An Investigation of the Process of Rebuilding Identity in Antjie Krog’s Literature and its Effect on the Reader: An Analysis of *Dogter van Jefta, Lady Anne* and *Country of My Skull*

Mastertaak voorgelegd tot het bekomen van de graad van Master in de Taal- en Letterkunde: Twee talen

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## ii. Abbreviations

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<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>ODNB</td>
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<td><em>Post Traumatic Stress Disorder</em></td>
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1. Introduction

The current Republic of South Africa is known both for its large variety of ethnic groups and its troubled and complex history (Ibbo Mandaza, 2001: 133), characterized by power shifts from one of the aforementioned groups to another. As it is well established that identity is a changeable construct (Tshikala K. Biaya 53) and not an “irremovable skin” (Neville Alexander 152), every power shift entails an adjustment of identity for the people involved: with every shift one group’s identity is shattered and another one’s is restored. The former group, usually the one that is being repressed by the group in power, has to restore its identity after being discriminated against and incorporate that traumatic experience in their new identity.

This phenomenon has occurred a number of times throughout South African history, as will be discussed profoundly later on. However, evidence can be found in literature by Afrikaner writers (among which J. M. Coetzee) that at one point in the South African past, during the Apartheid, it are no longer only the identities of the people of colour, in other words the victims of the traumatic event, who have been crushed, but also the identities of several white Afrikaners, belonging to the ethnic group of the perpetrators, as they experience guilt for the monstrosities people of colour have been confronted with. They appear to feel partially responsible for the injustice, although not directly having engaged in those monstrosities, but apparently through belonging to the privileged population group. A closer look at Coetzee’s work, by means of an example, reveals that his novels, although dealing with guilt in relation to the Apartheid, are comparable to “the work of a ‘colonizer who refuses’ to endorse or support colonialism, but who is nonetheless, in Albert Memmi’s characterization, deprived of moral tranquility because he ‘suspects, even if he is in no way guilty as an individual, that he shares a collective responsibility by the fact of membership in a national oppressor group’” (Forrest G. Robinson, 2012: 2). As the protagonist of Coetzee’s novel Diary of a Bad Year states: “The generation of white South Africans to which I belong, and the next generation, and perhaps the generation after that too, will go bowed under the shame of the crimes that were committed in their name” (Coetzee, 2007: 44). The knowledge of that responsibility and the consequently

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1 The reflections of the protagonist may in this case be interpreted as “the artist […] speaking through
experienced guilt, which can be conceived of as a traumatic experience, has to be incorporated in the new identity of the Afrikaner. Dominick LaCapra\textsuperscript{2} and Cathy Caruth\textsuperscript{3} have already elaborately investigated the way in which victims of a traumatic event process a trauma and represent it in literature and have also looked into the role of the perpetrator but have given minor attention to how this group, people who although not having participated in cruelties against mankind nonetheless display characteristics of a trauma, deals with that experience and rebuilds their identity.

Antjie Krog can be argued to belong to that group of people as evidence of that guilt can be encountered in her work\textsuperscript{4}. The evidence will be laid bare later on in this paper.

That this process of rebuilding identity due to the traumatic experiencing of guilt is reflected in literature is no coincidence. After all, African literature has often been used to assert and emphasize identity (Tanure Ojaide, 1992: 46), to share that identity and that way convert it into a collective identity. Expressing identity and consequently endorsing social cohesion (45) are therefore two of the four functions African literature seems to have alongside being didactic\textsuperscript{5} (44) and having a utilitarian function\textsuperscript{6} (44). In short, African literature serves to express a political opinion and to display and emphasize their own Afrikaner culture and identity. Afrikaner authors want their population group to be recognized as a group, having their own language, habits and by extension their own identity. Consequently, as Krog’s literature, to some extent, possesses these functions, it not only displays a process of rebuilding identity but also constructs a collective identity throughout the oeuvre as a whole, which might help white Afrikaner readers restore their identity, incorporating the knowledge of the injustices directed towards people of colour and the accordingly felt guilt in their new Afrikaner identity.


\textsuperscript{4}In her later work Krog incorporates more personal experiences and feelings which results in autobiographical novels (e.g. ‘\textit{Country of my Skull}’) (Mads Vestergaard, 2001: 25), which allows the conclusion that the guilt encountered in those books is the guilt she personally experiences.

\textsuperscript{5}African writers have “assumed the role of the conscience of the society, reminding readers and society of the high cultural ethos that must be upheld” and teach them about the culture of the community (Ojaide, 1992: 44).

\textsuperscript{6}“Modern African literature is the repository of the cultural life of the people and is a major source of education for the young everywhere and urban people who have lost touch with their roots” (Ojaide, 1992: 45).
With this aim, I will, first of all, situate Krog’s work in the (literary) history of South Africa and explain how the struggle of identity displayed in her work indicates that trauma theory has a much broader application as it also affects the ‘innocent’ bystander to some extent. Furthermore, I will investigate what instances of identity are displayed throughout the work of Krog by means of a study of *Dogter van Jefta* (*DJ*), *Lady Anne* (*LA*) and *Country of My Skull* (*CMS*), works carefully chosen in order to represent her literary oeuvre as a whole. Since, according to Georgina Horrell, “contemporary writing in or of the New South Africa […] displays a crisis in identity […] for whites - and in particular for white women” (Horrel, 1997: 765), I intend to lay bare the struggle of identity displayed in Krog’s work, whether there is an evolution of identity, perhaps with relapses (which would point towards the process of rebuilding identity) within the individual works and eventually throughout her entire oeuvre. Afterwards, I aim to determine whether stages can be discovered in this process which might coincide with the stages of processing a trauma. This is possible due to the fact that the process of rebuilding identity, especially in the case of South Africa, is often a struggle resulting from a traumatic event (LaCapra, 2001: 81). According to Horrell, it is “an ambivalent, unstable and unavoidably painful process of radical redefinition” (Horrel, 1997: 776). As a final point, I will clarify how this rebuilt identity serves as a collective one, which helps the white Afrikaner reader (re)discover his or her own new identity, as the latter is often being created through narratives (Susan Vanzanten Gallagher, 2002: 305) and individual memory often contributes to collective memory and by extension collective identity.

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7 Whether there is something as an ‘innocent’ bystander is disputed by what in Latin America is called ‘La teoría de la ruedecilla en el engranaje’ (Arturo Klenner, 2013: 5). In the words of Rosana López Rodríguez: “Como todos los sujetos están involucrados (aunque con un grado diverso) en el funcionamiento de la maquinaria, todos los engranajes humanos de esa máquina son responsables”. In other words, it can be disputed whether only people who committed crimes were guilty during the Apartheid as every white Afrikaner was a piece of the puzzle which constituted the political system.

8 This happens through “repeating the narrative of the violence over and over again to ease the burden of trauma that it carries” (Robert J. Schreiter, 1992: 34).

9 With respect to collective memory in remembering the Holocaust, Alvin H. Rosenfeld has stated the following: “A single Anne Frank excites more emotion than the myriads who suffered as she did but whose image has remained in the shadows” (Rosenfeld, 2000: 207). Although the diary of Anne Frank was a personal document, it was converted into an attribute that represented the suffering of all mistreated Jews in the Holocaust. The same way in which this item of personal memory was converted into a document assisting collective memory, I believe an individual struggle of identity can contribute to the formation of a collective identity.
2. Identity, History and Trauma: Theoretical Framework

Prior to the analysis of the process of rebuilding identity in Krog’s *DJ, LA* and *CMS*, it is important to elaborate on some of the concepts presented in the introduction. First of all, it will be necessary to determine which definition of identity will be used in this paper. Secondly, I will explain how an identity crisis often results from a traumatic experience. By means of an example from South-African history, it will be clarified that not only the victims undergo traumatization and subsequently an identity crisis. With these concepts as a starting point, it will be possible to analyze Krog’s work thoroughly in terms of identity.

With respect to the purpose of this paper, it is fundamentally important to primarily establish what identity is and how it is constructed, i.e. by what factors it is influenced, what types of identity exist and which of these types will be dealt with in this paper. First of all, it is noteworthy that “[w]e never have only one identity. All of us have multiple identities” (Alexander, 2001: 148). When talking about identity, at least two oppositions emerge. First of all, a division has to be made between an identity which has been imposed on a person or group of people and an identity one creates for himself, as “[w]e are most often ‘given’ identities by others who act on the basis of stereotypes they have internalised” (149). A second distinction has to be made between a supra- and a sub-national identity (Simon Bekker, 2001: 3). The supra-national identity, applied to South Africa, is built on the unified feeling of belonging to one group, one nation, melting all ethnic differences, whereas the sub-national identity takes ‘the other’ as a starting point, defining himself as belonging to one particular tribe of the many the Republic of South Africa houses as opposed to another. The constitution of the latter type of identity is made possible due to the different history the various tribes have. They obtained these different histories as a result of the various “ethnic conflicts […] in post-colonial Africa, debilitating ethnic fragmentation” (Alexander, 2001: 150). This severe history is burned in the communal memory and has impeded, for a large amount of the South African inhabitants, the construction of a national, united identity. The identity I would like to focus on in this paper is the one that has been created internally by the subject. When examining the process of rebuilding identity, it will be interesting to see whether the
identity of the subjects at the end of the Apartheid is a sub-national identity or a supra-national identity and whether that will alter throughout the process.

It has already been established that identity is constructed, that “we are not born with an identity”, which is fixed (Alexander, 2001: 148). The starting point of constructing identity is that “[a]ll people want to belong to a larger social unit” (148). How identity is exactly built from there, however, results problematic as “there is no current elegant theory on the construction and elaboration of ethnic identities which may be applied across countries, cultures and continents” (Bekker, 2001: 2). Nevertheless, some factors can be determined that contribute to the construction of identity. According to Harry Garuba, these factors are language, culture, origin, self-identifying within a group, kinship and common inheritance with members of that group and ascription to it by others (Garuba, 2001: 8-9). In consequence, others play an important role in the construction of identity, as one often develops one’s identity with regard to ‘the other’ in order to set oneself apart from ‘the other’. Consequently, when the power relations shift, ‘the other’ can become more or less powerful. As the self is defined against ‘the other’, an alteration of identity takes place along with the shift in power relations. One might observe that throughout South African history, these power shifts often have a political or economical crisis as a basis (Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2001: 76) which frequently result in racial domination. As these periods of racial domination and inequality leave deep marks in ‘the other’s’ metaphorical skin, a mere adaptation of identity results in a genuine identity crisis due to the trauma of being oppressed.

In order to explain this fully, one must first define what trauma is, elaborate on the origin of trauma and gain insight in how traumas are dealt with, as an identity crisis and the process of rebuilding identity often coincides with acquiring a trauma and working through that trauma (LaCapra, 2001: 81). There are several definitions of ‘trauma’. First of all, *Cambridge Dictionaries Online* defines it as follows: a “severe emotional shock and pain caused by an extremely upsetting experience”. The ‘American Psychiatric Association’ has not defined ‘trauma’ but ‘Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder’ (PTSD), “which included the symptoms of what had previously been called shellshock, combat stress, delayed stress syndrome, and traumatic neurosis, and referred to responses to both human and natural catastrophes” (Caruth, 1995: 3).
PTSD might coincide with the process of rebuilding identity, as both follow the traumatic event. The association defines PTSD as follows: “a response to an event ‘outside the range of usual human experience’” (3). Through these definitions, it can be confirmed that, in the case of the lyrical I in LA and the narrator in CMS, it is suitable to speak of a trauma, as what white Afrikaners experience, namely, being cast in the role of perpetrator without having committed crimes and belonging to the privileged and perpetrator group, is an extremely upsetting one, outside the range of the usual human ones.

Prior to examining how a trauma is processed, it might be interesting to elaborate on the fact that the same potentially traumatic event does not cause trauma in every subject that experiences the event. Storr, Ialongo, Anthony and Breslau discovered that there are factors which might increase the risk that a certain subject will acquire a trauma after the potentially traumatic event, while others, who do not possess those factors, are less likely to suffer from PTSD (Storr; Ialongo; Anthony; Breslau, 2007: 119). They discovered that young adults (age approximately 21), “who had been rated by their first grade teacher as having aggressive/disruptive behavior problems” were more likely to come across potentially traumatic events, such as “being mugged/threatened with a weapon, badly beaten-up”. However, for this group of people it would not result in PTSD. Another group, “[y]ouths with high levels of self-rated depressive and anxious feelings in first grade were more likely to experience PTSD, once exposed to” a potentially traumatic event. The last group, “[y]ouths who scored in the highest quartile on a reading test in the first grade were at lower risk for exposure to assaultive violence traumas” (119). This might explain why not all white Afrikaners display an identity crisis, as a result of the trauma that came along with the knowledge of the role their population group played in the Apartheid10.

Once a trauma is acquired, it is in need of processing and, according to LaCapra, this is a process which consists of two stages: ‘acting out’ and ‘working through’. LaCapra took these two concepts “from Freud and from psychoanalysis” (LaCapra, 2001: 141). Acting out, on the one hand, is “related to repetition” (142). It is a stage of reliving the past, of being haunted by the ghosts of the past and for some people even one of living the present as it were still the past (142-3), while “the future is

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10 By extension, this might explain why the lyrical I in DJ does not appear to suffer from trauma.
blocked” (21), as “[t]o be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event” (Caruth, 1995: 4-5). Acting out, according to LaCapra, is a necessary or inevitable stage (LaCapra, 2001: 143). In other words, working through does not happen before a period of acting out has taken place. The event the victims act out or reenact during this phase is the traumatic event which caused the trauma and consequently the PTSD and it is this event that returns after a period of delay (Caruth, 1995: 7). Caruth points out that this traumatic event is not consciously experienced at the moment it occurs (8), but that it is repressed at the moment of impact. She stresses that trauma does not consist in forgetting, but speaks of an inherent latency instead (8). This means that the power of “trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting but that it is only through its inherent forgetting that it is experienced at all”. It is this blankness “what precisely preserves the event in its literality” (8).

