, 1) and thus “has the right to be equivocal. ...The partial truths [...] offered by a novel are a rampart against dogmatic abuses” (qtd. in Baker, 1), the other argues that literary work performs the realistic depiction of the world through its content. Geoffrey A. Baker, in *Aesthetics of Clarity and Confusion: Literature and Engagement since Nietzsche and the Naturalists*, refers to the clash between these two

notions of political art as “the *aesthetic of clarity* and the *aesthetic of confusion*” [original emphasis] (Baker, 2). Contemplating these two different aesthetics in literature simultaneously triggers another principal question that has dominated the twentieth century’s debates on the capabilities of literature: is literature capable of initiating political or social change? Therefore, to ask this question is also to contextualize the relationship between literary texts and their political potentials. More specifically speaking, when two literary works are both engaged with political problems, the one delineates real political problems with an expectation that its reader eventually becomes more aware of those problems, whereas the other values the unintelligibility with a hope that its reader is willing to confront with confusion and ambiguity as a means to perceive the reality. I have become more interested in the latter since trauma discourse marks unintelligibility as one of the key features of traumatic experiences. As I have emphasized in the introduction that trauma studies should not focus only on fatal moments or the deaths, but should also provoke a wider interest in traumatic mechanism for assessing ongoing and quotidian effects on the witnesses and the survivors. Sigmund Freud illustrates a coherent explanation about this in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. He encapsulates the ordinary traumatic neuroses in two characteristics: first, that the traumatic neuroses result from fright associated with the factor of surprise; and secondly, that psychic wound acts as resistance to the development of neuroses. To clarify, Freud also demonstrates the distinctions between fright, fear and anxiety: fright rests on “the state a person gets into when he has run into danger *without being prepared for it*; it emphasizes the factor of *surprise*” [emphasis added] (Freud, 6), whereas fear “requires a definite object of which to be afraid” (Freud, 6), and anxiety originates from “a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one” (Freud, 6). However, he does not agree that anxiety leads to a traumatic neurosis because “[t]here is something about anxiety that protects its subject against fright and so against fright-neuroses” (Freud, 7). According to Freud’s definition of ordinary trauma, those who have experienced or

survived from traumatic events seem more likely to have wounded minds without prior expectation or awareness. In other words, they are not fully aware of how their minds become wounded at the moment of occurrence. Instead, their wounds are then recalled constantly in other forms including dreams or nightmares. For these reasons, it can be understood from Freud's explanation that fright does not solely play a key role in prompting a traumatic neurosis, but it also has to be involved in a matter of unknowing or being unprepared. Similarly, Cathy Caruth pinpoints in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* that trauma, according to what trauma stories tell us, haunts the victims not entirely through "the reality of the violent event" (Caruth, 6) but also through "the reality of the way that its violence has *not yet been fully known*" [emphasis added] (Caruth, 6). Both of these important accounts, in my interpretation, lend emphasis to the the idea of incomprehensibility or call for attention to the state of confusion.

While my focus on doubt in the previous chapter was principally limited to the subjective experiences of the characters, I would aspire to understand the novel's emotional effect on both the characters as well as the readership who may be reading *Mother to Mother* as an indirect witness outside the boundary of shared national and individual histories, but who is perceiving those histories through the reading experience. On the one hand, the witness of the novel's arrangement of time, relying on one of my initial impressions on the novel, is more likely to project from the reading experience and eventually generate confusion. It is simply because the novel is not organized chronologically even though each part is labelled with precise dates and times. The way that the novel shuffles from the 1990s, when the crime of Amy Biehl's murder was actually committed, to the apartheid years, and also back to the distant history of South Africa, has a huge impact on the readership and thus leads to confusion, an emotional effect that characterizes the reading experience. Switching back and forth between these different times, the novel simply intervenes both South Africa's and individuals' histories. It also reflects Magona's attempt to get a grip on the readings of those

histories through their temporal dimensions. As the novel calls on the reader to follow the constant temporal alternation, it tends to arouse more confusion. On the other hand, apart from the influence of the temporal reversal on the readership, certain incidents introduced and repeated in the novel provoke confusion on a realistic basis. These confusing incidents cumulate and gradually result in intense traumatic impacts on Mandisa. Therefore, my analysis of confusion may extend beyond the realistic horizon. In other words, the novel and its reading have many things to do with clarity while demanding the reader's psychological identification with the characters in order to address multilayered traumas, both collectively and individually. This chapter, on the whole, will probe confusion, not simply with regard to the feelings that characters share when being faced with certain incidents in personal and political lives, but also in the aspect of the reading experience when handling the temporal shifts.

