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**Trauma in Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1960) and
Mark Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy: The True
Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in
South Africa* (1986)**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a
Master's degree in Literature and Civilization

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Abstract

The present work explores how trauma is experienced under the state of oppression in Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1960) and Mark Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa* (1986). The novels are studied through the lens of Cathy Caruth's theory of Trauma, as introduced in her book, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1995). In the light of this theory, *Night* and *Kaffir Boy* are analyzed by shedding light on the concepts of historical trauma, the belated symptoms of trauma and the duality of trauma in two different contexts: the Holocaust and the Apartheid.

Key Words: Apartheid, Holocaust, *Kaffir Boy*, *Night*, Trauma Theory.

Dedication

To our parents and relatives for their endless love, support and encouragement

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General Introduction

The twentieth century represents one of the most traumatizing and turbulent decades of human history. This is mainly due to the chain of the dreadful events that took place and shook the planet to its core. Indeed, the period witnessed a range of gruesome inhumane acts including mass violence, genocides, religious persecutions and racial discrimination, to name but some. In this respect, Shoshana Felman writes, “The twentieth century can be defined as a century of trauma” (171). Among the extreme cases of human oppression, one may mention the Holocaust and the Apartheid, which constitute unparalleled occurrences in the history of human sufferings and in exposing men's inhumanity.

Trauma studies have been a recurrent subject in various domains, with the most prominent of these being found in the literary field. Literature apart from having an artistic value is a powerful means of expressing socio-political views, bearing witness to traumatic testimonies and historical burdens of nations. Accordingly, numerous writers have used their words not only to describe the sordid conditions of people living under the tyrannical systems of the Holocaust and the Apartheid but also to depict the damages caused to their psyche and personalities. Amongst these writers, one may name two prominent literary figures and their works: The Romanian writer Elie Wiesel’s *Night* (1960) and the South African author Mark Mathabane’s *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth’s Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa* (1986), (hereafter referred to as *Kaffir Boy*).

Night (1960) is a memoir written by the Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. After having experienced the horrendous conditions in the Nazi concentration camps, the author offers a vivid depiction of the atrocities and traumatic events he and his fellow Jews have endured. In doing so, Wiesel presents both his agony and the Jewish predicament during the Holocaust. On the other hand, *Kaffir Boy* (1986) is Mark Mathabane’s autobiographical account of growing up in Apartheid South Africa. The novel provides an accurate picture of the terrifying universe Mathabane was subjected to under the rule of the whites’ segregationist

legislations while at the same time detailing the social and political chaos that plagued the country.

Throughout their writings, it is noticeable that both authors were highly influenced by their personal life experiences. Despite their different backgrounds, cultural contexts and geographical distances, both writers have dealt with the same issue, trauma.

Thesis Statement

The study probes into the various facets of trauma in relation to two different settings: the Holocaust and the Apartheid, as reflected in Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Mark Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy*. More precisely, it analyzes the two main protagonists, Eliezer and Johannes, using Cathy Caruth's theory of Trauma.

The Review of Literature

From our review of some of the critical points of view written upon Elie Wiesel's *Night*, we have noticed that the author and his work have received a considerable bulk of criticism. In her book entitled *Legacy of Night: The Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel*, Ellen Fine studies some of Wiesel's books in which she describes his experiences in the concentration camps and in the post-holocaust world. In her analysis, Fine focuses on the writing styles used by Wiesel in his literary works. She argues that "the thrust of Wiesel's writing does not lie in his literary techniques and he has openly rejected the notion of art for art sake" (7). Fine acknowledges the French Existentialists Sartre and Camus's influence on Elie Wiesel and signals the noticeable relatedness of their protagonists to that of Wiesel's. She argues that each of their main characters endure appalling circumstances that turn them into pessimistic individuals struggling to find meaning and purpose at the core of their existence.

Moreover, in his *Bloom's GUIDES: Elie Wiesel's Night*, Harold Bloom asserts that the Holocaust autobiography mirrors the repercussions that the Holocaust events had on its survivors, mainly on their personalities and future lives. He states that in the writing of his book *Night*, Elie Wiesel hopes that the terrifying experience he has faced while in the concentration camps will never be repeated in the future. He further expands his criticism by arguing that the aim of Elie Wiesel's *Night* is not only to bear witness to the dreadful events he encountered during the Holocaust but also to provide meaning to his survival.