In working through, on the other hand, “the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem and to distinguish between past, present, and future” (LaCapra, 2001: 143). It is a stage in which a person can admit “yes that happened to me back then. It was distressing, overwhelming, perhaps I cannot entirely disengage myself from it, but I’m existing here and now, and this is different from back then” (144). It is not forgetting the past but rather coming to terms with the trauma from the past (144). It might be important to note that, although acting out and working through are described as two different stages, they are not “totally different categories, rather it is “a distinction between two interacting processes” (144) that “are intimately related parts of a [larger] process” (143). Also, it might be interesting to mention that not all people who suffer from trauma process it in the same way. There is “a distinct kind of traumatic experience in those for whom the experiences may not be available as flashbacks or simple memories but may be exhibited in more subtle kinds of behavior” (Caruth, 1995: viii) and “[t]hose traumatized by extreme events, […] may resist working through because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma” (LaCapra, 2001: 22). Also, “[p]ossession by the past may never be fully overcome or transcended, and working through may at best enable some distance or critical perspective that is acquired with extreme difficulty and not achieved once and for all” (70).
LaCapra developed his theory on how a trauma is processed by looking into the Holocaust and how its victims deal with the trauma that originated from their experiences during the Holocaust. This theory is applicable to South Africa as well, as similar to the Holocaust, at several times in South African history, one population group was severely disadvantaged by another, causing trauma in the oppressed group, the victims. The most important example is the Apartheid, during which one certain population group i.e. the black population, and even broader, all people of colour, were severely disadvantaged by another population group, i.e. white Afrikaners, causing trauma in the members of the former group that is similar to that experienced by the victims of the Holocaust.

However, it has been generally recognized that trauma can also be encountered in the case of the perpetrator. The example most frequently discussed is the Goldhagen debate. This debate centers around the controversial book by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen: *Hitler’s willing executioners: ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. What is relevant for this paper is that Goldhagen tries “to convey the horror, the gruesomeness, of the events for the perpetrators” (LaCapra, 2001: 117). In other words, “he tries to represent trauma presumably from the perpetrators’ point of view” (117). In order to fulfill this task, he uses “speculations or projections about feelings seemingly ascribed to perpetrators but coming from a […] perspective that is not simply their own” (118). It is an “imputation of what perpetrators must have felt or at times should have felt” (119). An example from Goldhagen’s book follows:

“Some of the Germans, of course, had children walking beside them. It is highly likely that […] these men had previously walked through the woods with their own children by their sides, marching gaily and inquisitively along. […] In these moments, each killer had a personalized, face-to-face relationship to his victim, to his little girl. Did he […] ask himself why he was about to kill this little, delicate human being […]? Did he wonder incredulously what could possibly justify his blowing a vulnerable little girl’s brains out?” (218).

After this excerpt, Goldhagen elaborates on how “gruesome” the killing itself was and indicates how the event of seeing someone’s skull burst open and receiving the blood and bone splinters on your face and clothes must have been a traumatizing event as well (218). Although it remains a question whether the perpetrators really experienced these feelings, there is evidence that for some perpetrators, this might have been a reality, as in Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (held in countries like Argentine, Chile and South Africa) perpetrators seemed to express deep shame and guilt for the
actions they had committed (Irene Wirshing 9). Whether these result fictitious or not remains the question.

In the past, trauma theory seems to have been applied almost exclusively to the trauma displayed in the accounts of victims and perpetrators. What the case of ‘innocent’ white Afrikaners brings to the attention, is that trauma theory has an even broader application since there seems to be a ‘gray zone’, as Primo Levi has stated (Levi, 2009: 36), a range of people that do not belong either to the group of the victims nor to the group of the perpetrators, who display symptoms of trauma. In other words, there might be an additional group to which trauma theory might be applied: the group of ‘innocent’ people belonging to the ethnicity of the perpetrator, in other words the privileged group, who do not commit crimes themselves but still feel guilty for the crimes committed in their name and the privileges they receive at the discomfort of another population group. During the South African Apartheid, this is the group of the ‘innocent’ white Afrikaners. They clearly do not fit into the category of victim as they belong to the perpetrator group, but, as they are ‘innocent’, it would be unjust to denote them by the term perpetrator either. Therefore, it is necessary to go in search of a new term to refer to this group of people throughout this paper.

The first term I would like to consider is one by Levi, who was the first to establish an intermediate group between the category of the victim and the perpetrator and to designate a name to that group. His reason to do so is that he believes that history can never be described in terms of black and white, although, “perhaps for reasons that go back to our origins as social animals, the need to divide the field into ‘we’ and ‘they’ is so strong that this pattern, this bipartition- friend/enemy- prevails over all others” (Levi, 2009: 36-7). Levi has attempted to establish this intermediate group in the second chapter The Gray Zone of his book The Drowned and The Saved. In this text, in which he discusses the situation in the Lager concentration camp during the Holocaust, he creates a third category of people (next to the victim and the perpetrator) which he calls the ‘collaborators’, as he believes that “the network of human relationships inside the Lagers was not simple: it could not be reduced to the two blocs of victims and perpetrators” (37). With this term he refers to the people who performed minor tasks that are generally not considered to be crimes but
nonetheless contribute to the system. These tasks consisted of extracting corpses from
the chambers, pulling gold teeth from jaws, cutting women’s hair, sorting and
classifying clothes, shoes and luggage, transporting bodies to the crematoria etc. (50).
The people performing these tasks were common criminals who were offered these
jobs as an alternative to detention, political prisoners broken by suffering and Jews
who saw this opportunity as “the only possible escape from the ‘final solution’” (47).
Although they were not necessarily committing crimes, they were nonetheless a part
of the system, in other words, la ‘ruedecilla en el engranaje’ (Klenner, 2013: 5).
Therefore, they constitute a different group of people somewhere in between the
categories of victim and the perpetrator. Nonetheless, ‘innocent’ white Afrikaners do
not fit into that category either, indicating that the gray zone between the victim and
the perpetrator is in fact much larger than generally believed.

It is, therefore, essential to use another term to designate ‘innocent’ white Afrikaners.
If one considers another term, such as ‘witness’, again problems emerge. Although
the definition of ‘a witness’ is, according to Cambridge Dictionaries Online, “a
person who sees an event happening, especially a crime or an accident” and this group
of ‘innocent’ white Afrikaners witness the crimes their population group is
committing during Apartheid, this term might not be ideal as it is often used by
authors such as LaCapra to denote a person who is witness to a person with a trauma
(LaCapra, 2001: 97). In other words, a person who suffers from a trauma due to being
confronted by the trauma of someone else, that way adopting the same distress the
trauma victim has. This type of trauma is generally denoted by the term Secondary
Trauma Stress (STS). Therefore, I prefer not to use this term as it would mean treating
‘innocent’ white Afrikaners solely as witnesses of a trauma (in other words trauma
victims) instead of witnesses of the crimes of the Apartheid, while it is the latter
connotation I would like to focus on.

The only term left then, in my opinion, would be ‘bystander’, a term which, according
to Cambridge Dictionary Online, denotes “a person who is standing near and
watching something that is happening but is not taking part in it”. As this term has not
been previously used in the context of trauma it does not evoke the problems
encountered when opting for a term such as ‘witness’. It is a word that has already
been used multiple times in other contexts by authors such as Arne John Vetlesen and
Alicia Tycer. Vetlesen has used the term in his article *A Case for the Responsibility of the Bystander*. In this text, he discusses bystanders to a genocide and distinguishes between different types of bystanders. What he calls a ‘passive bystander’ might be similar to the people I would like to denote in this paper with the term ‘bystander’. He defines the ‘passive bystander’ as follows: “Theirs is a passive role, that of onlookers, although what starts out as a passive stance may, upon decision, convert into active engagement in the events at hand” (Vetlesen, 2000: 520). This definition describes the case of Antjie Krog very well as she ultimately decided to act against the Apartheid\(^\text{11}\). Therefore, the term bystander is definitely applicable in this context.

Tycer has used the term ‘bystander’ as well in her article "*Victim. Perpetrator. Bystander*": *Kane's 4.48 Psychosis* which constitutes an analysis of Kane’s play about the presentation of depression and suicide. She uses the term to refer to more or less the same concept as discussed before, since she defines the audience in Kane’s *4.48 Psychosis* as follows: “the typical, passive audience member can be seen as “bystander,” a position that involves an element of voyeurism and guilt resulting from inaction” (Tycer, 2008: 32). Again a similarity with Antjie Krog can be encountered since she, parallel to the audience in Kane suffers from feelings of guilt, not necessarily due to not having acted, as she did do this (supra), but because of the shame for the crimes committed in her name and the guilt for the fact that it could have been something in her very own Afrikaner culture which led to the Apartheid\(^\text{12}\).

It is obvious that these uses of the term ‘bystander’ do not stand in the way of the use of the term in the context of the ‘innocent’ white Afrikaners but rather contributes to a fuller definition of the word which makes this term even more applicable to this group of people. I will therefore use this term to denote this group and opt for the term ‘bystander trauma’ to refer to the trauma experienced by members of this group.

In conclusion, in order to be able to investigate the literature of Krog in terms of trauma and identity, some concepts had to be explained and demarcated. It can be concluded that identity, on the one hand, can be imposed on a person by others, or

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\(^\text{11}\) In 1970, Antjie Krog decided to write an anti-apartheid poem called Gee vir my 'n land waar swart en wit hand aan hand, vrede en liefde kan bring in my mooi land in her high school magazine (Hettie Scholtz).

\(^\text{12}\) “Was Apartheid the product of some horrific shortcoming in Afrikaner culture […] How do I live with the fact that all the words used to humiliate, all the orders given to kill, belonged to the language of my heart?” (Krog, 1998: 361).
there can be an internal locus of identity. In this paper, I will focus on the latter one. The latter one can be a sub-national identity or a supra-national identity and depends on a number of factors determined by Bekker. In terms of trauma, on the other hand, it is now proven that the narrator and the lyrical I in CMS and LA indeed suffer from trauma. However, not everyone confronted with a potentially traumatic event suffers from trauma. Storr, Ialongo, Anthony and Breslau have determined factors which point to the likelihood someone will acquire a trauma. This might explain why the subject in DJ will not appear to be traumatized. I also elaborated on the concepts of acting out and working through, through which, according to LaCapra, a trauma is dealt with, in order to establish whether the process of rebuilding identity coincides with processing a trauma. Although trauma theory has been developed to refer to the trauma obtained by victims and has been applied to the trauma experienced by some perpetrators, evidence shows that this theory is also applicable to the case of white Afrikaners who can be situated in between the victim and the perpetrator. This indicates that trauma theory might have a larger application than often believed. As there is no term to denote this group of people I argued to denote them with the term ‘bystander’, as the terms ‘collaborator’ and ‘witness’ did not seem ideal. Consequently, I will denote the trauma experienced by this group of people with the term ‘bystander trauma’. With these concepts in mind, it will be possible to explore the process of working through trauma and rebuilding identity for white Afrikaners in Krog’s literature.
3. Analysis of Antje Krog’s *Dogter van Jefta, Lady Anne and Country of my Skull*

**Introduction**

In order to gain more insight in how traumas are processed, it is interesting to look at literature, as looking into “a variety of disciplines can contribute to the ongoing work on trauma” (Caruth, 1995: ix). In the oeuvre of Krog, it can be confirmed that what LaCapra stated in *Writing History, Writing trauma*, namely, that “traumas might […] be seen as posing the problematic question of identity”, is in fact true, as a process of rebuilding identity is present in some of her work. However, one has to keep in mind that posing the question of one’s identity is not always a result of an acquired trauma, but can be a healthy reconsideration of one’s place in society. In my opinion, it is only when one realizes that one cannot go on living life as one has been doing in the past, without posing the question of the self, one’s believes and one’s place in society, the identity crisis can be considered a result of trauma. As the Apartheid is a recurrent theme and the question of identity is often posed in Krog’s work, her literature is ideal for examining the process of rebuilding identity that accompanies trauma for the white Afrikaner population. In this chapter, I will therefore look at the two poetry volumes *DJ* and *LA* and examine the autobiographical prose title *CMS*, with the aim of laying bare the instances of and progress in formulating a new identity and working through the trauma, if the reconsideration of identity results from one. This way, it will be possible to determine, in the next chapter, the stages through which bystander trauma and the process of rebuilding identity that results from it are being worked through. I will dedicate greater attention to the autobiographical work, as it is the most interesting in this respect.

**Analysis of *Dogter van Jefta***

In the volume *DJ*, which treats a lot of different topics that all deal with the identity of the lyrical I, there is one poem that clearly takes the Apartheid as a subject, i.e. *Buite Ninevé* (Krog, 1970: 16). In this poem, it becomes clear that her preoccupation with the matter leads her to questioning her identity, as the lyrical I tries to position herself in the multi-coloured society. She does this through a comparison between the country of South Africa (and its inhabitants) and a certain ‘boompie’. Although it has

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13 This brings to mind the article by Storr, Ialongo, Anthony, Breslau, which proved that the same potentially traumatic event does not cause trauma in every subject that experiences the event, but determined that it depends on the possession or not of certain factors.

14 In the first poem Krog ever published, the one that made her famous, she already revealed her stance on the Apartheid and her willingness to use her poetry to come up for the rights of the black population group, as the lyrical I said: “Gee vir my ‘n land waar swart en wit hand aan hand vrede en liefde kan bring in my mooi land” (Hettie Scholtz).
been argued by Conradie that “die Afrikaanse taal vergelijk word met ‘n klein boompie”’ (Botha, 2011: 47), I agree with Botha that this interpretation “oortuig nie heeltemal nie” (47). Botha believes that Grouws might be more likely correct stating that it refers to “die digter se volk” (47). I agree with this to a certain extent. I believe that the ‘boompie’ does not only represent the people of South Africa but also, the country as a whole during the Apartheid regime, including its inhabitants. In my opinion, this can be proven by the following verses: “‘n klein boompie met aparte wit dorings met ‘n klein Europa in sy Afrika” (Krog, 1970: 16). Using the word ‘apart’, she indirectly refers to the Apartheid itself and the inequality in the country, in my opinion, represented by the ‘boompie’, that, next to the brown parts of its trunk, has ‘aparte’ ‘witdorings’, that have another status. This raises the question of who the lyrical I is and whether she wants to be an ‘aparte witdoring’. She says that “[d]ié wat in jou koelte sit, sing nie vir jou nie, dié wat jou sade pluk, gee jou nie water nie”, but she concludes with the words “[é]k sal vir jou liedjies maak, my boompie ek sal vir jou bid” and “ek bly jóu doring ek bly wit” (16). In other words, this poem clearly indicates a true love of the lyrical I for her country and a hope that the problems it has will be overcome. At the same time, the lyrical subject clearly confirms her place and identity as white within a multi-coloured society. This means that the identity she formulates is a sub-national identity (Simon Bekker, 2001: 3), defining herself against the other. However, at the same time, she indicates that although society claims she is different and belongs to an ‘apart’ part of society – an identity that has been posed on her and has led her to defining herself like that as well – she is willing to help others reconsider this position, as she wants to take care of the ‘boompie’ that is decaying due to a lack of care (symbolic of a country which is decaying as well, due to poor morals). Although the Apartheid has made her reconsider her identity, there are no signs yet that the lyrical I is coping with trauma. Rather, it is a poem in which the lyrical I seems to rethink her identity in relation to the Apartheid in a healthy way.