Confusion in *Mother to Mother* profoundly emerges from Mandisa's personal and political traumatic experiences, and repeatedly haunts them throughout the novel. Confusion in this matter is associated with its clarity: it disrupts the underlying reality. Before moving on to specific traumatic experiences that the characters have undergone, it is necessary for me to identify how "personal and political lives" are viewed in my interpretation. To do so, I may rely on Baker's citation from Gottfried Keller's work, the influence of which can be traced in the works of other prominent figures including Michel Foucault and Fredric Jameson:

'Everything is politics' In Keller's view [...] *every action, thought and emotion of human beings is inseparably bound up with the life and struggles of the community, i.e., with politics*; whether the humans themselves are conscious of this, unconscious of it or even trying to escape from it, objectively their actions, thoughts and emotions nevertheless spring from and run into politics [emphasis added] (qtd. in Baker, 14).

Borrowing such a citation above, I would like to paint a portrait of confusion in relation to political experiences that go beyond the limitation of the state or the governmental

power and that are inextricably linked with language and quotidian interactions. Thinking of confusion in this way helps me justify the indivisible relationship between the political and social aspects of life or, sometimes, the privatization of the political concerns.

However, this can also pose a problem represented as tension between the aesthetics of literature and its role as political engagement, especially when its writer explicitly acts as a political writer like Magona. On the narrative level of *Mother to Mother*, accounts of Mandisa's life intervene to suspend Mxolisi's portrait of life periodically. Strictly speaking, Mandisa adopts a non-traditional method of bearing witness by intermingling the narration of her own memories through her son's case. This is a position from which confusion most basically emerges and remains throughout the novel. In addition, *Mother to Mother* is also viewed as Magona's political work for two obvious reasons. First, it is concurrent with the establishment of the TRC. Second, the fact that the murderers who had been convicted of Amy Biehl's crime were eventually released by the TRC's investigation underlies the novel, despite not being recounted directly. For these reasons, certain critics recognize a correspondence between the novel and the TRC's aims. Renee Schatteman, for instance, sees the novel as a space in which voice of the victim coexists with that of the criminal, and therefore as a project serving the TRC's agenda:

the novel's representation of Mxolisi's story can be seen to represent the essence of the TRC. Mandisa's narrative, after all, with its detailed accounting of Mxolisi's life and its speculations about Amy's thoughts and actions on the day of her death, satisfies the TRC's aims to promote reconciliation [...] (Schatteman, 19).

On the other hand, Magona implies her hesitation in relation to the TRC's chief intention – the possibility of cross-national or cross-racial empathy – both in her autobiographies and interviews. This is echoed in Anne Whitehead's "Reading with Empathy: Sindiwe Magona's *Mother to Mother*". Whitehead distinguishes different affective effects of

apartheid on black South Africans by proposing that apartheid triggers the insularity of the imagination, yet the post-apartheid era causes a realization of white people's suffering. By doing so, she argues that the overflow of social consequences of the forced removals that Mandisa directly experiences from her childhood acts as "Magona's implied criticism of the TRC's political mobilization of cross-racial empathy" (Whitehead, 186).

Either of the ways used to consider *Mother to Mother*, I would propose, reflects literary roles in social and political aspects; literature should change the world by initiating the reader's awareness of particular issues in society or by motivating the reader to question their knowledge and its meaning. Asking questions about the meaning of some bewildering facts in *Mother to Mother* provokes the demand of clarity. The play on two opposing aesthetics – clarity and confusion – becomes engaged in several literary works by authors from the late nineteenth century to the twentieth century not only in the western world but also in South Africa. Personally, I also see these two poles as reality and fiction. Furthermore, it is undeniable that the political potential of literature or literary activism is shaped through these two opposing values so that it becomes part of the political aesthetic. However, considering whether literature is politically effective seems superficial and insufficient to answer deeper questions about clarity and confusion. Questioning epistemology as well as different literary modes can also collaborate with each other as a method to recognize roles of literature including its political potential, through the values of clarity and confusion, beyond the limitation of finding only its actual effectiveness. I would invite you to consider a part of Baker's explanation before exploring further discussion about this:

I would even suggest that the refraction of political specifics occurs not entirely with the aim of engaging an audience in that specific problem [...] but rather in order to invite readers to consider *the political implications of the less-specifically political aspects of the text* [emphasis added] (Baker, 220).