In an article entitled “ ‘Paradoxical Doubleness’ in Elie Wiesel's *Night*”, Gamze Sabanci Uzun takes up the issues of identification and doubleness in Wiesel's memoir *Night*. She indicates the prevalence of two different narrative voices in the book, that of Eliezer the innocent child and Eliezer the adult narrator. Sabanci claims, “what we see in *Night* is the existence of a child's voice settled in an adult perspective” (458). According to her, the process of identification allows the readers to assimilate and empathize with the experience of Eliezer the innocent child but on the other hand undermine in various ways identification with Eliezer the adult narrator since he has prior knowledge of the events and foreshadows the coming calamities.

Unlike his Romanian counterpart, the South African novelist Mark Mathabane and his work *Kaffir Boy* have not been subject to a wide range of criticism. In a chapter entitled “Autobiography and Bildungsroman in African literature”, Apollo Amoko draws a parallel between autobiographies and bildungsroman by using Mark Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy*, Bloke Modisane's *Blame Me on History*, and E'skia Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue*, as representative examples among others. The importance of such narratives, says Amoko, lies in the fact that they highlight the authors' stance as anti-Apartheid activists who act as spokesmen for every black South African. He asserts that the three of them are first-hand accounts of black youths' coming of age amidst poverty and violence, who managed to exile

and escape from the throes of the racist system of Apartheid. According to him, “All three writers bear graphic witness to the horrors of racist oppression even as they each narrate the story of spectacular individual triumph” (198).

David Matshine in “From Kaffir Boy to Makwerekwere” explores the themes of inferiority and racism in *Kaffir Boy*. He claims that Mathabane was regarded as a “Makwerekwere” (an outsider) by his black community and as a “Kaffir Boy” by the White community. Matshine demonstrates this through his analysis of the complex relationship that existed between Mathabane and the black and the white population. He discusses the sense of alienation and segregation that Mathabane felt with the white race that simply disliked him for his skin color, and the black race who considered him a traitor because he sought to fulfill his dreams by adopting the white man’s lifestyle and culture.

Significance of the Study

It is paramount to note that during our investigation, we have noticed that very little criticism was devoted to Mathabane’s *Kaffir Boy* compared to Wiesel’s *Night*. Most of the criticisms on Mathabane’s work are more or less limited to non-academic articles and Master dissertations, whereas *Night* has been scrutinized from various perspectives. Yet, to our knowledge, no previous study has been undertaken so far to compare the two novels.

Aims of the Study

The objectives of this dissertation is to picture the extent to which trauma, caused mainly by violence and extreme racial stereotypes about the inferiority of the Jews and black race, engraved psychological scars in the psyche of the main protagonists in *Night* and *Kaffir Boy*. The work further seeks to showcase how trauma is experienced differently in regard to two environments: the Holocaust and the Apartheid.

Research Questions

The present study attempts to address the following research questions:

- How is trauma depicted in two different settings: the Holocaust and the Apartheid?
- What are the principal events that triggered trauma in the psyche of the main characters?
- What are the consequences of experiencing trauma on the main protagonists?

Methodology

For the fulfillment of our dissertation, we will rely on Cathy Caruth's theory of Trauma as presented in her work, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996). The use of this approach will help in examining the psychological impacts trauma left in the psyche of the two main characters in Wiesel's *Night* and Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy*.

Structure of the Paper

The present work will be divided into two chapters. The first chapter will revolve around the historical, literary, and theoretical contexts of Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Mark Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy*. The second chapter will examine the main protagonists' traumatic experiences in the light of Cathy Caruth's theory of Trauma.

Chapter I

Night and Kaffir Boy in Context: Historical,
Literary, and Theoretical Backgrounds

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present a general framework of the whole study. It is divided into three sections that introduce the historical, literary and theoretical backgrounds of Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Mark Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy*. The first section will be devoted to the historical overview of the Holocaust and the Apartheid. We shall bring forth the major events that have negatively affected the way of life of the Jews and the black South Africans. In the second section, a brief review of the Holocaust and the South African literature will be provided with special reference to first-hand accounts. We shall include some of the prominent Holocaust and South African writers and their major literary productions that were written to denounce and terminate the Holocaust and the Apartheid. The literary profiles of the authors will also be integrated in this section in order to understand the impact of Wiesel's and Mathabane's life experiences on their writings. In addition, the plot summaries of the two works under study will be presented. The third section will define Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma in general and cover the principal concepts that are going to be used to probe the aforementioned narratives.