**Analysis of Lady Anne**

In *LA*, this theme is also present. In fact, it is predominant. This literary work is initiated by a collage of article snippets and quotes concerning the present state of the country and its rule, which shows the lyrical I’s obsession with the matter. Examples are: “die vrijheid zal in Afrika rijzen als de zon uit de morgenwolken”, “waar die lande verdeeld is op grond van stamme, waar daar dikwels militêre ingripping is […] [d]ie enigste bestendigheid lê by die groot maatskappye wat die land uitbuit” and “[t]he
grave will render all alike [s]o, if only in our lifetime, let us be various” (Krog, 1989: 8). It is a time in which the lyrical I is angry because “die soveelste politieke rusie tussen familie” is taking place and every word one utters is politically charged. It is a time in which “selfs die woord mikrogolfoond” has “gealaaid status” and “die vraag wie drink koffie wit of swart” is “n finale keuze” (34). Because of these events, the subject feels obligated to recapture her identity (which might indicate that a traumatic experience, her place and role during the Apartheid, preceded the identity crisis) and in order to do so she relies on one of the most famous early European settlers in South Africa: Lady Anne Barnard, who travelled to South Africa accompanied by her husband Andrew Barnard, a man without a function who had lost his money due to mismanagement. Lady Anne was appointed colonial secretary by Henry Dundas and is often considered the first female South African writer (ODNB). The lyrical I says “ek wou ’n tweede lewe deur jou leef Lady Anne Barnard” (Krog, 1989: 40), she wants to embark on a journey in search of her roots and identity with Lady Anne as a guide and wants to sing the praises of that person. She introduces this aim by saying:

[wjees] gegroet Lady Anne Barnard!
U lewe wil ek besing en akkoorde
daaruit haal vir die wysie van ons kwart.
Ek knieval, buig en soen u hand:
wees u my gids, ek – u benarde bard (16).

Therefore, the lyrical I creates a collection of poems in which she impersonates Lady Anne and comments on every detail of the latter’s life. However, in between the subject decides to return to her former self again, in order to insert parts of her own life and to comment on Lady Anne’s biographical events she sung about in the previous poems. From time to time, the lyrical I enters in a crisis situation (which again is characteristic of dealing with trauma), e.g. when she says:

uit jou briewe kom jy voor my staan:
hand in die sy as ligsinnige dwaas pen
in ink geslepe snob naïewe liberal
deur die nikswerd aan jou sy van standpunt verwen
gearriveer met jou hele frivole lewe sit ek nou berserk
met jou op my lessenaar: as metafoor is jy fòkol werd (40).

15 However, I believe that a trauma is not necessarily obtained through one traumatic event, but can in some cases be caused by a series of possible traumatic experiences - in this case the ongoing distress which accompanies the realization of one’s place in a society under the Apartheid regime - that slowly builds up until a climax is reached, a moment in which one realizes that one’s identity has to be reconsidered in order to go on with one’s former life, which in this bundle seems to be the case.
The lyrical subject also comments on the process of writing itself in this bundle. She critiques the fact that it is expected of writers that they “anders is as ander tekstproduceerders”, and that they “vooraan die ‘struggle’ moet moes”. She also stresses that writing “is not an attempt to escape reality but the opposite, an attempt to animate it” (60). In other words, the identity crisis the lyrical I expressed, possibly triggered by the tensions because of the debate centring around the Apartheid she expressed earlier, the one she wanted to solve through impersonating and singing the praise of Lady Anne, is not an escape from reality, rather, it is her way of trying to accept it and work through it, which could indicate that a trauma is being worked through.

She starts to build her new identity by asking who she is, detached from the Apartheid. Primarily, she is a “digter” and a “mens” and in the presence of her husband, “sneuvel ek [the lyrical I] tot vrou” (73). On this level, she is working through and gaining a new identity, coming to peace with who she is. This can be seen in the fact that she arranges the poetry volumes “alfabeties”, she used to organize “emosioneel” (69). She now finds a place for herself as a poet within the oeuvre of other Afrikaner authors such as Jonker and Opperman by arranging her poetry next to theirs on her shelf. However, at this point, she is still avoiding the question of who she is and where she should place herself within the Apartheid but is starting to regain her identity on other levels.

Although she previously claimed that rebuilding her identity through a personification of Lady Anne is not a way to escape reality, she does not immediately seem to make progress concerning finding her place in a society dominated by the Apartheid regime. Instead, she postpones having to pose that question by comparing her love life with that of Lady Anne, the hard events of life which sometimes put a strain on the relationship, despite the great love she harbours for him. She wonders: “wat hét van jou geword jy wat myne is” (77). These poems incorporate a lot of references to coming of age, as well16, which might indicate that the process of rebuilding identity is a difficult one which requires years in order to be worked through.

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16 Her hair turns grey “op 35” and she says that she is “op pad na de middeljare” (Krog, 1989:72)
Later, she admits to having postponed the question of identity in relation to the Apartheid. In a snippet at the side of a poem she writes that she travels “nie agter jou [Lady Anne] aan op soek na myself [the lyrical I]” but that she “reis om weg te kom van diéself” (96). Realizing this, the lyrical I finally decides to start the painful process of reconsidering her place in society. Her motivation for starting this process seems to be her children. The following lines: “net vir my kinders lê ek my lewe neer”, “hier leer ek skryf – ek kan nie anders nie” (91), might be interpreted as the lyrical I realizing that she does not want her children to grow up believing in a world in which there is no freedom nor equality. It might be argued that she wants to write in order to create a new identity for her but primarily for them, which detaches them from the horrible events of the Apartheid, as these lines are used to end a poem in which she tries to recreate the alphabet in a non-discriminative way. At the beginning of that poem she states: “[a]s jy A sê moet jij B sê/ A is altyd teen apartheid/ B is blind vir kleur” (91). This way, the poem is a crucial one for the lyrical I in formulating a new identity. She wants to foster one in which black and white are equal.

Talking about slavery while impersonating Lady Anne, who strongly opposed to how brutally slaves were treated and who dedicated part of her life to fighting against it (ODNB), makes her compare the situation to the Apartheid, grasping the cruelty of the situation. While in Lady Anne’s mindset, she says “die slavinne ontrou bevind word deur Telemachus in trosse gebind, soos duiwe geryg aan snoere” (Krog, 1989: 81). The lyrical I defends the slaves just as Lady Anne used to do in her letters: “die slawe werk vir karkoere, word straffeloos mishandle, terwyl grootbek mans boerdanse op gavotewysies dans!” (85). Words such as ‘karkoere’ and ‘grootbek’, show her true disgust towards slavery and its masters. This makes her want to distinguish herself and her identity from everything associated with the Afrikaner culture even more, although she believes, like Lady Anne, that despite the fact that “[d]ie stam van die vryheidsboom” will be chopped down, “kort voor lank sal sy helder takke wyer as ooit oor die aarde rank” (81).

She also admits that she feels guilty in ‘n Gedig oor skuld. In this ‘gedig’, she describes guilt for crimes she herself did not commit but were performed by other members of her population group. She portrays her guilt as a bystander as follows.

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She starts by referring to original sin in the verse “met SKULD gebore”, but extends that guilt to another level, namely the guilt she experiences by being a bystander during the Apartheid: “*namens* huis en haard: HET jy baie, SKULDIG te voel” (98). In other words, because of where you come from, where you grew up (huis en haard), you have to feel guilty because you belong to the population group that disadvantages another. “[*N*amens hulle]” is she “SKULDIG” (99).

In the concluding poem of the volume, it can clearly be seen that after analyzing her place in the Apartheid state, she, for the benefit of her children, wants to detach herself entirely from her own Afrikaner culture in order not to be associated with the cruelties anymore. She starts the poem with “hy wat versuim om sy lewe en dié se plek noukeurig te ondersoek, et die Skrywer van sy verhaal gefaal” (107). In other words, she fulfilled her purpose as a writer to question her identity and place in society. However, the result is bitter. She concludes the poem saying that this “gedig is die afskeid aan jou […] en jou se soort” (108). The last part of this line is repeated twice in order to emphasize this detachment from her former culture. This points to a traumatized person who is not able to live with the truth as it is, who cannot go on living with the knowledge that she is one of ‘them’. A new identity is created at the end, but one that leaves a bitter taste. Although a new identity has been fashioned, she has not worked through the trauma. Instead, it might be argued that the lyrical I continues to live in a state of denial, even after deliberately detaching herself from the character of Lady Anne, a character which was in a way a means to escape reality. Even while being herself again and no longer impersonating someone else, she can still not be claimed to live in full acceptance of reality. This brings to mind the observation by LaCapra that “[t]hose traumatized by extreme events, […] may resist working through because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma” (LaCapra, 2001: 22).

**Analysis of Country of My Skull**

In CMS, the narrator accounts her experiences as a journalist at the ‘Truth and Reconciliation Commission’ (TRC) (Krog, 1998: 21). For some people, this abbreviation could stand for ‘Trauma Recovery Centre’ as well, this way denoting the function of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the same abbreviation (LaCapra 43). This commission was founded with the aim of restoring memory. Evidently, questions were raised as to why they did not opt for punishing the people...
responsible for the crimes against humanity instead of offering amnesty (Krog, 1998: 35). First of all, it is argued that “[t]his clause, which stated that amnesty would be given, made the elections possible” (vii). Secondly, it is said that “[p]eople demanding punitive justice are ignoring the greater justice a new morality could bring – a shared morality – freed from colonialism, oppression and greed” (27). The narrator argues that “[i]f it [the Commission] sees truth as the widest possible compilation of people’s perceptions, stories, myths and experiences, it will have chosen to restore memory and foster a new humanity, and perhaps that is justice in its deepest sense” (23). However, for the white Afrikaners present, this commission meant being confronted with the past and having to recognize the crimes their population group has committed. Therefore, this commission constitutes for them the beginning of a trauma that results in an identity crisis and a strenuous search for a new one. It is the process of working through that trauma and that way the process of rebuilding identity for the narrator and other white Afrikaners expressed in this book, I intend to explore below.

It sometimes appears difficult to determine when exactly a trauma is acquired, as it often results from a series of events building towards a culmination point instead of a single event. In this book, this is the case. In the beginning of the book, the narrator suffers from severe feelings of guilt, due to the knowledge of what happened in the past, a guilt that is not only experienced by her but that is a “collective guilt”, endured by a large part of the white Afrikaners (26). However, she does not yet seem to display symptoms of trauma. As a result of the guilt, she is obsessed with making sure that every detail at the conference is right. First of all, she wonders: “[w]hat kind of people should serve on the Commission, what kind of contribution can the candidate bring to the process of reconciliation and truth” (24) because “[h]ow impartial can a person be who lost both hands in a bomb attack” (29). Secondly, she is concerned with how the Commission is called. “We also insist on the use of ‘Truth Commission’ rather than ‘TRC’ which would conceal the essence of the Commission behind a meaningless abbreviation” (48). In short, focusing on perfection seems to be her way of dealing with that guilt. It can be argued that this strong involvement has a therapeutic effect for the white Afrikaners, one that helps them deal with the excessive feelings of guilt in the form of making partially right what has been done
wrong. This can be seen in the intense feeling of happiness that stems from it: “[w]e lift our fists triumphantly. We’ve done it!” (48).

The first signs that a trauma has been acquired seem to occur a few days into the conference. The reader can clearly perceive the narrator’s grief and distress, and that of other white Afrikaners present at the conference, grow as the days go by (which could support the theory that a trauma can result from a series of events rather than one). “Water covers our cheeks and we cannot type. Or think” (44). At the daily press conferences they end up “bewildered and close to tears at the feet of Archbishop Tutu” (48). During the testimonies, she starts writing poems, documenting her grief:

dare I sit in this grape dark
during this return journey where my body is overcome
by grief my heart coagulate resigned
Write I – a blue slit against this all (53).

“After three days a nervous breakdown was diagnosed” (54), which might be a sign that the trauma has been fully acquired. From this point onwards, she feels that she cannot get rid of the past anymore and it starts to haunt her: “Week after week, from one faceless building to another, from one dusty, godforsaken town to another, the arteries of our past bleed their own particular rhythm, tone and image. One cannot get rid of it. Ever” (55). “After five years without cigarettes”, she starts smoking again (55) and the trauma starts interfering with her work: “In the second week of hearings, I do a Question and Answer with an actuality programme. I stammer. I freeze. I am without language. I put the receiver down, and think: resign” (55). Furthermore, she starts to feel not at ease in places that ought to be the most relaxing and familiar: her own home. She feels alienated from her own family (71) and starts to experience contradictory feelings: “I can talk about nothing but the Truth Commission. Yet I don’t talk about it at all” (71). Furthermore, she starts to react in a way inappropriate to the situation such as beginning to laugh during a testimony, which forces her to take a few weeks off (71-2). She does not appear to be the only one showing trauma symptoms. Some of the attending white Afrikaners start having health problems such as bronchitis, pneumonia etc. (71). The narrator’s health seems to suffer from the trauma as well: “my hair is falling out. My teeth are falling out. I have rashes” (74). These problems might have been acquired due to environmental circumstances, but can be argued to originate from the high dose of stress trauma sufferers experience as well.
This trauma causes the sufferers, in this case the bystanders, to severely question their identity. An ex-South African who now works in America says: “I was a political journalist at the SABC – it was I who would remove the voice of someone like Archbishop Tutu from reports and insert sinister background music”, “I was eventually fired for my left-wing political views … what does that make me” (21)? Furthermore, finding and rebuilding identity is often complicated by how others perceive them. “Nadine Gordimer once asked a black writer: ‘Why do you always picture a white woman lounging next to a swimming pool? We are not all like that!’ He replied: ‘Because we perceive you like that’” (22). Another example comes from the narrator herself. When she “was still a lecturer at a training college for black teachers, a young comrade arrived”. He refused to enter her class and “called Afrikaans a colonial language” (23). Finally, an observation uttered by Kondlo affects white Afrikaners where it hurts the most.