Borrowing Baker's lens to read *Mother to Mother* as an audience outside its specific problems – apartheid and post-apartheid, I can come up with a new possibility to glean from scattered minor moments, especially confusing and blurred ones – “the less-specifically political aspects of the text” (Baker, 220). By doing so, I hope to piece them together into one or more major issues – “the political implications” (Baker, 220). Despite traumatic events in South African history of apartheid that allow *Mother to Mother* to be viewed as a political work, we can also realize that a number of unintelligible accounts are trumpeted through the narratives if we look beyond those direct historical traumatic moments. In other words, the incomprehensible moments of the novel are responsible for demeaning the history and alternatively foregrounding personal confusion as the root of the problems in the novel. At this point, it may also be useful to elaborate on particular most equivocal situations Mandisa has endured in order to uncover how confusion is triggered, reacted to, and transformed into traumatic wounds. Uncovering these is expected to bring about the meaning of both literary and political aesthetics towards the novel.

Mandisa is deprived of understanding of their own circumstances. However, the majority of *Mother to Mother* is devoted to Mandisa's intimate stories ranging from childhood to adulthood. Among a range of those stories is her virgin pregnancy – the most unclear issue which is suspended from having come and gone like others. Mandisa is struggling to make sense of her pregnancy because she always claims that she and China (Mxolisi's father) only “squeeze together, kissing and having ‘play sex’. No penetration” (Magona, 96), and “China [is] careful and all [they do is] play sex, with him never going higher than a little above mid-thigh” (Magona, 97). By the use of such clear language, the provided explanation about their relationship does not sound ambiguous at all until the language comes again to stir the same piece of information and make it ambiguous:

My virginity was rent not by a lover or husband, even. No, but by my son.

This fact, an accident, my people called it, had always set me apart...Only

now, the inverse of the equation hit me. Where I had often heard it mentioned that *a woman will always have a tender spot for the man to whom she gave her virginity, how could I feel that way towards my son?* Indeed, how often had I not wondered whether my feelings towards him would have been different had his coming been otherwise? When he cried, sometimes instead of feeling sorry for him, I felt sorry for myself. As though he had less reason for his tears than I for his being on this earth. *Did I hate my son? Stop it! Stop it! How could I hate him?* [emphasis added] (Magona, 156)

Juxtaposing these, beyond the syntax or the accuracy on the sentence level, convinces me of the potential of language as functions of clarity and confusion. It therefore reminds me of a method of textual interpretation which is suggested by Baker. He also encourages us to consider “the activist nature of [a] text as a function of its perceived audience: Is it treatise or manifesto?” (Baker, 86). If we are to examine the activist nature of Mandisa’s equivocal virginity, it is worth considering where this ambiguity is intended to arrive or whether it is treatise or manifesto.

Mandisa’s mother believes that the only way to prevent Mandisa from getting pregnant is to hide her from her familiar environment and friends. This implies that her mother intends to hide her from her boyfriend, China. Although Mandisa tries extremely hard to prove that she remains virgin, her mother has lost all reason, and forces to move to her grandmother’s home in the distant village, “where children still know how to behave” (Magona, 99). She experiences this removal at the age of thirteen, which can be comparable to the way she and her people undergo the forced removal under apartheid. One day of her life in the village, despite being hidden and watched by her grandmother and aunt, appears to be the day when “the baby inside [her announces] his existence. Out of blue, there in [her] belly, was the small, tentative movement of a mouse awakening from deep sleep” (Magona, 113). Hiding her in the village cannot stop her from becoming pregnant as though it haunts her wherever she

goes, even though she insists that she has been “untouched”. Likewise, even if the forced removals do not come to every family at the same time, they finally arrive in front of every door. Mandisa’s confusion about her pregnancy is played along with South African non-white people’s confusion about the forced removals, with which Mandisa is again involved. Its activist nature may not be to call for any transformation but to shatter the clarity on the pages for the audience to witness layers of pain caused by confusion at times.

It is not only her pregnancy that shakes her childhood and relationship with family, but the fact that it is discovered while she is coping with her life at her grandmother’s home and a new school also makes the perplexity more intense for herself and among her family. It is even more interesting to hear Mandisa constantly recalling her perplexing pregnancy in the midst of other traumatic stories later, both along accounts of her adulthood and of distant past traumatic histories. Her action of retelling it recreates the tradition of storytelling while keeping the reader as a listener.