1) Historical Background of *Night* and *Kaffir Boy*

1.1. The Roots of the Holocaust

The Holocaust refers to the deadliest events that began in 1941 and ended in 1945, during which the Nazi Germany and its allies murdered six million Jews as part of "the final solution" (Fischel 50). Their destruction machinery did not stop at Jews but involved other civilians as well including "Soviet prisoners of war, Jehovah's Witnesses, mentally retarded, physically handicapped or emotionally unstable Germans, Gypsies (the Roma and Sinti), German male homosexuals, trade unionists, political dissidents and clergymen who dared to speak out against Nazi policy" (Hellig 20). Indeed, the Jews have been target long before the outbreak of the Second World War. Throughout history, negative stereotypes were often set

against the Jews. They had been blamed for all humanity's shortfalls, natural disaster and tragedy. Therefore, they had always been subject to maltreatment and alienation.

During the Weimar republic (Germany's government from 1919 to 1933), the Jews as a group were accused of stabbing Germany in the back due to their defeat in the First World War. They were seen as a demonic force that poisoned the world with conflicting ideas such as exploitative capitalism, communism, conspiracy and above all plotting to take control over the world. Following the Great Depression that hit Germany in 1929, both its already struggled economy and its empirical government collapsed overnight. In this climate of bitterness, the Nazi party rose and took power in 1933 with Hitler as its Prime minister. Within a year, Hitler declared himself "Führer" and an absolute dictator. As a result, he took advantage of people's despair by offering them the Jews as convenient scapegoats and promising them to restore Germany's former greatness. Once in power, Hitler moved quickly to end the German democracy and turned it into a totalitarian state. On the basis of his anti-Semitic beliefs, Hitler and his supporters wasted no time tightening their grip on every aspect of the Jews' life. The brutal process destroyed Jewish people in accordance with the Nazi Germany anti-Semitic racist outlook. In this context, Jocelyn Hellig in her book *The Holocaust and Antisemitism* states, "The Jews were targeted for annihilation for the simple reason that they were born Jewish" (19).

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and World War II broke out. Within months, the Nazi plan to exterminate European Jewry became clear as they were immediately targeted and subjected to violence and humiliation. In a swift succession, many Jews were liquidated into ghettos, mostly in Warsaw and Lodz, as a stepping stone toward other policies. They were condemned to live behind brick walls and barbed wire under appalling conditions with little or nothing to eat. Cut off from their livelihood, the Jews greatly suffered from torturous beating, diseases and daily hard labor. Besides, they were forced to wear a yellow

star or badge so they could be easily identified. By 1940, the Nazis continued their march of conquest in Western Europe namely the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg, Belgium, France, in addition to Hungary annex parts of Romania, inclusive of Sighet (Wiesel's town) and other towns in northern Transylvania.

In the summer of 1941, with Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, the mass systematic murder of the Jews reached its peak. As part of operation Barbarossa, Germany launched an all war against what they called the Jewish Bolshevik danger. Following their annihilation policies, four special units of the S.S and police mobile task forces called "Einsatzgruppen", dispersed from north to south and began systematically shooting the Jews into mass graves. However, even this murderous method proved problematic for the Nazis since it was not fast and efficient enough. They once again forced the Jews into ghettos, but those were soon overpopulated, so they needed to find a "solution" to what they called the "Jewish problem". As an alternative solution, gas chamber and crematorium were introduced. In accordance with the decision of the "final solution" taken in "Wannsee Conference" to murder all the Jews everywhere across the face of Europe, many concentration camps in occupied Poland were constructed either as killing centers, death camps, labor camps or internment camps. Among them, Auschwitz and its sub-camps that numbered at least forty, and other main camps such as Belzec, Chelmno, Majdanek, Sobibor, and Treblinka.