Whites […] have no compassion. Look at this poor guy Webber who lost his left arm […]. Why does he come alone every day? All the black victims are accompanied by their families and people from their communities. And Webber? Is it because he really has no one in the world, or is it because whites do not care about each other (66)?

These generalizations and stereotypes uttered by blacks challenge the identities of whites even more, making the progress towards a new identity an even harder struggle, as inscription to a group by others is one of the factors according to which one builds one’s identity (Garuba, 2001: 8-9).

It could be that the feelings of guilt have transformed in a true trauma because it is only now, hearing the testimonies at the TRC, that the Afrikaners realize the full extent of the acts of members of their population group. Before, they knew the type of crimes that had been committed, but, being confronted with the personal testimonies of the victims, they were able to identify with them. Seeing and hearing those heartbreaking stories will have greatly intensified the feeling of guilt. This, combined with the endless number of accounts, illustrating the enormous extent of the crimes, might have been the series of events which culminated in the trauma.

However, some characters in the book seem to suggest that the trauma is not one rising out of guilt, but that it is a case of secondary witness trauma (55), which can also be denoted by the term ‘Secondary Trauma Stress’ (STS), a trauma that often
occurs to people listening to the accounts of the victims and writing about the traumatic experiences, such as journalists or historians (LaCapra, 2001: 97). Sufferers of that type of trauma experience the same distress the victims did during the traumatic event, feeling as if they themselves have experienced these events (Krog, 1998: 55). Nonetheless, I believe there are several signs in the book which indicate that the trauma she suffers from is not a trauma due to secondary witnessing but as a result of guilt. First of all, Afrikaner journalists seem to have a much harder time dealing with the testimonies than journalists originating from other countries. In the words of a Belgian journalist: “South African journalists keep on bursting into tears all around me in the Hall” (49). If the journalists were suffering from secondary witness trauma, the foreign journalists would have experienced the same distress the Afrikaners suffered from. The fact that this is not the case might indicate that Afrikaners, hearing the testimonies about the crimes committed by their population group, are confronted with intense feelings of guilt – which does not happen with journalists from other nationalities as they do not feel responsible – and that this is the true origin of the trauma. Furthermore, the lyrics of the song sung by Tutu also indicates that her trauma stems from feelings of guilt due to being a bystander and having the same skin colour as the perpetrator. Although the song refers to the black population of South Africa: “What have we done, our only sin is the colour of our skin”, the fact that she “cried with such a sense of loss and despair” she “could hardly breathe” (64), might show she herself identifies with the song and feels intense guilt for being an innocent bystander.  

Although the TRC seems to be the last step towards acquiring a full trauma, it is at the same time a necessary step in moving towards the process of working through. They first have to relive all the events of the past and get to know the details of that horrific past, before it is possible to start working through the trauma. It is only when they have obtained the full picture of what happened and understand why it is they had to rebuild their identity, it becomes possible to know what to incorporate in that new identity as “[i]dentity is memory” and “[i]dentities forged out of half-remembered

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17 It might also be argued that this scene supports the theory that she is suffering from a secondary witness trauma. However, the fact that black people do not seem moved anymore (Krog, 1998: 61) by the song and it are only the attendants of white colour who are in distress might show that in this case it is not an adoption of the grief presented in front of them.

18 However, determining where acting out ends and working through is complicated due to the great amount of relapses. This might be due to the fact that the two are, in the words of LaCapra, “interacting processes” (LaCapra, 2001: 144).
things or false memories easily commit transgressions” (36). However, obtaining this new identity appears to be a difficult struggle characterized by relapses and the different Afrikaner characters seem to deal with the trauma in various ways.

A lot of white Afrikaners initially try to cope with the trauma by drinking “deep gulps of neat brandy. Others calm themselves with neatly rolled dagga zoletjies” (71). These ways seem not productive and will probably not help these bystanders to evolve towards learning to live with the trauma and incorporating the events in a new identity. The narrator seems to have different, more adequate, ways of dealing with the trauma. Writing and this way getting everyone acquainted with the events occurring at the conference seems to be one of her ways of making peace with and working through the past. Making sure that everybody is aware of the past and takes up their responsibility seems to reduce her feeling of guilt. This can be seen in her preoccupation with assuring even the people wanting to avoid hearing about the conference will still be confronted with it:

Instinctively, one knew that some people would deliberately cut themselves off from the Truth Commission process. And it would be quite possible to do so, by reading nothing about it. But very few people escape news bulletins – even the music stations have a lunchtime news report. So it is crucial to us that the Commission and its narratives be captured as fully as possible on ordinary news bulletins (46).

However, this determination to write at some point leads to a moment of personal crisis for the narrator: “No poetry should come from this. May my hand fall off if I write this. […] If I write this, I exploit and betray. If I don’t write this, I die” (74). Although she needs to write in order to cope with events happening in her life, her usual way of dealing with those events does not appear to be an option anymore, as she probably feels nothing beautiful should be made abusing such tragic events in the process. She might feel guilty for taking advantage of other people’s misery and using it for her own profit as a writer.

Another way she deals with the trauma during the testimonies of the victims is analyzing the way in which the crimes were committed by the people of her population group. This way, the events might feel less threatening and it might be that a sense of being able to prevent similar events from happening is acquired from analyzing those events, which might help them deal with the trauma, as it gives them a sense of control. For example, they discuss “interacting and contesting spaces” (62):
“He invades her privacy, he sits on her bed – something only very intimate guests or children would usually do. While he’s sitting there, he threatens her husband. Then she reclaims her space: you can do this and say that, she says … but you will not sit on my bed” (59).

She also hints that she will be forgiven for being a bystander once the perpetrators will have received amnesty after the TRC, as she claims that without reconciliation there can be no progress (54). The meaning of ‘progress’ in this context can then be seen as twofold: the progress of her country and the progress of working through the trauma. However, when the perpetrators testify, in the second part of the Commission, the forgiveness she was hoping for, for playing the role of the bystander during the Apartheid, is brought in jeopardy when she realizes the TRC does not bring truth, rather the illusion of truth (84). She claims that for the people responsible, it is an “Operation Shut Up and Deny” (85). Therefore, she starts to attend the hearings of the second part of the Commission adopting a very hostile attitude saying the accounts of the perpetrators “had better be powerful. Had better display integrity. And it had better bring acute personal detail, grief and bewilderment” (84). Her hatred towards the perpetrators, who pushed her into this situation, is very clear: “One has actually forgotten how they look: Their clipped snorretjies, the shifty eyes, the arrogant circumnavigation of questions” (86).

Because of the fact that this part of the Commission does not bring what she had hoped for, sincere accounts which could bring reconciliation for the perpetrators as well as herself, that could be used as the basis of a new start and a new country, she becomes more and more disillusioned. Even hearing her own language becomes painful and shocking: “I have forgotten the worst: the brutal Afrikaner accent and the unflinching tone” (86). At a certain point, due to the reading of the book *Reconciliation through truth* by Kader Asmal, she realizes that “the Truth Commission will not be able to fulfill its implicit mandate to create a new moral order, if it does not make a distinction between those who fought against the Apartheid and those who defended it (87). This way being completely disillusioned, she is no longer concerned with the arrangements and making everything is done perfectly in order to restore memory and achieve truth and reconciliation. When the judges are worrying about the seating arrangements, stating that with your seating
arrangements, “[y]ou project a symbolic message” (89), she writes, “[o]ut of pure boredom” (89), a mock news report on “how the learned judges now have the same problem as an uninitiated hostess on a Saturday evening” (89). This scene clearly indicates her complete disillusionment and disbelief in the capacity of the Commission. The steps she took concerning working through the trauma by analyzing and writing about the Commission are lost again and one can speak of a large relapse in the process of working through the trauma and rebuilding her identity.

The narrator decides to start over in the following chapter, analyzing different versions of the same murder. In this process she observes that no matter how different the versions, somehow they connect (131). It could be argued that, this way, she is gradually regaining belief in the TRC. Even though sometimes lies are told, the truth can rise out of the analysis of a collection of versions treating the same event. In other words, the TRC might fulfil its function of reducing the guilt experienced by white Afrikaner bystanders and working through the trauma after all. However, dealing with trauma is a tough process that, as discussed before, is often characterized by relapses. In reasoning with herself on this subject, she encounters a new one. Just when she reached a breakthrough – realizing that analyzing the accounts for an academic purpose helps one live with what her people did – she poses herself a question which makes her beliefs shudder again: “[w]hat is ‘academic’ about the attempt by everyone involved to avoid responsibility” (133)? This realization restores the guilt that might have been reduced by the previous one, as she now feels obliged to take on the responsibility for the acts of the perpetrators. If the perpetrators do not take it and receive amnesty, she herself will not be excused. Therefore, she takes on the culpability of her people, in order to make right for the victims, as only when that wish has been fulfilled, she will be able to partially dispose of the guilt and consequently the trauma. However, this wish gets further complicated by the fact that perpetrators who do take responsibility for their acts and ask for forgiveness are not granted that forgiveness by the families of the diseased victims, “they shake their heads and say they don’t accept it” (139). However, realizing that reconciliation will not take place after all, she does recognize that the TRC has achieved a good thing as well: “[b]ecause of these narratives, people can no longer indulge in their separate dynasties of denial” (134), a realization which does help her process of working through the trauma along.
Nonetheless, the intense hatred she experiences against the perpetrators continues:

It’s them! […] I go cold with recognition. That specific salacious laughter, that brotherly slap
on the hairy shoulder, that guffawing circle, using a crude yet idiomatic Afrikaans. […] The
Afrikaner *manne*. […] The nightmare of my youth. The bullies with their wives – the chatty
women with the impressive cleavages and well-behaved children. The moustached men who,
for decades, turned life on the platteland into a spiralling inferno of destruction, brutalization
and fear (134).

She finds herself “overcome with anger” (135), because she knows that “they were
the doers. Killing, for them, was not dressed in the official pastels of ‘eliminate’,
‘remove’ or ‘take out’. […] Their task was to murder” (135). She literally states it is
because of them that she is in this ‘mess’ (135). It is them who have driven her
towards this guilt she does not deserve. The trauma and the realization of being
pushed into this situation leads her to wanting to distance herself (135). It hauled her
into an identity crisis, as she utters “I am not of them” (135), meaning, I am not a
member of the same people. She not only wants to create an identity for herself in
which she is dissociated from those other members of her people, on top of that, she
intends to encounter outward physical signs that they are different. With that aim, she
looks at “their hands, their fingernails, in their eyes, on their lips”, for signs that they
are “The Other” (135).

Her anger with the perpetrators is reduced when she sees the human in them (144).
Maybe being encountered with their vulnerability she again recognizes them as
members of her own population group and now sees them as people who made
mistakes. It seems like she no longer wants to create an identity in which she belongs
to another group than the one the perpetrators immerge from. However, caring for
these men, no longer designating them as ‘the other’ and including them as part of her
heritage in her own identity (145), confuses her even more. She states: “What do I do
with this? They are as familiar as my brothers, my cousin, my school friends” (144).

Furthermore, her feelings of guilt and responsibility – and consequently her identity
crisis – are transferred through her newspaper articles to her reading public, generally
white Afrikaner bystanders. They start to accuse her of suggesting “that all Afrikaners
are murderers”. One argues: “I have nothing to do with all of this. I live on a farm in
Hofmeyr and I will not allow you to make me an accomplice” (145) and tells the
narrator not to include him or her in her ‘us’ (146). Consequently, the narrator almost transmits her trauma onto other white Afrikaner bystanders who did not cope with strong feelings of guilt and could still distance themselves from the perpetrators.

As the physical symptoms of a trauma continue and are recognized as trauma related by a doctor (146), she starts to explore whether others might cope with the same problems, i.e. collective guilt, as the doctor points out (146). When she realizes that others who attend the TRC do not share that same feeling of guilt she appears not to be able to cope with that. She admits to losing control in the following lines: “My last reserves desert me. I walk up to him. I push my hand in his face” (147). The reason she was overcome with anger is that she believes that it is their duty to take responsibility for the act of the perpetrators, as they committed the crimes in their (i.e. white Afrikaners in general) name: “They all say they did the dirty work for you and for me. And all of us are trying to deal with that, with the responsibility of that, with the guilt of such a claim … and where are you” (147)? She probably feels they are obliged to feel guilt and that it is not morally correct if they do not. As long as she feels like this, no progress in working through the trauma is possible. She refuses to recognize that it was because of the ANC white Afrikaners obtained collective guilt and the subsequent trauma as her colleague argues: “You have fallen hook, line and sinker for the ANC’s attempts to put the blame on the Afrikaner” (147). A possible explanation could be that she feels she has to recognize the ANC as pure good, as it constitutes the basis of the new society. If this basis is lost, no hope is left for achieving a new country that is no longer reigned by racial categories. As a consequence of not finding others she can share her feelings with, she feels that “they have been left on their own to deal with what they hear” (147). They are “on their own with their own fears and shame and guilt” (149).