Even though *Mother to Mother* is based on the killing of Amy Biehl, it is explicitly and recognizably fiction with the circumstances which are deliberately not identical to the crime. Instead, it speaks about multilayered traumas through the crime by prioritizing Mandisa’s and Mxolisi’s individual traumas and allowing these experiences to be fused into shared traumas within their community. Such a fusion of personal and collective perspectives engages in wider dimensions of reality as to South African history and politics in particular. In other words, the novel works principally on a micro level of multiple traumatizing stressors until the marginalized stories have taken on central roles in the novel. In this sense, I would propose that the fiction reconstructs the reality in order to reconnect it with collective history so that the reader can feel and see it continue inside the historical frame and at the historical pace. It is worth noticing that every individual story comes together with the narratives of one or more historical counterparts. While individual traumas are constantly paired with other realities, what the novel ignites my further observation in terms of its structure is the fact that this

pattern is also consistently interrupted with the temporal shifts. The way that it is structured is hence to embellish the reality with its imaginative elements. The apparent contour of Mandisa's virgin conception, therefore, divulges Magona's deliberate attempt to hide the reality or the understanding from the reader. This becomes a two-way confusion in which the characters and the reader are growing confused together throughout the novel. This emotion eventually foregrounds both the development of the novel as well as the act of domestically and collectively witnessing the trauma of apartheid and the transition to democracy.

When considering reality acquired as a key feature in fictional space like *Mother to Mother* and as a factor assessing confusion, I tend to take "imagination" into account. Is imagination adopted to distort reality in order to make fiction possible? So, is imagination a means to distinguish fiction from reality? If imagination is a device to make fiction possible, what kinds of true stories does imagination need to process for creating fiction? To which forms of language do such stories turn in fiction? These questions prompt me to think about Jacques Derrida's questions of imagination when he elaborates on deconstruction in *A Taste for the Secret*, comprising series of dialogues on ideas that have marked his works. In "I Have a Taste for the Secret", Derrida presents a paradoxical nature of imagination: it is "a threat to truth, intellect and reality – yet a resource as well" (Derrida, 5). He continues the discussion about this paradox by giving an example from Plato that "imagination has an ambiguous nature: on one hand, it [...] threatens truth and the idea – the image is inferior to the idea; and, on the other, it has a positive function – it is philosophically and pedagogically necessary" (Derrida, 5). This insight into the working of imagination, consequently, treats it as a place for mediation and synthesis, allowing participation as well as reconciliation as a result. According to Derrida, imagination which is "the locus of fiction" (Derrida, 5) is the enemy of reality in a way. His main interest is also inclined toward philosophy because it is expected to represent reality. Moreover, Derrida evokes, through a fascinating term "repressive tolerance" (Derrida, 9), a question whether philosophy which has always

been seen as truth can also be treated as literature. The way “we accept the philosophers’ emancipation from the care for truth and their acceding to literature, their treating philosophy as literature” (Derrida, 9) is a repressive gesture. In other words, we are seemingly demanded to undergo a dilemma: “We [philosophers]’ll grant you the right to treat philosophy as literature, but you have to forget this business of claiming to be occupied with truth” (Derrida, 9). This shows not only the relationship between philosophy and literature or philosophy and truth, but also the relationship between truth and its reader, I would suggest. Applying the proposal of reading philosophy as literature by compromising its reality basis into the reading of *Mother to Mother* tends to liberate my reading from confusion about certain reality aspects in the novel’s certain times and incidents, especially Mandisa’s virgin pregnancy. To clarify, the reader should care less about the possibility or evidence of how Mxolisi has been conceived by a virgin mother. Instead, it is more worth allowing this kind of equivocal incidents to be deemed a successful attempt to reshape intimate memories and remap collective traumatic experiences in order to create a revolution in mainstream history.

In addition to the play on the opposition between reality and imagination, another element in *Mother to Mother* which chiefly intrigues me in terms of an effect of confusion on the reader is its non-chronological structure. It now leads me to more questions about the use of the concept of epoch which is usually intertwined with the trauma discourse. Is any trauma the case only when being considered on the basis of time when it breaks out? Was apartheid traumatic only during the years of its official application? Does apartheid remain real because it is timelessly traumatic or vice versa? If apartheid is timelessly traumatic, can it be considered contemporary? The reading of trauma novels like *Mother to Mother* can become more affectively interesting when being contemplated together with these questions. This immediate relationship between the imaginative trauma and the traumatic state of the same history can equate to the fact that specific stories in a trauma novel remain traumatic because they are felt by the reader and renewed by the fictional form or the form of retelling, regardless of

when they actually take place. In this case, exploring another of Derrida's concepts called time out of joint would benefit my further analysis.