These hastily-constructed locations acted as the central sites for the extermination of the Jewish people; they were accoutered with various destruction equipments as well as gas chambers and crematoria. Each camp was surrounded by electric barbed wire fences and guarded by the cruel regiment of "Totenkopfverbaende", also known as the SS' Death Head Units. "Few lived longer than six months; they died from starvation, disease, the rigors of hard labor, beatings, torture, and summary execution--by shooting, hanging, or gassing" (qtd.

in Miller 74). We might then understand that the Jew perished not only because of annihilation but also because of excessive hunger, labor, illnesses and epidemics.

In fact, most of the Nazis' genocidal projects were held in the most notorious camp, Auschwitz. Being the largest in German-occupied Poland, the majority of the deportees were shipped there. According to Jack R Fishel, "It was at Auschwitz that the bulk of the deported Jews were killed, and this extermination camp has since become synonymous with the Holocaust" (81). By 1944, the rate of extermination in Auschwitz reached its climax with the arrival of over 440,000 Hungarian Jews. They were transported en masse from Hungary across Slovakia and on to Auschwitz. Entire Jewish families were brutally rounded up from their homes or ghettos and forced into inhumanely overcrowded cattle cars under deplorable conditions. Upon entrance to Auschwitz, the Jews had to go through a selection, in which under the supervision of the SS doctors, the "strong and healthy" were appointed for hard labor and the debilitated to the gas chamber (Fischel 81). Those selected for forced labor were crammed into barracks called "the quarantine", where they were shaved of every hair on their bodies, dressed in prison uniforms and registered under numbers tattooed on their arms. The majority of the inmates were then sent to perform strenuous work in Auschwitz and its sub-camps (Fischel 83).

During the final months of war, The SS guards forced the surviving prisoners on death marches to Germany as an attempt to prevent the Soviet Armed Forces from releasing the remaining inmates. During these marches, hundreds of thousands died of maltreatment, execution, and hunger. Luckily, by April 1945, the Soviet troops started gradually liberating the Jews. On May 7, 1945, German armed forces surrendered to the Allies and World War II officially ended in Europe.

1.2. The Rise and Fall of the Apartheid

Apartheid refers to a policy of racial and political segregation that was prevalent in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. It constitutes one of the most peculiar and abhorrent forms of discrimination by which the white minority oppressed the black majority and other people of color. However, it is significant to note that racial segregation and white supremacy were only a continuation of injustices that were put in place a long time before the Apartheid was formally established. In the words of Athol Fugard, “Apartheid was the logical development of segregationist policies that extended back many years and through many South African governments” (36).

Being recognized for its strategic geographic sites, South Africa had always been a favorite destination for the major European colonial powers. In the early seventeenth century, the Dutch explorers were the first to settle in the Cape of Good Hope. Shortly after, the land was gradually populated by the Dutch farmers also known as the Boers or Afrikaners. Next, they were followed by the British colonizers who landed in the territory in 1775. For years, the two colonizing countries fought each other to obtain sovereignty over South Africa's riches. As new colonists, they pretended that they came with the intention to open up the route for trade towards Asia or to civilize the indigenous people who were regarded as “childlike or mentally retarded and therefore unable to take care of themselves” (Dlamini 37). But in reality, and especially with their discovery of gold and diamond, native South Africans were exploited and dehumanized at every turn. In fact, the only idea that the opposing parties endorsed was maintaining their wealth with the continued forced labor of the natives

Following the peace treaty of “Vereeniging” signed between the Boer republics and the British Empire at the end of the second Anglo-Boer war in 1902, legal segregation gradually began to take shape. By 1913, the Natives Land Act was enacted restricting the

amount of land available for black farmers to 7 percent and later in 1936 to 13 percent. Clark and Worger argue that this act was legislated to minimize competition between the whites and the natives who in turn managed to grow their agricultural production and sell their crops profitably. At the same time, the Act sought to increase the number of workers in “white farms, factories, and in the growing mining industry” (23). By virtue of such motions of events, dreadful Apartheid was introduced.