As a result of the guilt that accompanies being a white Afrikaner, she starts to reconsider her childhood, her family and consequently her culture in an attempt to work through the trauma. She thinks of her mother and how she “was brought up” by her “with what is the best and the proudest in the Afrikaner” (148). In addition, she starts to “wonder about the responsibility of a Leader” (148). She asks herself: “Shouldn’t he be establishing a space within which we can confront ourselves and our past? Shouldn’t he bring to the table the Afrikaner’s blunt honesty and fearlessness to
grapple with the impossible” (148)? This way, she is looking for a framework through which she can formulate a new identity and come to terms with her past as she asks herself: “Is truth that closely related to identity? It must be. What you believe to be true depends on who you believe yourself to be” (149). This realization allows her to create a new identity, a new truth she is able to live with: “We are deeply ashamed and gripped with remorse. But hear us, we are from here. We will live it right – here – with you, for you” (149).

However, as this newly found basis upon which to build a new identity is based entirely on what the TRC should do, i.e. make right for the horrible past, this basis shatters when her belief in the TRC as an organ that can achieve reconciliation is challenged once again. This occurs in the following chapter entitled “Reconciliation: The Lesser of Two Evils” (164). In this chapter, the narrator, as already indicated by the title, takes part in a heated discussion on whether or not the TRC can achieve reconciliation. When she finally grows on the idea that the achievement of reconciliation is possible, she encounters a problem in her reasoning. The analogy that was used to confirm the TRC’s effectiveness “raises the difficult question: Is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission then the equivalent of the symbolic Ossewa Trek of 1938 – a tool to create a particular nationalism rather than a new South African identity” (170)? A second way in which her belief in the TRC as an organ that can guide white Afrikaners towards a new identity, leaving behind the trauma they acquired through forgiving the perpetrator and offering help to the victims, is challenged, is when she discovers the following. “Of the twelve amnesty applications, seven were awarded. All seven are black ANC members. Of the five who were refused, four are white” (178). These realizations indicate that the TRC is no longer a valid basis for working through the trauma and formulating a new identity and that she should better find another basis. In addition, it shows that the road towards forgiveness for her population group and by extension for the narrator herself is still long. Nonetheless, other white Afrikaners appear to use the TRC with the same aim as well, to reduce their guilt by taking responsibility. To them: “the amnesty process has become more than what was acquired by law. It has become the only forum where

19 As discussed earlier, she feels that she will be forgiven when the perpetrators of her population group are forgiven. Earlier, she recognized this as a condition for being able to lose the trauma and encounter a new identity.
South Africans can say: We may not have committed a human rights abuse, but we want to say that what we did – or didn’t do – was wrong and that we’re sorry” (184).

Although taking the TRC as a basis for working through and rebuilding identity has proved unsuccessful, she does not have another solution yet and keeps on investing her hopes in the Commission. This leads to complete disillusionment and physical symptoms of distress when the testimony of De Klerk ruptures what everyone hopes to take out of the commission. The narrator earlier expressed her wishes that the perpetrators had better shown grief and remorse (84). Instead, De Klerk does not show respect as he “sits deeply sunken in his chair” (191) and does not utter the words of regret everybody was hoping for, but instead, beats around the bush, irritating everybody present. Realizing his account breaks down her hope of forgiveness and ever finding a place in the new society, she sobs for air. At her feet “is a swimming pool” (191). She asks someone to help her “make sense of De Klerk” (191), as it is the only way for her to get out of this state of distress. She utters: “If they give up on De Klerk and the Afrikaner, then how can they expect the rest of the country to live with us” (191)? This remark on her part indicates that the TRC still constitutes for her the basis of her recovery. Constand Viljoen points out to her that she is not alone in coping with these feelings and that type of distress. He says: “the Afrikaner can in no way detach himself from the past. […] The Afrikaner feels disempowered, unsafe, his language is threatened, his educational structures are in pieces – in short, the Afrikaner feels flooded by the majority and he has nowhere to turn” (192). “When De Klerk walked out”, not having come across in the way Afrikaners needed in order to move on, all hope faded for her. In her own words, “it was as if something slipped through my fingers for ever” (194). She feels as if they, white Afrikaners, have been left dangling as she utters:

Speechless I stand before the Archbishop. Whence will words now come? For us. We who hang quivering and ill from this soundless space of Afrikaner past? […] What the hell does one do with the load of decrowned skeletons, origins, shame and ash (194)?

For her, that was “the day the ‘Big Dip’ began. The Day of the Undeniable Divide. One moment it was the closest, the next moment the farthest apart that people in this country have ever been” (194). She has no hope anymore of ever creating a place for herself in society and creating an identity in which she, as a white woman is entirely equal to the black population. Others as well began to wonder about “the impossibility of the process, the futility of the dream of reconciliation” (194). All her
faith in ever contesting a place for herself and her population group in this country is lost. This country will never again be hers as she utters the words of complete disillusionment: “What we have hoped for, will never be” (194). She yearns “for another life” (195). She is back at the bottom, where she started. “People thought that the Truth Commission would be this quick fix” (195), but it appeared not to be. For the white population, the belief in the capacity of the Truth Commission has entirely disappeared. A columnist writes: “Reject the Truth Commission with the disgust it deserves – on untested evidence it tries to portray the Afrikaner as the icon of all evil. Untested evidence has become the truth of the ‘boerehaters’” (196).

Nonetheless, evidence starts to rise that the narrator is finding a way to put the events of the previous days into perspective and evolve, however slowly and not without relapses, towards a belief that it is possible, through the Commission, to find a place in the new society and by extension, create a new identity accordingly. She realizes that “De Klerk was nothing more nor less than a politician looking for a forum to sort out tensions in his own ranks”. In addition, it is brought to her attention that “the Commission has enough evidence on De Klerk” and that “[h]e will eat his words” (197) which should convince her of the fact that the aims of the Commission will be fulfilled after all and that the behaviour of De Klerk will not be able to alter that. However, she is not entirely convinced and, therefore, turns to her Jewish colleagues in order to interrogate them on the events that occurred during the second world war, to see if forgiveness for her people is truly possible. The impending answer would be so hard to hear that she does not dare to ask them the question whether “anyone was forgiven on the basis of reparation” (197). Just considering what the answer to that question might be already causes great stress in her that makes her question her identity:

> Behind me sinks the country of my skull like a sheet in the dark […]. I shrink and prickle. Against. Against my blood and heritage thereof. Will I for ever be them – recognizing them as I so daily in my nostrils? Yes. And what we have done will never be undone. It doesn’t matter what we do. What De Klerk does. Until the third and the fourth generation (197).

These words point towards a severe questioning of identity that expresses that she will not be able to create any other identity than the identity she is being pushed into. Despite the efforts of the TRC to achieve reconciliation, she believes that she will forever be recognized as one of ‘them’ one of the perpetrators through her skin colour, as she includes herself in the ‘we’ of the sentence “what we have done” (197).
She believes they can no longer escape the stigma imposed on them. They will never be able to create an identity of equality with the other habitants of her country and is convinced of the fact that this stigma will not disappear for the generations to come, in other words the ‘post-generation’ (Marianne Hirsch, 1997: 22). Completely in distress because of this realization she turns to Archbishop Tutu for help as he as well is a crucial element in her recovery. He is the one who helps her make sense of the occurrences at the Truth Commission and at this moment of distress, it is again he who is able to help her recreate her belief that it is possible to work through the trauma and encounter a new identity that is acceptable to live with and who guides her closer to her new identity. After her conversation with him, “[a] massive sigh breaks through her chest” (198). She admits: “For the first time in months – I breathe” (198) and realizes: “The absolution one has given up on, the hope for a catharsis, the ideal of reconciliation, the dream of a powerful reparation policy … Maybe this is all that is important – that I and my child know Vlakplaas and Mamasela. That we know what happened there” (198-9). She is finally able to take not the TRC as a basis upon which to build her new identity and work through the trauma but realizes there is another way for her to regain a place in the new society. The only thing of importance is that they remember the past and remember where they come from. However, she comprehends that the TRC has played an important role in coming to that realization, as she grasped from the beginning that “if you cut yourself off from the process, you will wake up in a foreign country – a country that you don’t know and that you will never understand” (199). This way, the narrator has come to a temporary state of peace. A new identity has not yet been created but she now possesses multiple foundations from which to start creating her new identity. This entails that, for the moment, she is not concerned with the fact that the TRC does not always function ideally and understands that it should not necessarily have an effect on the outcome she is hoping for, namely the constitution of a place for white Afrikaners in the new society.

The announcement that Tutu suffers from cancer (230) causes another relapse on the part of the narrator, since he is, as mentioned above, also a necessary element for her in working through the trauma. Throughout the Commission, she has counted on him to make sense of her feelings and help her through this difficult time and now, “[t]his man who has made sense for us of the torturous process of dealing with the truth by
illuminating it with insight humour an hope [...] lies, smaller than I [the narrator] remember” (233). At every relapse and severe questioning of identity, he succeeded in restoring what was left of her identity. She now has deep concerns about how she and the Commission are supposed to continue without him, as she feels that, without him, she will not be able to make further progress in dealing with her trauma and identity crisis: “We cannot finish what we have started without this man” (233). They are in need of “leadership on racial tension” (234), which is hovering the Commission, but “the moral overlay that Tutu could have provided is missing” (235). That her belief in the possibility of working through the trauma and regaining an identity is inherently linked to the guidance of the archbishop can be seen in the fact that she clings on to him the instant he returns, almost begging him to reassure her that everything will eventually be ok and that she will once again obtain a place within her country. His answer to that question is that “[p]eople must rightly say to us – For goodness’ sake, physician, heal yourself” (237)! In other words, he urges her to take matters in own hands and not to wait for someone to heal her. Rather, she herself must be the subject of her recovery. He tells her that she “can transcend the conflicts of the past. And say yes, that is where we come from, but it is possible for people coming from all the different backgrounds to cohere” (238). This way, although she still is dependent on him for her recovery (239), he offers her a basis upon which to build her new identity, one which includes the past and builds from there. Although she is not yet strong enough to embrace a new identity and she is still susceptible to moments of crisis, the archbishop has clearly brought her closer to a new identity and a healing from the trauma she is suffering from.

Others, however, can still be found in what could be called the pervious stage in working through this type of trauma and consequently towards a new identity. They are still overwhelmed by anger for being accused of something they did not participate in, a phase the narrator also went through. One that led her to distancing herself from the other members of her race (135). It is suggested that this type of behaviour by whites is “a sign of guilt” (244), indicating that these particular white Afrikaners – who had previously felt insulted by the writings of the narrator, because it portrayed them as accomplices (145) – might still be situated in an earlier stage of working through trauma towards a new identity. It is argued that there are two groups of white Afrikaners: those who “refuse point-blank to take any responsibility” and
“those who feel deeply involved and moved” (246). They suggest that the only just and moral way to behave is the latter type of behaviour (246). This way, it is not recognized that the members of the former group behave that way because they are deeply traumatized and can still be situated in an earlier stage of dealing with that trauma. These utterances have a negative impact on the process of working through for these trauma sufferers, as it only intensifies the feelings of rage instead of guiding them to a state of acceptance: “they feel unfairly treated and they deny everything” (246). The majority starts to realize that the reaction of the white Afrikaners can be explained: “inadequate preparation was made before the TRC started its work […] to investigate ways in which people could integrate all the information that would be revealed … and that is why we’re unable to cope with what is coming out” (247).

The narrator continues to use writing as a way of dealing with her emotions and identity struggle, even though it is a conflicting experience as indicated above. In this process of writing (writing CMS) she is in search for the truth. However she does not refer to the commonly acknowledged truth with this term. Instead, she is in search of her very own truth (259), a truth she can live with and that will allow her to create a new and satisfying identity which offers her a place in her country. She feels the need to do this through “a new character” she creates, “who could not only bring in new information but also expresses the psychological underpinning of the Commission” (259). The narrator tries to distinguish herself from the narrative instance, proving the narrator is clearly not strong enough to cope with the past directly. It is only bearable to do so distancing herself from the person suffering from the trauma. However, the distinction between the narrator and the separate character she claims to have created to tell the story, is entirely blurred by the fact that the narrator is at the same time the same voice of the narrative instance or character she claims to have created to tell the story. In short, like the lyrical I in LA, she feels the need to impersonate someone else in order to deal with the trauma and the quest for a new identity.

20 In addition, it must be argued that the members of the former group are not denying the facts, as is claimed by the people who created these categories. They do completely recognize the events of the past and consider them horrible, but believe that, as bystanders, they are not guilty. This statement brings to mind ‘la teoría de la ruedecilla en el engranaje’ explained above. If people fighting against the guilt others are trying to impose on them. In an attempt to make right, the people who do feel that guilt, try to include others in it as they deem feeling guilt is just. Something the narrator indulged in as well (135).
After a period in which the search for a new identity seemed to be temporarily paused, she regains the courage to take Tutu’s words into account and tries to become the agent of her own progress. She once again lingers on the word ‘truth’ and what it implies. The seemingly forgotten realization that she reached before, namely that there are different versions of truth (259), is regained. She comes to the conclusion that there is a connection between what is true and what is useful. She now agrees with pragmatic truth theorists “that we literally should not care whether our beliefs or stories are true or false, but rather whether they enable us to achieve happiness and well-being” (299). This realization is capable of again getting her out of the state of depression she returned to after the previous breakthroughs and enables her to once more work towards a new identity, one that will be based on her very own truth, one that contests a space for her in this new society and that she will be able to live with.

This time, there is nobody present who can upset her by making a comment she is not strong enough to deal with yet and she is able to start working on rebuilding her identity. She accepts that the previous months of exploring the past, although very hard and intense, were a necessary exploration of history in order to work towards an acceptance and a new identity as a reference is made to *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad in the following line: “Over these past fifteen months we’ve been taken by victims like yourselves into the very heart of darkness – into the most cruel and lonely corners of the human temperament” (315). Referring to this book also makes the reader reflect on the possible meaning the reference to this important colonial work might have. In *Heart of Darkness*, the European protagonist Marlow, working for a trading company, embarks on a journey in search of Mr. Kurtz, a cruel ivory trader. At a certain point in the book, Marlow utters the words “The horror! the Horror” (Joseph Conrad, 2008:182), which could arguably be a moral enlightenment on the part of the protagonist, realizing the corruption that is taking place in this beloved place by the people of his population group (Michael Levenson, 1985: 278). From then on, it can be argued that he, like the narrator of *CMS* has to rebuild an identity taking into account the events from the past and his role in it. As the line in *CMS* uses a past tense it indicates that the journey through the heart of darkness and the realization of that metaphorical darkness is now behind and that the search for a new identity coming to peace with the past can take place.
The first sign of contesting identity can be found in the fact that she starts to identify with the lyrical I of a poem that one of her students wrote. The last lines of the poem are the most significant in this respect: “I remember far there were I don’t know myself/ If you have seen/ you have seen for ever” (Krog, 1998: 317). These lines indicate that the time in which she felt she did not know anymore who she was is almost in the past. She is starting to find herself however realizing that once you know what happened in the past, you are never able to get rid of it anymore. Nevertheless, the fact that she is starting to know who she is again indicates that she is starting to be able to incorporate that horrific past in her identity.