Derrida borrows Hamlet's sentence: "The time is out of joint" (qtd. in Derrida, 6) in order to expand on how time is "outside itself, beside itself, unhinged" (Derrida, 6) because "it is not gathered together in its place, in its present" (Derrida, 6). Moreover, it is thought-provoking to learn from Derrida that "in a tradition that goes from More to Tennyson, 'out of joint' was used in a moral sense, and meant disorderly, corrupted, unjust" (Derrida, 6). This use of the term even deepens the implications of the non-chronological order of *Mother to Mother* with regard to apartheid as well as its chaotic and discriminatory conditions. All the delineation has encouraged me to enlarge the concept of epoch as a gesture that rejects the probability of periodization of history. Therefore, the political potential of fiction is to retell personal and collective history while transferring it into a debate on specific politics and increasing the dynamic of the same history. In other words, the history that has been transformed as fiction becomes more capable of being repeated in its political debate so that the problem of periodization can lessen, if not disappear. The refuse to periodize history acts as a strategy on which political literature like *Mother to Mother* can rely in order to disjoint its stories from times so that they remain "untimely" (Derrida, 6). While mobilizing themselves outside the boundary of epoch, literary stories can also reconnect their relationship with people over times and represent themselves as the interpretation of and the relationship with the history rather than the mirror image of the history. This leads me to another deduction: *Mother to Mother* is a fictional space which can succeed the past, not by telling the past, but by being told in the present, and thus plays a role of fiction that deals with history as relationship for maintaining self-contemporary. I would explain this in the simplest way that an event that occurred in the past like apartheid can be considered contemporary when it is still relevant to any present state. This is the same reason why some philosophers or thinkers remain contemporaries, despite their deaths or their concepts having been proposed in the past.

To enhance my analysis of confusion as a foregrounding emotional experience for the readership, moving back to the definition of it I have indicated in the beginning will be useful. As I have pointed to what confusion means by focusing on a lack of understanding resulting from knowing too much or too little, confusion is explicitly concerned with “knowing”. In this case, I am not referring merely to epistemological knowledge but also to knowing in the relation to literary language which realizes political potential of literature. This is also echoed in Baker’s discussion about how knowing becomes a problem about which political aesthetics are concerned. Baker addresses this conflict that “the problem is that we [the readers] have too little knowledge, and so the author enlarges his or her knowledge of an issue in order to share that knowledge with others” (Baker, 21-22). He expands on this issue by citing a range of scholars and authors. One of the instances is Coetzee, who recognizes this tension as the unstable knowledge of language, narrative, history and thus identity, in terms of both the nation and the individual:

For Coetzee, the problem of knowing is the problem of knowing others; in his novels set most visibly in an Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa, the knowledge necessary to realist portraiture confronts the ethical and political problem of acknowledging that others are never fully knowable, and that language and representation are often unreliable (Baker, 22).

A similar pressure is also applied to the reader of *Mother to Mother* in the form of confusion when Magona, as its author, inserts into the novel and the characterizations perplexing events including Mandisa’s virgin conception of Mxolisi, and she deliberately and constantly challenges the reader’s knowledge by not solving the mysteries through the narrative or language. Even though Magona does not unravel the reader’s confusion through the narrative, she marginalizes the virgin pregnancy and Mxolisi through Mandisa’s language. As a result, the marginalization of Mandisa’s pregnancy can grant the reader the ability to rationalize and transform not merely the mysterious pregnancy but also the confusion into an idea of the non-belonging which implies Mandisa’s

attempt to portray an ethico-political duty in the repeated flashbacks. If Mandisa's language neither alludes to belonging nor non-belonging, there must be a sort of indelible suffering that goes back to that time of her life or haunts her. More specifically speaking, a trauma does not only affect the victim while experiencing it, but it also leaves its mark while she is trying to survive and overcome the aftermath of the trauma in which she does not fully understand its origin and its meaning. This state of emotion may impossibly be responded by revolt or indignation, but possibly by incomprehension. This kind of language problem can be reminded in Derrida's term "double movement", referring to the movement of consciousness and non-consciousness or the problem between belonging and non-belonging.

At this point, the origins and the results of doubt and confusion are more clearly distinguished for the purpose of literary analysis. On the one hand, doubt arises and then probably disappears or lessens when understanding replaces it. For this reason, it is not surprising that a subject having undergone doubt would appreciate clarification. On the other hand, confusion arises, principally amidst chaotic atmosphere and places in which a subject does not allow to have understanding or in which understanding does not have its time to form. Therefore, confusion remains even though understanding replaces it at last.