In 1948 the National Party, which was a very Dutch Boer nationalistic oriented, was elected to power in South Africa with D.F. Malan as its prime minister. Under his rule, the National Party proved to be an extremely divisive factor in the lives of the indigenous inhabitants. Once in power, they started strengthening the racial segregation that had begun under the Dutch and the British colonial rule in much as they reinforced their control over every aspect of life through the various coercive laws they set up. The aims of these laws as Athol Fugard argues is “to separate whites from nonwhites, blacks from other nonwhites, each black ethnic group from other black ethnic groups, and rural blacks from urban blacks” (48). In other words, Apartheid had severely disadvantaged the majority non-white population and kept them just above destitution simply because they did not share the skin color of the rulers.

In their book, *South Africa: The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, Nancy L. Clark and William H. Worger describe this system as follows: “Apartheid, literally ‘apartness’ or separateness in the Afrikaans and Dutch languages, is the name that was given to a policy of separating people by race, with regard to where they lived, where they went to school, where they worked, and where they died” (3). It may then be understood that the Apartheid called for the separate development of different racial groups based on strict racial hierarchies. As a start, the government instituted a four-tiered system through the Population Registration Act of 1950, classifying South Africans as either Bantu (black Africans), Coloureds (mixed race), Whites, or later in 1959 as Asian (Indian and Pakistani). In the same year, The Group Areas

Act was passed to set aside areas for different racial groups. They banned mixed race living in a country where different races had lived side by side for centuries. Under this act, all the blacks were forced off their land into designated zones; they were taken away to rural camps located in underdeveloped areas where they did not even have the right to own the place but only rent it since it was regarded as a white man's property (Clark and Worger 71).

Moreover, Pass Laws came into effect in 1952, requiring all black South Africans to carry identity documents known as "reference book". It included all their personal information that served as a proof of employment and identification whenever traveling outside of the assigned areas (Clark and Worger 76). Every black over the age of sixteen had to possess this passbook and if ever caught without, he or she was severely punished and imprisoned. These laws were further intensified with the introduction of The Separate Amenities Act which segregated municipal services such as buses, hospitals, beaches, theatres as well as schools and universities. That is to say, they separated public facilities wherein each one would only serve a specific race. With time, many other excessive laws were passed to further marginalize the black community from the whites.

No longer willing to endure the abuse and indignity of the Pass Laws and other oppressive legislations, black South Africans ventured to denounce the National Party's policies during a huge and pacific protest that took place in 1960 at Sharpeville. This critical event resulted in the killing of nearly seventy and wounding over 180 black people. Indeed, the Sharpeville Massacre marked the first turning points in the anti-Apartheid movement. Soon after, riots broke out and a state of emergency was declared all across the nation. Despite the banning of opposition parties such as the African National Congress, freedom fighters like Nelson Mandela continued their fight against the Apartheid regime and moved it underground. By 1962, Mandela was condemned to life imprisonment for conspiracy to terrorist acts. Meantime, other anti-apartheid activists like the leader of the "Black

Consciousness” movement Stephen Bantu Biko carried on resisting. Through his campaigns, he called blacks to take control of their own identities and liberate their mind from the idea of inferiority that Apartheid had animated for years.

In 1990, Nelson Mandela was freed at the age of 71 after ending 27 years in prison. Four years later, South Africa held its first multiracial election and elected Mandela as its first black president with the African National Congress winning 62 percent of the votes for the legislature. Thereby, the country attained political independence and with it, the Apartheid came to a definitive end. In the introduction to his book, *Rethinking the Rise and Fall of Apartheid: South Africa and World Politics*, Adrian Guelke claims, “His [Mandela] standing was a reflection not just of his own extraordinary qualities but also of the significance the world attached to the miracle of South Africa’s transition to democracy in 1994. The triumph of liberal-democracy constituted an amazing conclusion to the story of South Africa in the twentieth century” (1).

2) The Literary Backgrounds of *Night* and *Kaffir Boy*

2.1. An Introduction to the Holocaust Literature

The annihilation of the Jews by the Nazi Germany stands as one of the defining marks of the 20th Century. From the massive genocide of the Holocaust, various literary works came into prominence. Indeed, under the shadow of Nazism, numerous writers felt the need to inform mankind of the horrors and destruction inflicted upon the Jews by the German’s anti-Semitic beliefs. Accordingly, authors came up with powerful works of art that depict the cruelty of the Nazi as well as the sufferings of the European Jews. Their writings are known as the Holocaust literature. They have either written their personal reflections about this tragic moment of the 20th Century or described their own ordeals, which occurred at that time.