The second sign that she is moving towards a new identity are the following lines: “I am white, […] I have to reacquaint myself with this land”, with the fact that “my language carries violence as a voice” and “that I can do nothing about it, that after so many years I still feel uneasy with what is mine, with what is me”. She asks herself: “God. Does He hear us? Does He know what our hearts are yearning for? That we all just want to be human – some with more colour” (328). While singing the anthem in Sesotho, she knows that “among the keynotes of sorrow and suffering there are soft silences where we who belong to this landscape, all of us, can come to rest” (328). In these lines it becomes clear that she is slowly coming to peace with the past and accepting it and herself as she is. She can openly recognize again that she “belongs to this landscape”, that this is her country and that she has a place in it. In addition, she is starting to use the word ‘us’ again designating her population group together with all the other inhabitants of the country in one unifying term, in other words, she is no longer opting for a sub-national identity but for a supra-national identity (Simon Bekker, 2001: 3). She does no longer feel foreign in her own country and seems to temporarily have found a place for herself in it.

However, her emotional state is still fragile and therefore she is still susceptible to relapses. That she is still negotiating her identity with herself can be seen in the title “snow has a smell” (Krog, 1998: 337), which might be a metaphor for the fact that white Afrikaners (snow), have a dark history (smell). However, the line “he touches his glasses and I realize for the first time that there are no reflections in them, the lenses absorb everything” (338) indicates that she is not yet ready to be confronted with her true self and lay bare all the aspects of herself, as these new found pieces of
herself are still too fragile and can easily be broken by remarks from others. The remark about the glasses might indicate she has the feeling she is being put on a pedistool and that she fears he will interrogate her until she loses the newly found peace of identity, as the fact that the glasses have no reflection signifies that everything is dragged out of her and sucked into the eyes of her interlocutor. He easily succeeds in making her lose control of her identity which can be seen in her reaction to the words “all of us”. She says: “Suddenly I want to go home. I have nothing to say to his ‘all of us’” (338). Although she could previously include herself in an ‘us’ that referred to white and black people, she is not yet able to include herself in an ‘us’ which situates her on the same level with the perpetrator.

Because of this encounter, she becomes very defensive as she wants to protect her progress in finding a new identity. When her interlocutor asks “[d]o you think the hearing will reveal that Mandela himself was responsible for the cover-up”, her “blood turns to ice-water” (339), which indicates that her hope of finding a place in the new society is linked to Mandela as well, just as it was clear above that she needed Tutu in order to recover. If he would be found guilty, the new identity built upon the new state in which he played an important role would be lost with him. She needs him as an icon, a symbol that a new society of equality in which everyone has a place is possible. She says that “[i]f he is responsible for a cover-up”, she does not want to hear it (339). “Something, something has to survive out of all of this” (339). He comforts her by telling that “with all the ANC people asking for amnesty – it will do a lot to dispel the feeling that the Commission has targeted whites” (339). With this remark, he tries to reduce her feelings of guilt and guides her back towards a new identity freed from it. However, he does not entirely succeed, as she utters “[w]e sit there, the two of us – with our confused South African moralities” (340). They are still trying to negotiate their identities, they are still to a certain extent traumatized and that might be the reason why they are so sensitive and so easily misinterpret other people’s remarks.

Being so sensitive, she again starts to see the errors in the conference in a chapter entitled “Tragedy of Errors” (337). She discovers that there is blackmail (341), corridor gossip (343) and that one of the Commissioners if guilty of committing crimes during the Apartheid (350), which upset her and makes her doubt whether or
not the TRC will succeed. The question remains whether she still needs the TRC as a basis for her identity or whether she will be able to formulate a new identity regardless of whether or not the TRC was successful. She tries to regain belief through looking for facts in the latest testimonies, in order to determine whether the truth is told or not. She is partially relieved when she discovers that “there is indeed a town called Heidelberg a few hundred kilometers away” (351) and believes the registration number XA 12848 must be correct as well as the way he expressed it – “XA twelve, eight-for-eight” (350) - “had a ring of authenticity to it” (350). This indicates that her earlier progress in recognizing that there are different kinds of truths is once again lost. She is rebuilding her belief in the TRC on random elements, that way ignoring what her friend on the plane previously said: “Do not always look at the Truth Commission as a whole, but focus on what is in it that makes it worthwhile” (338). By letting herself be confused by every single element that does not function the way it should, she does not look at the big picture and the things it generally does do right. As she does not succeed in following this advice, she is severely hit by the fact that yet another Commissioner is accused of a crime (356). It breaks down TRC as a basis for her in forming a new identity. She is deeply affected by this. At the amnesty hearing of that afternoon she says: “We hear him … and we don’t” (253). When he finally was proved guilty she utters: “Something has shifted and I’m filled with loss” (357).

Although these realizations constituted a devastating experience for her, these events might have been what she needed to move on as she is “suddenly sick and tired of the Truth Commission”. She finally succeeds in entirely disassociating her progress from the TRC as she realizes “[c]ommissioners have become smug, self-righteous, morally arrogant and bloated with self-importance. Corridor gossip flourishes” (358) etc. and worst of all, “the women! They have never managed to subvert the developing stereotype of the Commission: women as victims, men as fighters and leaders” (358). As a woman, she is deeply offended by this and therefore, the TRC cannot be used to build up the feminine part of her identity which she wants to be strong and independent, something these women have set a bad example for. She displays nostalgia towards the beginning of the TRC: “ the red light was the ultimate symbol of the whole process: here the marginalized voice speaks to the public ear, the
unspeakable is spoken – and translated – the personal story brought from innermost depths of the individual binds us anew to the collective” (359).

In addition, she still feels troubled by writing as a means to rebuild her identity. She still considers the medium of poetry too beautiful to display the horrors of a past (360). Celan agrees with her and argues that “maybe writers in South Africa should shut up for a while. That one has no right to appropriate a story paid for with a lifetime of pain and destruction” (360). He wants the domain to “belong to those who literally paid blood for every faltering word they utter before the Truth Commission” (360), which points towards great feelings of guilt on the part of the interlocutor, he feels so guilty that he feels he would ignoring them yet another privilege by writing in their name. The narrator adds that it is “sacrilege to pretend you know” (360). Her experience tells her “that there is no way you can begin to imagine the language, the rhythm, the imagery of the original stories” (360). Using the word ‘sacrilege’, she indicates that she herself is still overwhelmed by a feeling of guilt which for the moment disables her in creating a new identity as she is not yet able to incorporate the guilt in a new identity. Only when she succeeds in that, progress towards a definite new identity is possible. She receives a counterargument on this last utterance which will bring her closer to accepting her past and her guilt. It is pointed out to her that Dorfman – who wrote about events he did not go through himself – has once refuted that argument by saying: “How else would it get out? How else would the story be told” (361)?

After that discussion, she starts to heavily question her past and identity which will lead her towards a large breakthrough. She starts to ask herself:

“Was Apartheid the product of some horrific shortcoming in Afrikaner culture? Could one find the key to this in Afrikaner songs and literature, in beer and braaivleis? How do I live with the fact that all the words used to humiliate, all the orders given to kill, belonged to the language of my heart” (361)?

All these questions refer to essential aspects of her past and all of the need to be answered in order to reach a new identity which accepts these events as part of it. A conversation with Young further explores her feelings on the matter. He points out that white Afrikaners seem to suffer from feelings of inferiority (361) which can lead to “dissociation of the personality” (362). As it has been discussed earlier that the narrator intended to dissociate herself from the rest of her population, this hypothesis
can be proven. Finally her interlocutor asks her: “Are you grieving” (362)? She answers: “How can I? What have I lost? Why do I feel I am gaining all the time? One does not grieve for Apartheid. Should I grieve for a phantom fatherland perhaps? I think ultimately I rather take responsibility for the oppressor” (362). This utterance clearly indicates the path she undertakes in order to find a new identity. On the one hand, the fact that she does not feel allowed to grief indicates that she is still governed by guilt. On the other hand, she recognizes that the only way to lose the guilt and anger she has been confronted with during the past months is to accept the responsibility for the acts of the perpetrators and accept the identity that many are trying to force upon her instead of resisting it. She realizes that she has been dragged into it and that she essentially is innocent but being innocent she still is governed by guilt as a consequence of being dragged into it. The acceptance that one is not guilty does not seem enough to address that feeling of guilt and to do away with it. Consequently, the only solution left is to intend to get rid of the guilt by accepting the responsibility for the acts one has felt guilty for in the first place.

Subsequently, her attempts to define herself as a woman and trying to negotiate the female aspect of her identity is complicated by the hearing of Winnie Mandela. It is shouted that “Winnie had a mandate from us to kill” (372). Because of this remark, the narrator switches off her tape recorder (372). “I don’t want to hear it” (372) she says, “I don’t want to broadcast it. I don’t want to live in a country where women mandate one another to murder” (372). It is still hard for her to identify herself as one of the women when certain women are perpetrators, which indicates that she is still often troubled by being placed in the same category of the perpetrator. In addition, there has already been placed a stigma on her population group and she would not be able to bear it if a stigma were to be placed on her gender as well. However, she does recognize that this hearing is necessary and important as it, making her question herself, forces her to reconsider her identity: “This hearing will test us beyond ourselves, I know” (372).

In what follows, two things are clear. First of all, she is still negotiating her identity and consequently her place in society with herself. Secondly, despite the earlier breakthrough of realizing that the TRC should not be depended on as a basis for recreating identity, she does still feels the need to use it in formulating that new
identity as she admits: “This hearing is about my country, I am thinking. And whether there is space for all of us. And the conditions for this space” (390). This quotation shows that the narrator feels negotiating a place for herself can only happen in the TRC, since she believes it is only just to occupy the space that is appointed to her instead of the earlier belief that she is allowed to negotiate that place internally. In order to find out what that place is, she needs to attend the hearings.

Consequently, she again starts to doubt the TRC as a just organization which makes her feel her “brain is splitting into a headache” (390). She admits she has “never been this depressed at a Truth Commission hearing” (390). “I […] have a distinct feeling that for now this hearing has nothing to do with me, with whites” (390). It is not sufficient in contesting a space for her and her population group in the new society. Furthermore, the observation that “[b]lacks are deciding among themselves what they regard as right and wrong” (390), which makes her believe her population group will never be forgiven and that a place for them will never be encountered. This remark is a large deviation from what could be observed at the beginning of the novel. Initially, the intense guilt led her to evaluating the organization of the TRC and made her believe that it was just that blacks were now given the lead, as this was her way of making right. The guilt seems to have made place for an objective search for a new identity as she now realizes that the events at the TRC have “little to do with the past. It has everything to do with the future” (390). Creating a future in which everyone has a place is now the aim of the Commission, whereas it used to be to make right for the past. This indicates that although she partly relies on the TRC again, she has moved closer towards obtaining a new identity and being cured from the trauma.

The title of the next and last chapter of the book, “Beloved Country of Grief and Grace” (395), indicates that she is finally starting to accept her country as her own, that she is capable of formulating an identity incorporating and accepting the past without it leading to a state of depression. This is a clear indication that she has left the emotional responses such as anger behind to make place for a more rationally based period in working through her trauma and towards a new identity. She realizes this herself as she utters: “In the beginning it would give me a kick – I am not one of them!” (398). Instead of refusing to be guilty and rebelling against being placed in the same category she now accepts responsibility for the events of the past. This, as
explained before, is the only way out of the trauma and only way to make peace with the feelings of guilt she still harbours (396). Now she realizes: “We have betrayed civilization and its values. We have brought shame and disgrace upon our heads” (397). However, “[p]eople realize instinctively that this is the last, the very last opportunity for the majority of people to break into a culture of [...] individual responsibility” (399) and this is only possible “if the definition of ‘us’, of the ‘South African group’, of ‘African’ were to be changed to the extent that it now included you” (399). As a result of realizing she has to take responsibility in order to rebuild her identity, she is finally able to start to revise her life and look at her past to find out who she is and who she was without resuming a state of depression. She is now on her way to a full recovery.

First of all, rediscovering the memory of sitting on her “father’s shoulders next to the main road from Johannesburg, waiting to see Verwoerd passing by on his way to Cape Town” (397), she tries to determine whether she is still that little girl who rooted for the wrong side or whether she has changed and tries to incorporate that dark memory in her new identity. They used to be very proud of their culture. “[T]he knife in Verwoerd’s heart was regarded as a knife in the Afrikaner’s heart” (397), as with it, their entire culture and consequently their identity was turned upside down. However, these realizations do not bring her in a state of depression anymore. She knows that despite of waiting for Verwoerd when she was a little girl, she turned her back on the Apartheid while being a teenager21.

Secondly, she continues to explore her identity by starting to write poetry again. While previously she felt she did not have the right to write something beautiful on a subject that damaged many people’s lives and believed the privilege to write on the topic should be left to the victims of the Apartheid, she is now appears to be capable of writing on the topic again. In these poems she tries to come to peace with the past: “I travel I travel along the corn and chaff of my past/ that my past crawls forth on its deadly knees without once looking up”, “I claw on my knees claw to that place” (400). She expresses she has to revisit the past in order to discover her new identity and to get rid of the trauma that has been haunting her: “set me set me from revenge

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21 If off course one recognizes that the narrator is in fact the same person as the author of this autobiographical work, Antjie Krog, who wrote her first poem against the Apartheid in 1970 as mentioned above.
and loss/ from ruins set me from the long white scar the lichen and/ ash set me free” (401). She is finally displaying the will and courage to work through the trauma.