CHAPTER 5

GRIEF

Exploring emotions in *Mother to Mother* is to take different journeys, some of which are psychological journeys into the painful history of South Africa and others are into the trauma of struggles over its political history, particularly over apartheid as well as democracy. The emotions – pain, confusion and doubt – that we have explored so far are eventually met at a grievable story of life as in the novel whose ending leads not only to grievable individual stories of mothers, victims and perpetrators, but also to grievable collective memories. This final chapter is going to reveal how Mandisa has been transformed throughout her writing of the letter, with a radical turn at the end. The way she radicalizes the contexts of her son's crime and the colonial history in the final part of her letter makes it more sensible for her life and her community to grieve and mourn. For each of my personal journeys from one emotion to another so far in this project, my interest in grief is of paramount importance because I wish to propose that the previous emotions: pain, confusion and doubt results in a grievable life. In other words, perusing grief is allowing my analysis to conclude what grief means to Mandisa, how Mandisa's life represents grief that victims of South African apartheid have shared, and what grief has left behind as traces we can track from the novel. For these reasons, this chapter is going to invite you to take another journey around scars left by internal wounds and injuries since those like Mandisa have been living with the scars which I see as grievable lives.

While considering grief as one of the affects, I also pay significant attention to its expression. Even though grief and pain have always been remembered as an inextricable pair, which is the practicable conception, how is the former expressed so that it can be distinguished from the latter? It is implicitly important to negotiate pain at this point where it plays a role in mourning and thus grief in terms of its expression. Pain is interwoven potentially with physical and psychological damages followed by

adverse impressions on the relationship between the subjects who express it and the objects that are represented through it. Based on this picture of pain, grief shares some common aspects; grief engages with certain objects in a meaningful way. The working of grief towards certain lost objects involves mourning in some cases and through melancholia in others, as a result. Sigmund Freud is a prominent person who compellingly attends to grief from which mourning and melancholia arise. Introducing two key terms – mourning and melancholia – in the late 1910s, Freud suggests that the mind relies not only on mental processes but also on various internalized love objects. His introduction of mourning and melancholia has then influenced the way psychoanalysts conceptualize the internal faculty when it responds to grief of losing a love object. The very proposal distinguishes mourning from melancholia as if it is a healthy conscious reaction against pain and its unhealthy unconscious counterpart respectively. To shed light on these two psychological mysteries, Freud recognizes the mood of mourning as a painful one by encouraging us to “see the justification for this when we are in a position to give a characterization of the economics of pain” (Freud, 20).

If grief is likely to emerge either as mourning or melancholia, we should find the differentiation between these two states helpful because each of them usefully implies different underlying features, particularly when they act not only as symptoms but also as reading practices. Even though Freud’s explanation of mourning as “the reaction of the loss of a loved person” (Freud, 19) is rather cliché, another depth added into its definition refers to “the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one’s country, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (Freud, 19), which provokes the working of mourning in certain political environments such as the ones in South Africa’s apartheid and its transition era. Despite the fact that mourning possibly triggers similar consequences to melancholia – “a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, [and] inhibition of all activity” (Freud, 20), a further indicator of melancholia as a symptom is “the disturbance of self-regard” (Freud, 20) or “a lowering of the self-regarding feelings” (Freud, 20), which is absent from

mourning. Properly speaking, the working of mourning follows the sudden withholding of passion for the loved objects that have no longer existed. This can also explain “a hallucinatory wishful psychosis” (Freud, 20) when one, regardless of its replacement, never quits her passion spontaneously, causing her to turn her back on reality and hold to that object. More generally speaking, when the experience of loss or grief is responded by melancholia and thus results in the distortion of the ego at a certain extent, it takes place in the unconscious mind so that it cannot be fully apprehended. To clarify, melancholia can lead to an identification of the ego with the lost objects, or “an object-loss [is] transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification” (Freud, 25). This is where pain develops from melancholia whose conflicts within the ego replace the struggle over the loss and then leave painful wounds. What interests me more is one of Freud’s conclusions: “when the work of mourning is complete the ego becomes free and uninhibited again” (Freud, 21). In short, this conclusion induces me to assume that mourning is capable of healing melancholia and pain.