The Holocaust literature refers to the body of writings that present the atrocious conditions and unspeakable treatments that the Jews suffered from under Hitler's Germany. It has been extensively portrayed in a variety of forms including diaries, autobiographies, memoirs, prose fiction, poetry, and short stories dealing with the events of the Holocaust and its aftermath. The Holocaust literature is the outcome of the first, second and third generation survivor voices. It has been written in all European languages mainly in "Yiddish", as in the case of *Night*, and "Hebrew" (Harold Bloom, *Literature of the Holocaust* 25). Nonetheless, the purpose of this literary genre is to uncover the plight of the Jews community and ensure future generation to never forget the barbarism perpetrated by the Nazis. In this context, Harold Bloom claims that the recording of this viciousness "ease us into a position where we can imagine the struggle for those daily immersed in it" (*Literature of the Holocaust* 229).

Despite the fact that the Holocaust literature encloses a multitude of different forms, autobiographies and memoirs are unique in their representation of the events of the Holocaust. Samuel Totten highlights the importance of first person-accounts stating that such narratives depict a history that was experienced rather than something read about in a book or recounted by other person (107). It may be claimed, therefore, that survivor testimonies are of paramount importance since they procure authentic documentation of the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime. They also provide the best evidence of the devastation that the Holocaust created in the psyche of its victims. That is why numerous eyewitnesses conveyed the trauma of war through their rich and thought-provoking narratives.

Among the first contributions to the corpus of the Holocaust literature, we may cite the young Holocaust victim, Ann Frank and her popular work *The Diary of a Young Girl* (1947). The diary portrays Ann and her family's miserable life in the secret annex of an old building during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. It is regarded as the most read novel of the Shoah as well as the symbol of the six million Jewish victims murdered at the hands of the

Nazis (Cargas 51). Equally important, Gerda Weissmann's memoir *All but My Life in* (1957) also constitutes one of the first bodies of works written by a female Holocaust survivor. This personal novel captures her egregious experience as a victim of the Nazi savageness. It follows her six years' path from labor camps to her horrendous death march over the Czech borders, to be finally rescued by the American soldiers, near the end of the Second World War. Another name associated with the Holocaust Literature is the "the Dante of the twentieth century" (Roth 110), Primo Levi. His work, *Survival in Auschwitz* (1961) is an eyewitness novel that provides vivid and disturbing descriptions of the brutalities he had witnessed and endured during his confinement in Auschwitz. The text is a harrowing work that details his arrest, transportation and survival from the death concentration camp.

Last but not least, Elie Wiesel, the author under study, is one of the foremost writers of the Holocaust literature. His internationally acclaimed narrative, *Night* (1960) has reached a canonical status. This terrifying testimony acts as a reminder of the greatest crimes that took place amidst modern civilization. In the words of John K Roth: "Wiesel has helped create a literature intended to ensure that victims, living or dead, of any kind of inhumanity will never be forgotten" (4).

2.2. An Introduction to the South African Literature

As seen earlier, literature constitutes a very important part in the lives of the oppressed since it deals with societal realities and captures the destructive image of the world with its details. South African literature, for its part, depicts the belligerent atmosphere that characterized the twentieth century Apartheid South Africa. That era witnessed massive unequal divide between two very distinct races where racial acts were part of the black people's life and the hallmark that made it distinctive from other countries. In this perspective, Eileen Julien asserts that "South African literature is one of the richest and most

complex on the continent” (308). Racial abuses, unfair acts, poor education and many other brutal treatments were practiced on the majority of colored Africans. They were continually forced into positions of inferiority and subordination and were not treated as fully fleshed citizens. As a consequence, many writers put pen to paper to convey the country’s turbulent history as well as the traumatic experiences black people suffered from to the coming generations as a way of recording history.