The third indication that the narrator is working through the trauma towards a state of acceptance is the following excerpt:

I see my mother coming back from the chicken-run with her two youngest grandchildren, each swinging a basket of eggs. She seems frail, but the scene is so peaceful, we are so lucky, so privileged ... But whereas this privilege used to upset me in the past, now I can hold it against a truth that we are all aware of. No longer an unaware privilege, but one that we know the price and morality of (413).

She is aware of the stages she went through and is finally able to incorporate the past into her new identity, she is able to live happily with the truth. She is can now recognize once again “how desperately beautiful this country is” and that it is the “[m]ost beloved state of heart” (412).

A fourth sign that the narrator is at peace with her past and origin is the fact that she can return to the family farm without feelings of distress (412). Whereas previously, her new found identity remained fragile and could easily be damaged by remarks from others or observations, she is now able to hold up against the interrogation of her brother. His utterances point out that he is not as far in recovering from bystander trauma as she is. He considers to “load up” his “bakkie and leave” (415). When she asks him why he answers: “Because this is no longer my country” (415). He does not feel he has regained a place in the new country the way she has. Although an utterance like this could have easily upset her before, she now replies: “How can you say that! Look where we are today and how it is ...” (415). He still seems to be stricken by guilt. He says: “They want to build the country themselves. And it’s fair enough” (417). When the narrator asks him if he does not think it is unfair when they accuse him of racism he replies: “No! they’re right” (417). He seems to be in the state the narrator was in at the very beginning of the book, a state of intense guilt which leads to the belief that the victims have the right to do whatever they want, even if it means treating the white population as they have previously treated them (417). This belief is accompanied by a strong feeling of not belonging. What there population group committed was so horrible that every member of that population group simply does not deserve a place in the country and its society anymore.
However, the subtitle “Down to my last skin” (418) indicates the last relapse she encounters. Although her identity is quite strong and is far less fragile than it used to be, her belief in a future and a country that could function in creating equality for all, which is evidently linked with her identity, is still strongly connected to the outcome of the TRC. She documents that she is “distracted and upset” by the thought that other Commissioners might resign which could bring the outcome of the TRC and consequently the country in jeopardy. She wonders: “If the Commission can’t make it work, what hope does the country have” (419)? Fortunately, she realizes: “it is the Commission alone that has brought me to these moments of [...] belonging” (421). No matter what misfortunes the TRC has known, it has succeeded in negotiating a place for whites in the new society and it has been able to create a new basis upon which the new country can be built, as she argues it is because of the Commission she experiences the following feelings which display her new found identity and place within the country. “My gaze, my eyes are one with the thousands of others that have looked back over the centuries towards Africa. Ours. Mine. yes, I would die for this” (421).

At the end of this work, she has found her “new skin” (423). The TRC has, despite “all its mistakes, its arrogance, its racism” etc., succeeded in keeping “alive the idea of a common humanity”. “[I]t has chiselled a way beyond racism and made space for all our voices” (422). In other words, it has succeeded in creating a place for everyone in the new society. “[I]t carries a flame of hope that makes me [the narrator] proud to be from here” (422). She feels the need to document her struggle towards this point. She wants “this hand of mine to write it. For us all; all voices, all victims” (422). In this ‘all’ she includes all inhabitants of her country, from every population group and situates them on the same level. They are all victims of the same past. In the concluding poem she stresses her “new skin”, her new identity. She utters “I am changed for ever” and wants to say “forgive me” (423). She asks: “You whom I have wronged, please/ take me/ with you” (423). With this question, she is asking to be included as one of the inhabitants of South Africa, which is a broader identity than the one she started with, in which her identity displayed her as a member of the white population in contrast to ‘the other’ inhabitants of her country. It has become a supra-national identity (Simon Bekker, 2001: 3).
In conclusion, the narrator has been able to work through the trauma of being from the same population group as the perpetrator. Through a strenuous search characterized by relapses and helped by enlightened souls such as Tutu, she has eventually been able to encounter a new identity in which she is able to accept the past, recognizing the responsibility for the crimes committed by other and incorporate that knowledge and memory into a new identity. This identity appears to be one in which she feels united with all inhabitants. She recognizes the country as hers and sees herself as a South African woman instead of a white Afrikaner. The result of working through the trauma therefore seems to be a unified and inclusive identity as opposed to an excluding one.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter was to further explore trauma – in particular the trauma experienced by white Afrikaner bystanders during the Apartheid – and the progress of rebuilding identity which results from it, through analyzing Krog’s literature. It was discovered that the questioning of identity might be a healthy way of reevaluating one’s identity but might also result from suffering from a trauma. Whereas the lyrical I in *DJ* did not display symptoms of trauma, the subject from *LA* and the Narrator of *CMS* did seem to be severely traumatized. It was possible to provide proof of the fact that the trauma resulted from an intense feeling of guilt that resulted from being a bystander and consequently belonging to the same population group as the perpetrator of the Apartheid, while not having engaged in crimes against humanity themselves. For both protagonists, this realization has pushed them into a strenuous search for a new identity and a quest for a place in the new society. For both characters, this search appeared to be a difficult one characterized by relapses. In the case of *CMS*, the narrator was able to work through the trauma and create a new identity for herself, incorporating and accepting the past. In this new identity, the narrator sees herself as South African instead of as a white Afrikaner. In *LA*, a unifying identity could not yet been formulated, which left the subject in distress and in a state of denial. Having laid bare chronologically the process the protagonists go through in working through bystander trauma and rebuilding identity, it will be possible to explore, in the next chapter, the stages in which this type of trauma is worked through and in which a new identity is formulated in the work of Krog.
**4. Stages of Working Through and The Process of Rebuilding Identity**

Having closely documented the instances of identity and the progress thereof and after having laid bare in great detail how the bystander trauma was worked through by white Afrikaners in *LA* and *CMS*, it is now possible to extract phases from the chronological presentation in the previous chapter. Despite the fact that the characters where susceptible to a great deal of relapses, a global pattern emerges. In my opinion, three stages can be detected in the process of working through a bystander trauma and rebuilding the identity that was shattered as a result of it: a stage of grief and intense guilt, a phase of anger and denial and one of acceptance. These stages bring to mind the stages of grief documented by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross which were denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kübler-Ross; Kessler, 2005: 7). These stages were determined while examining the behaviour of people confronted with the prospect that one is terminally ill and will die. the similarities might be related to the fact that in both losing an identity and losing one’s life there is the aspect of loss. However, after a close examination of the characters in the books I discussed above, I do not agree with Kaliski that the behaviour of white Afrikaners represents these stages (Krog, 1998: 196), as I find that depression comes first, denial and anger are so closely intertwined that I would consider them one stage in this context and the phase of bargaining does not seem present. Below, I intend to explain what these categories entail and provide proof of their existence.

The first stage, of grief and intense guilt, is a stage in which the trauma sufferers are deeply moved by the events that occurred and feel extremely guilty, which the lyrical I of *LA* expressed in ‘*n Gedig oor skuld* (Krog, 1989: 98). As a result, they feel the need to make things right for the victims. Therefore, the narrator of *CMS* was obsessed, at the beginning of the book, with discussing the organizational aspects of the Commission. An example was when she was concerned with “[w]hat kind of people should serve on the Commission” (Krog, 1998: 24). They believe the victims have the right to ask for anything they want as they owe it to them. When the narrator ask her brother “Surely you at least want them to treat you better than you treated them” (417), he replies: “No” (418). As a result, they feel they no longer deserve a place in that country, that they should no longer call that country theirs and that they should leave the country and its leadership to the victims. Like the narrator at the beginning of the book, her brother no longer feels there is a place for him in this
country: “this country is no longer my own” (415) and believes it is “fair enough” that blacks “want to build the country themselves” (417). In addition, they try to analyse the events of the past in order to determine what went wrong. This way, the white Afrikaners attempt to regain control and the reassurance that it will not happen again (62).

In the second stage, anger and denial, they are overcome with rage for being dragged into it by the perpetrators while they are in fact innocent. The lyrical I of LA expresses it by saying that “namens hulle” she is “SKULDIG” (Krog, 1989: 99), whereas the narrator of CMS expresses it as follows: “I find myself overcome with anger. Anger for being caught up in their mess” (Krog, 1998: 135). They deny belonging to the same population group and dissociate themselves from the perpetrators. In the words of the narrator, I am not of them (135). This indicates that during this stage, the identity is an excluding one or a sub-national identity (Bekker, 2001: 3), during which the subject defines oneself against ‘the other’. The speaking subject of LA, on the other hand, utters the words this “gedig is die afskeid aan jou [...] en jou se soort” (Krog 1989: 108). As opposed to the narrator, the lyrical I does not succeed to overcome this stage and reach the following stage of acceptance.

The way towards the third stage, acceptance, appears to be a long and difficult one characterized by relapses as they base the identity they try to build on someone or something else. In other words, they count on someone else to help them work through the trauma, which has the disadvantage that whenever that person or element does no longer seem valid as a bases for a new identity and a new country in which they have a place, they encounter a moment of personal crisis. For the narrator, this consisted out of taking the TRC and the Archbishop Tutu as a basis. When Tutu had to leave as a result of cancer (Krog 1998: 230) or when the TRC was proven to be an “Operation Shut Up and Deny” (85), she entered in a moment of crisis. However, slowly they realize that no matter whether they are guilty or not, being dragged into it by belonging to the same population group has made them experience intense guilt. They start to realize that dissociating themselves from the perpetrator will not be sufficient to make them lose the guilt. It occurs to them that if they want to be able to leave the guilt behind, they have to take responsibility for the acts of the perpetrator, for what happened in the past, in order to be able to create a new identity and regain a
place in society they felt they had lost (399). When the phase of acceptance is reached, the trauma sufferers are finally able to accept history and take responsibility. The difference with the first stage consists of the fact that they no longer are so overcome with guilt that they believe blacks should pursue everything that is best for them regardless of the white population in order to compensate for the discriminations and violence they suffered in the past (418). They no longer feel they have no right to have a place in that society anymore. They believe once again in a country where all population groups have a place and can live in equality. They all are South Africans and all have a place in the new society. It is only now there identity becomes rather strong and can less easily be contested by observations and remarks by others, as they are at peace with the past and the guilt is reduced by accepting the responsibility for that past. They now seem to have created a new and open identity which is including instead of excluding, which can be exemplified with the fact that the narrator, at the end of CMS places herself on the same level as the black population group in the line “[f]or us all” (422). In other words, their identity has been altered from a sub-national identity into a supra-national identity (Bekker, 2001: 3).

Nevertheless, the epilogue to this edition of CMS, brings a depressing observation. Namely, that this type of trauma is circular because of the continuing confrontation with the past through economical measures that were taken through the Affirmative Action of 1998. Proof that the bystander trauma is circular can be found, first of all, in the epilogue, which was written a year after CMS. In this epilogue, it becomes clear from a speech given by Tutu – someone who had in the past always helped white Afrikaners cope with the past – that white Afrikaners as a population group still are not forgiven. He utters that black Afrikaners are still waiting for “appropriate response from Afrikaners” (Krog, 1998: 436). He lets the white Afrikaner population know that they still owe the victims of the Apartheid but does not enlighten them with what it is they owe (438), leaving them therefore confused and again feeling extremely guilty. The narrator says she “grew heavy with desperation”. She wonders: “How does one define appropriate”? […] What more does Tutu want? […] [W]hat embrace will unburden us all” (416)? Not knowing what it is they need to do to make up leaves the white population to live with endless guilt. The place in society they thought they had regained after the Truth Commission appears to be lost again, leaving the white Afrikaners lost as well, again trapped in a country where they do not
belong. In the words of the narrator: “we are trapped. If there is no forum in which people can think what they want and others worry about what they owe, then both are trapped in anger and guilt” (438), which brings her back to the first phase of the trauma, one in which she feels so guilty that she feels the need to do whatever is wanted by the victims in order to make right, regardless of the own wellbeing, as they believe it is the only just thing to do. She says that “[t]he two nations are both affected, one by injury, the other by guilt, and the first reaction is to withdraw from each other” (438). Her newly built identity that unified black and white as one nation is no longer valid and she is forced to start to speak in terms of two nations again, in terms of ‘the other’, as they once again are governed by racial categories. However, the fact that they continue to be confronted with the past might not be the only reason why the trauma appears to be circular. It also brings to mind the observation by LaCapra that “[p]ossession by the past may never be fully overcome or transcended, and working through may at best enable some distance or critical perspective that is acquired with extreme difficulty and not achieved once and for all” (LaCapra, 2001: 70).

Secondly, Krog’s work as a whole displays the same pattern. If one recognizes that in these cases the lyrical I of LA and the narrator of CMS represent the feelings of one and the same person, the author, another set of evidence can be found in arguing that bystander trauma is circular as in LA as well and in CMS a process of working through a trauma and regaining identity is visible, both displaying the same stages. This could mean that after having explored her identity in LA, she has lost that temporarily found identity (although it was an excluding one of denial) again and had to start over again in rebuilding her identity, as she became extremely traumatized and governed by guilt once again. After having rebuilt that identity again, in the epilogue of CMS, it is indicated, as explained above, that she once again returns to the first stage in overcoming a trauma and rebuilding identity, the one of grief and intense guilt. This indicating that it is very likely a new search for identity will again be encountered in the works following CMS.

In addition to the stages, another similarity in how the lyrical I in LA and the narrator in CMS rebuild their identity. Both protagonists opt for a different character to

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22 The works discussed above are carefully chosen to represent her work as a whole, as they include one work from the beginning of her career, one from the middle and a more recent work.
embarque on the process of rebuilding identity for them, as reconsidering the past and one’s identity is simply too hard. Every harsh reality would have a far too severe impact on the already by grief and distress stricken trauma victims. Therefore, both create a different persona to go on the journey for them. Although both dissociate themselves from the character they invented, the distinction between the narrator of CMS and her invented character is much more blurred than in LA.