Having attended to grief as a result of internal wounds or pain caused by apartheid, I am also keen on looking at other traumatic events in the contemporary history. Among the most traumatic occurrences in the twenty-first century is the September 11 attacks whose aftermath scars have also suspended themselves from healing. Judith Butler’s *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* collects essays written after September 11, 2001, all of which respond to how the tragedy leads to further vulnerable conditions and discourses in the world. However, it does not limit itself at the American boundary. Instead, it expands on the cultural and political aspects of grief or mourning which can help me to settle issues concerning the possibility as well as the roles of grief in *Mother to Mother*. What makes Butler’s proposal about grief thought-provoking is how she juxtaposes it to Freud’s. Freud claims that the act of mourning is basically involved with the ability to exchange a thing for

another thing. That is, one mourns because one is deprived of a certain attachment and then exchanges it with another object as “a sign of hopefulness” (Butler, 21). However, Butler disagrees that grief can be successfully expressed because one is capable of forgetting the attachment or because the attachment is replaced by a new object. Butler, instead, views mourning as the acceptance of a change following a loss or a detachment. Therefore, Freud regards mourning as interchangeability whereas Butler sees the same act as changeability. In short, taking both these approaches into account, I could see successful mourning as the association with at least an external factor on the one hand and with internal faculty on the other.

Even though I have made constant effort to detach my readings of postcolonialism, especially those concerning the context of South African apartheid, from Eurocentric notions of trauma, I have engaged my analysis with Freud and Butler since Butler questions the validity of grief and mourning by pressing it beyond the situational scale while Freud also provides another approach to the internal world intertwined with the external one. More specifically speaking, both of them decide to address grief as a quality, not as a quantity. If Freud’s claim is the case, grief can become visible in or be transferred to objects representing a loss. What can be an object making grief visible in *Mother to Mother*? On the contrary, if Butler’s view is true, grief shows inner changes in one’s self. Whose inner self has changed in *Mother to Mother*, and how does the change affect such inner self? For me, these two questions are worth considering equally, yet they come from different angles of grief.

Butler also emphasizes that grieving or mourning is not a private act because it does not lead one facing loss to a solitary situation. If it is privatizing, it is depoliticizing itself. However, it is also important to consider the fact that we are never private subjects, and constantly portray who we are through “the ties we have to others” (Butler, 22) or “bonds that compose us” (Butler, 22). In this sense, grief is not depoliticizing itself:

It is not as if an ‘I’ exists independently over here and then simply loses a ‘you’ over there, especially if the attachment to ‘you’ is part of what composes who ‘I’ am. *If I lose you, under these conditions, then I not only mourn the loss, but I become inscrutable to myself.* Who ‘am’ I, without you? [emphasis added] (Butler, 22)

The struggle over self-definition as proposed by Butler above is also a useful means to contemplate grief or mourning in the postcolonial, particularly post-apartheid, context. After the Second World War, we have seen global attempts to achieve cultural self-determination in company with political self-determination. The most obvious example is in the American Civil Rights movement. For South Africa, whose people were shaken loose from their cultures and identities by apartheid over almost half a century, its self-determination has been more closely associated with the demands for nationhood and political independence. The accomplishment of self-definition, therefore, becomes one of the ultimate goals for postcolonial movements. Such movements can be done through a range of methods, one of which is through literature. This implication of self-determination is also echoed in underlying ideas of decolonization movements and anti-colonialism, one of which is known as “the new man”, widely found in the writings of several intellectuals including Frantz Fanon. Fanon is also a radical critic of colonialism who considers literature as an important device adopted to strive for political independence because the aspiration for the independence has always provided the original impetus for particular South African literatures since the 1960s. At this point, my discussion has reached where I am considering Freud’s and Butler’s approaches to grief in the forms of mourning and melancholia as a result of pain which has always been taken for granted as a representation of South African political history. This point is going to be integrated with Fanon’s proposal of “the new man” in order to offer a possibility to read Mandisa’s development as a mother who, in the beginning, extraordinarily calls for the sole attention to her own and her son’s losses and as the same mother who finally claims

the other mother's loss and the common status as "Sister-Mother" (Magona, 198). This noteworthy transformation of Mandisa, when being read through the lens of mourning and melancholia, reminds us of how particular emotions or states of mind like mourning and melancholia trigger a new affective product like grief, which pervades postcolonial studies and addresses diverse postcolonial problems. One of the problems that is worth addressing in the discussion about grief and about such development of Mandisa is concerned with the idea of the "new man" in decolonization movements.

With regard to grief, Butler adds an implication of self-determination by not simply seeing it as an emotional response to violence but also as a claim of bodily integrity. To clarify, despite unique struggles over autonomy in wider realms – feminism, lesbian and gay movements and postcolonialism, for example – one cannot claim one's body as complete autonomy for the body is "constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere" (Butler, 26), "living in a world of being who [is] physically dependent on one another, physically vulnerable to one another" (Butler, 26). How is one's body vulnerable to one another? The answer for this question can become more interestingly complex by scrutinizing *Mother to Mother*, whose characters are potential to act as both victims and perpetrators simultaneously. For dealing with the roles of victims and perpetrators in this novel, an attentive observation on the author's preface should be useful. Magona grasps the chance in the preface to deluge the reader with the ambivalent interpretations of Amy Biehl and Mxolisi. While referring to Amy Biehl as a victim whose world is always heard, Magona appeals for adequate if not more "recognition" of the other world, the world of perpetrators like Mxolisi. Furthermore, Magona explicitly attributes the kind of Amy's murder to apartheid and its legacy which triggers the malicious environment in which young people like Mxolisi have grown up and developed "a twisted sense of right and wrong, with everything seen through the warped prism of the overarching *crime against humanity*, as the international community labelled it" [original emphasis] (Magona, V-VI). Here Magona's language, particularly the use of vocabulary with comprehensive meanings as "everything" and

“overarching”, does not simply show her certainty about the root cause of Amy’s criminal phenomenon and its counterparts, but it also implicitly introduces the interchangeable relationship between the victims and the perpetrators on the basis of binary opposition.

Based on Magona’s interpretations in the preface of *Mother to Mother*, Amy Biehl, in the most intelligible level, is the victim of Mxolisi’s crime while she also appears to be the representation of the malevolence of apartheid inflicted on Mxolisi’s world. Moreover, while Mxolisi is a criminal, he is also a young man “whose environment fail[s] to nurture [him] in the higher ideals of humanity” (Magona, V) so that he becomes a “lost [creature] of malice and destruction” (Magona, V) triggered by apartheid and its legacy. More specifically speaking, both represent vulnerability in different ways. On the one hand, Amy’s decision to give her black friends a ride in the township does not only cost her life, but it also provokes the stupidity and the vulnerability caused by her hope and seemingly false vision of post-apartheid South Africa. On the other hand, Mxolisi represents the vulnerability not only to black South African youth’s misperception pertaining to political actions but also to collective traumatic memories. All these complicated relationships between Amy and Mxolisi as the victims and the perpetrators, coupled with the paradoxical determinations of both these roles, can be explained as “bodily vulnerability” in Butler’s term mainly because we are social. The fact that we are never us alone because we are one way or another exposed to others excludes the act of grief and mourning from the kind of solitary activities. However, an attempt to grieve and mourn for any loss can sometimes be reduced as melancholia life when one is deprived of time and space for grief and mourning. Returning to the initial question from Freud about what object is making grief visible in *Mother to Mother*, I am reluctant to say that the object must only be a concrete item. Instead, it is likely to appear as a space through which grief feels comfortable enough to stay and be listened. Therefore, for me, the vulnerability can become the reason behind grief which emerges from an individual feeling or being felt

by others so that grief can be either a first-hand experience or a passive experience. Even a melancholic life as one of the possible solutions to grief can also act as an object or space in which grief is allowed to exist. Most importantly, the relationship between Amy and Mxolisi exemplifies how different individual definitions or determinations are made possible under the same social emotion like grief.

Furthermore, contemplating whose inner self has changed throughout *Mother to Mother* and how the change structures it in the way it is, I would invite you to look more closely at how Mandisa's feelings towards her histories, both personal and collective ones, have metamorphosed her feelings towards her son and the other mother. This transformation is more intense and more complicated than that from hatred to love and beyond distance versus intimacy. It is Mandisa, to whom Magona adds another layer of depth and complexity by entitling her two simultaneous roles as well: when she is the narrator, she is also the perpetrator's mother. Emphatically, Mandisa appears to reclaim time and space for grief. That is, she is given voice through the roles of the narrator and the perpetrator's mother alike. She never disappears. She stays with the reader constantly by being one way or another exposed to the reader and the narrative throughout the novel. These consistent roles add more complexity into the novel's strangeness, in terms of grief in particular, because she has many griefs in life for which she is reclaiming time and space. Apparently, her griefs are not only in the relations to herself as an individual human being, but they are also intertwined with her being as a social member – a black South African citizen – from colonialism and apartheid to post-apartheid. In other words, it is superficial to consider the other mother's loss of her daughter as the sole grief possible in the novel while Mandisa, despite having her son alive, is appealing for listening to her painful and grievable stories.

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