In conclusion, the analysis of LA and CMS indicates that, although working through trauma does not occur in one linear motion but is characterized by many relapses, globally, three stages can be determined in how white Afrikaners who suffer from bystander trauma rebuild their identity. There is a stage of grief and guilt, one of anger and denial and finally, one of acceptance. However, evidence shows that once a trauma has been worked through and a new identity has been formed, there is the possibility that the patient can lose the progress previously made and return to the very first stage in working through bystander trauma. In the case of white Afrikaners, this circularity of the trauma might be linked to the fact that even today, the white population is still frequently confronted with their past.
5. The Effect on The Reader: Creating a Collective Identity

As has been briefly mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, African literature has always been used for expressing identity (Ojaide, 1992: 46). It can be argued that the readers, reading these assertions of identity, consequently adopt that identity and convert it into their own. This way, the individual identity expressed by the protagonist, might be converted into a collective identity, as this process has already been documented for the transmission of memory.23 This way, the same can be argued for the transmission of the process of rebuilding identity. I believe that white Afrikaners, suffering from the same type of trauma as the protagonist of the book, reading literature that displays a process of rebuilding identity, can be aided in their very own identity crisis through this literature. As a reader tends to identify with the protagonist of a work of literature, he might go through the same stages of working through trauma and an identity crisis along with the protagonist. Consequently, the process of rebuilding identity is transmitted and the individual identity of the character is converted into a collective one for all readers. Evidence for this theory can be encountered in the works analyzed and will be explored below.

In LA as well as in CMS, the two subjects express openly that their process of writing is meant as a means to help the reader and that their truth and their identity, through writing, is converted into a collective one. As mentioned above, in LA, the lyrical I often opts for article snippets to reconsider and express her opinions on the situation of her country and her role as a writer. In one of the snippets she agrees with the definition of “[a] great writer” with Brodsky, who claims a great writer “is one who elongates the perspective of human sensibility, who shows a man at the end of his wits an opening, a pattern to follow” (Krog 1989: 60). In other words, the subject sees her role as a writer as one which should create a solution for the problems of the reader. It should offer them a path to follow that will lead them out of the crisis they are experiencing. This way, it can be argued that her writings, in her opinion, should express a process of rebuilding identity that consequently can be converted in a collective process when the readers opt to follow the path laid out by her and make use of the literature to recreate their own identity. As the lyrical I does not encounter a new identity, this text cannot be argued to display a collective identity. Nevertheless, it does in my opinion create a collective way of working through.

23 “A single Anne Frank excites more emotion than the myriads who suffered as she did but whose image has remained in the shadows” (Rosenfeld, 2000: 207).
The narrator of *CMS* expresses an aim similar to the one expressed in *LA*. Firstly, she evokes that she, as a journalist, feels the need to obligate other white Afrikaners to hear about the TRC (Krog, 1998: 46), as she believes that without that framework, “if you cut yourself off from the process, you will wake up in a foreign country – a country that you don’t know and that you will never understand” (199). In other words, her writing is predicated in a belief that she needs to awaken her people to the past so that they themselves will have a chance to come to terms with that past and with themselves. She admits that, with that aim, she applies “the full spectrum of hard new techniques” in order to “where necessary develop and reform them to our [the narrator] needs”(46) and confesses to having embellished and exaggerated (259) in her news articles as well as in *CMS*. In other words, she is willing to put everything in motion in order to make sure that her work can be used as a basis for working through, by readers who are confronted with the same trauma and identity crisis. She stresses that what she shares in her book is her truth, “quilted together from hundreds of stories” (259) that she has heard at the TRC. She stresses that they are “[s]een from my perspective, shaped by my state of mind at the time and now also the audience” (259). This way, she recognizes that the reader adopts the same state of mind and consequently the same identity through reading *her* truth. Finally, she states that “all of this together makes up the whole country’s truth” (259), as it is transmitted to the whole country through her writing and therefore converted into a collective truth and consequently identity.

Secondly, the narrator of *CMS* states that creating a collective identity is simply a role literature performs. She says that “[w]e make sense of things by fitting them into stories (299). She argues that “[n]ations tells these stories of their past in terms of which they try to shape their futures” (299). Consequently, her ‘story’ performs the same role as the stories told by the nation. It shapes the futures of all her readers as it provides them with a new framework of dealing with the identity crisis and with a new identity which then forms the reader’s collective identity, as she believes “the story brought from the innermost depths of the individual binds us anew to the collective” (359).
In conclusion, it can be proven that the literary works by Krog discussed above have a strong effect on the reader, as her literature offers a path through which the white Afrikaner readers work through bystander trauma and presents a new identity. In addition, this does appear to be the aim of the subjects of the literature discussed above. They believe that it is possible for a writer to offer the reader a path to work through, to present a new identity and that it is their duty to pursue this.
It is well known that the Republic of South Africa has a complicated history (Mandaza, 2001: 133) and that the black population was severely traumatized as a result of the atrocities committed by white Afrikaners during the Apartheid. However, it is less brought to the attention that the largest part of the white Afrikaners, who are innocent\textsuperscript{24}, as they have not committed any crimes against humanity, is also deeply traumatized. In this paper, I opted for denoting this group with the term bystander’, as it describes their status of perceiving what was done to the other population groups without having the power to actively react against it. It is this type of trauma I intended to bring to the attention and wanted to explore, as I believed exploring this type of trauma in literature, more specifically in the three works by Antjie Krog: \textit{Dogter van Jefta}, \textit{Lady Anne} and \textit{Country of My Skull}, would constitute in interesting observations in terms of how such a trauma is worked through and in terms of identity, as a trauma results in a severe questioning of that identity (Horrel, 2004: 776). In addition, expressing and asserting identity has always been one of the characteristics of African literature (Garuba, 2001: 8-9). Therefore, the exploration of the identity of white Afrikaners through literature was ideal.

In this thesis, I have looked into identity as it is built internally by the subject herself and how it can be influenced by how ‘the other’ perceives the trauma sufferer, when the quest for identity is still in progress. I was able to lay bare in detail the process the subjects went through in working through trauma and rebuilding one’s identity and I came to the interesting observation that the loss of an identity is characterized by stages quite similar to the stages one goes through when being confronted with the prospect of losing one’s life, in other words, the stages of Grief expressed by Kübler-Ross (Kübler-Ross; Kessler, 2005: 7). Instead of five stages I detected three. A stage of grief and intense guilt, one of anger and denial and a phase of acceptance. While in the first stage, the trauma sufferers are overwhelmed by guilt which leads them to believing that they no longer belong in their country and that the victims their population group damaged has the right to pursue whatever they want regardless of their own population. During the second phase, the guilt they experience leads to feelings of rage towards the perpetrators for having them included in the situation they now encounter themselves in. Their identity is now an excluding one in which

\textsuperscript{24} Whether bystanders are ‘innocent’ is disputed by what in Latin America is called ‘La teoría de la ruedecilla en el engranaje’ (Klenner, 2013: 5).
they see themselves as white Afrikaners as opposed to South Africans. In other words, it is a sub-national identity (Bekker, 2001: 3). This way, they feel they no longer have the right to be regarded as equal by people of colour, through the crimes of the perpetrator. As a result, they strongly dissociate themselves from the perpetrators, claiming they are different and not of the same population group. Getting towards the last stage of acceptance, which is a stage of peace with their identity and culture and the end of being traumatized, appears to be a difficult process characterized by relapses. These relapses occur due to the fact that they base their hope of finding a new identity and leaving the trauma behind on someone or something else. This way, simple observations by the subject himself or by other characters can easily confuse the trauma sufferer and make the person in question lose the progress previously made. The last stage of acceptance then, is a phase in which it is realized that the only way to live with the guilt is not to stress to themselves that they are not the perpetrator. For the characters from the works I examined, this did not appear to be sufficient to come to peace with the self and the past. There was the discovery that the only way to leave the guilt behind was to accept responsibility. It appears to be only when this observation was made the trauma sufferers came to peace with their past and found they had regained a place in their country. After this realization, they come to a new identity which can less easily be contested. This identity consists out of a belief that one is a South African. In other words, a supra-national identity has been created (Bekker, 2001: 3). One does no longer see the self in terms of racial categories but include all the inhabitants of South Africa in their identity, which indicates the guilt has been conquered and the trauma has been overcome.

However, reading the epilogue to CMS which was written a year after CMS was finished, the discovery was made that the trauma can be considered circular. Even though the identity obtained at the end of CMS appeared to be rather firm, the narrator seems to have returned to the very first stage of the trauma and identity crisis. This could arguably be caused by the continuous attempts on the part of the black population to remind white Afrikaners of what their population group has done in the past and by openly indicating that, even after the TRC is finished, they have not been forgiven. The white Afrikaner is confronted with the guilt which results from this continuously, as it is never expressed by the black population what it is white Afrikaners still owe them. Due to this lack of closure, or rather the dismantling of the
closure that had previously been created through the TRC, the trauma experienced by bystanders remains an open one. However, it has to be kept in mind that the circularity of the trauma might be caused by the fact that a “[p]ossession by the past may never be fully overcome or transcended, and working through may at best enable some distance or critical perspective that is acquired with extreme difficulty and not achieved once and for all” (LaCapra, 2001: 70). Other evidence for the fact that bystander trauma seems to be circular can be encountered in the fact that the process of rebuilding identity is repeated throughout the literary oeuvre of Krog as a whole as well.

In the last chapter, I intended to explore what the effect of reading these works has for white Afrikaner readers. Analogically with the fact that an individual memory can be transformed into a collective one (Rosenfeld, 2000: 207), I discovered that an individual identity can be transformed into a collective one as well. The protagonists of the works examined express this aim in the works themselves. They state that it is their duty to provide a path for the reader experiencing the same distress, in order to help him get through that crisis. In addition, the subject offers a new identity along with the belief that this individual identity could serve as a collective one for the reader.
7. Critical Note

I would like to end this thesis on a critical note and in extension draw attention to a possible area of research concerning this topic that is yet to be explored. At the end of the Apartheid and the beginning of the new democracy, the TRC was built with the aim of finding out the truth about the past and finding a way to forgive the parties at fault. They opted for this form of impunity and reconciliation over justice as they considered reconciliation a better basis for a new democracy than severe punishment. The narrator stresses that the aim of the TRC is to “foster a new humanity” (Krog, 1999: 23). According to her, “perhaps, that is justice in its deepest sense” (23).

Reverend Frank Chicane agrees: “People demanding punitive justice are ignoring the greater justice a new morality could bring” (27). However, they did decide to impose economic measures at the disadvantage of white Afrikaners. Namely, the ‘affirmative action’ or ‘regstellende aktie’ in the form of the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998. This act was implemented in order to make things right and compensate for the years of suppression over black people. However, according to many scholars, these measures did not enhance equality but instead, gave rise to what could be called ‘positive or reverse discrimination’, as these measures “rely on racial categories” (Pierre de Vos, 2012: 152) similar to those implemented during the Apartheid, but currently with the aim of achieving equality. This means that “in the postapartheid era, the potency of race as a factor in the allocation of social status and economic benefit has not fundamentally diminished in our daily lives despite a professed commitment to non-racialism in the South African Constitution” (145). This way, the actual perpetrators, the people who committed the crimes against humanity, were often given amnesty and set free without punishment or with a reduced one, while instead, all white Afrikaners, the largest part of this group consisting out of

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25 “The primary aims of affirmative action must be to redress the imbalances created by apartheid. We are not asking for hand-outs for anyone nor are we saying that just as a white skin was a passport to privilege in the past, so a black skin should be the basis of privilege in the future. The first point to be made is that affirmative action must be rooted in principles of justice and equality” (Human, 1993:3).

26 Concretely, these measures mean a severe economical disadvantage for white people as can be seen in the following example which shows measures taken for employment in the police force: “Luidens hofstukke lui die plan dat alle personeellede in die polisie landwyd 79,35% swart, 9,35% wit, 8,35% bruin en 2,46% Indiër moet wees, ongeag die provinsiale demografie. Solidariteit voer aan bruin, wit en Indiër-polisielede, manlik en vroulik, word uitgesluit uit alle poste wat vir swart lede gereserveer word. Hulle moet dan meeding om sowat 20% van poste al het hulle meer ervaring en kwalifikasies. “Dit beteken as daar 100 beskikbare bevorderingsposte is, sal voorkeur gegee word aan swart lede totdat 80 daarvan gevul is,” lui die hofstukke” (Llewellyn Prince).
bystanders, were punished, economically, for crimes most of them, being bystanders, did not commit.

This ironic fact might have caused, in my opinion, a reduction of the guilt of that generation of white Afrikaners, as they probably felt that, on some level, justice was restored. However, what they might not have realized is that this measure, at the same time, created a new trauma for the next generation, to denote this group with a term of Marianne Hirsch, the ‘post-generation’. These people “grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated” (Hirsch, 1997: 22). This way, the guilt of the previous generation is passed onto the next one. The latter generation is now punished for crimes committed before their time. They have to live with the stigma imposed on them and with the knowledge that their country will never truly be theirs. Instead, this country disadvantages them and takes away every chance they have of developing. As a result, “[d]ue to their loss of […] economic power and perceptions of reduced employment opportunities due to affirmative action, it is widely assumed that white South Africans are much more likely to leave [the country] than blacks” (Jonathan Crush), which results in economical problems for the country. Consequently, the white members of the post-generation have to build their identity including from the beginning that they are the bad ones, the perpetrators, as these measures contribute “to the way in which we understand ourselves and the world we live in, and the way we conceptualise our identities, the identities of others, as well as our relationships with others and the world around us” (De Vos, 2012: 145-46). Therefore, it might be interesting to look into the literature produced by this generation, in order to discover whether traces can be found of that trauma and in order to explore how they build their identity and what that identity entails.

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27 Archbishop Desmond Tutu believes that a lot of the measures taken by the ANC government were not ideal, as he recently stated that he “would very sadly not be able to vote for them after the way things have gone” (South Africa's Desmond Tutu: 'I will not vote for ANC')

28 “[I]t may also be bad news for the country as a whole in the form of a momentous loss of skills. Skilled emigration has the potential to rob the country of considerable investment in training and education, and also deprive the economy of needed skills and upper-end consumers. The brain drain is likely to be particularly damaging to the economy when students leave relatively soon after graduating and the country fails to receive any appreciable return on direct investments in training” (Crush).
8. Bibliography

Primary sources


Secondary sources


(http://www.queensu.ca/samp/samppublications/policyseries/policy36.htm)


**Periodicals**


**Referential works**