Whether fiction or non-fiction, including drama, poetry, short stories, essays, and autobiographies, South African authors have produced strikingly varied and influential history of literary output meant to show their protest against the Apartheid and claim their existence. They have either written their works while in exile or from within the country itself. Robert Mossman states that oppression, confinement, remorse and exile are among the recurring themes dealt with by both black and white South Africans of British and Afrikaner descent (41). Moreover, bearing in mind that South Africa had a significant cultural diversity with various and complex ethnic and language groups, most of its literature was written in several African languages namely in Afrikaans and English (Mossman 41).

In a chapter entitled “African Literature”, Eileen Julien argues that “among the earliest narratives of black life under the Apartheid are autobiographical novels set in urban South Africa” (308). As a matter of fact, the first black literary figure to tackle the issue of the Apartheid was Peter Abrahams with his path-breaking autobiography, *Tell Freedom: Memories of Africa* (1954). Set during the 1920’s and 1930’s, the narrative portrays Abrahams’ dreadful childhood during the terrible times of discrimination among races in South Africa. It also reflects his intellectual growth and his near adventitious political activism due to his desire to write and consider himself a free independent mind. Another book of the same plight is Es'kia Mphahlele’s *Down Second Avenue* (1959). This personal account covers a period between 1924-1959 and details his experience growing up in

segregated South Africa by recalling the indelible impact the Apartheid has left on his psyche, feelings, and life. Bloke Modisane also represents an important contribution to the canon of South African literature. In *Blame Me on History* (1963), Modisane bears first-hand witness to the injustices and racist acts inflicted upon the blacks living under the laws of the Apartheid's cruel machinery of oppression.

Finally yet importantly, Mark Mathabane is among the well-known South African writers who intended to share people the aspects of South African life under the Apartheid through his text, *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa* (1986). This poignant work sheds light on how utterly cruel and dehumanizing the system of the Apartheid was for a young black boy living in the ghettos of Alexandra. In an analysis of the African literature, Apollo Amoko calls attention to the significance of each of Mphahlele's, Modisane's and Mathabane's aforementioned autobiographies by advancing that all of them used their first-hand accounts to narrate their experience as a way to denounce the ruthless system of the Apartheid (203).

White South African writers also felt an overriding concern to represent the disdains and the ordeals of the black population through all the definite genres of South African literature. Among the most notable literary figures that played an important role in shaping the history of the Apartheid and post-Apartheid South Africa, one may mention Alan Paton's *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1948), Nadine Gordimer's *Burger's Daughter* (1979), J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999), and Athol Fugard's *The Blood Knot* (1961), to name but few.

2.3. Literary Profile of Elie Wiesel

Elie Wiesel is a Jewish Romanian author, a Holocaust survivor and a human rights activist. He was born in Sighet, Romania, on September 30, 1928 to Sholmo and Sarah Wiesel. He was the only son in a family of four children, with three other sisters. In 1944, he

was deported along with his family by the Nazi German to Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland. Later on, he and his father were relocated to Buchenwald, where his father ultimately perished shortly before the emancipation of the camp in April 1945.

After liberation, Elie found asylum in France, where he attended Sorbonne University. There, he was highly influenced by the existentialist writings of Sartre and Camus; thus, he studied philosophy, psychology and literature. In the meantime, he supported himself working as a choirmaster and teaching Hebrew. Later, he became a reporter for both French and Israeli newspapers. In 1956, through the encouragement of the French Nobel Laureate for Literature, François Mauriac, Wiesel broke his ten years vow of silence and wrote a Yiddish version of his traumatic experience under the Holocaust titled: *Un di Velt Hot Geshvigen (And the World Would Remain Silent)*. Two years later, the book was shortened and published in French under the title of *La Nuit* (1958). An English translation entitled *Night* appeared in 1960.

His works *Dawn* (1961) and *Day* (1962) that were released after *Night* form *The Night Trilogy*. They are fictional post-holocaust books that speak about the scars left upon Wiesel after his liberation from the concentration camps. Since then, he has written loads of novels, essays, plays, and historical studies such as *The Gates of the Forest* (1964), *Legends of Our Time* (1968), *Salmon or the Madness of God* (1974), *The Fifth Son* (1985), and *Hostage* (2010).

Wiesel moved to New York in 1955 and was granted a U.S. citizenship in 1963. Thereafter, in 1969 he married Marion Erster Rose, an Australian Holocaust survivor, who translated many of his books into English. Having endured the horrors of the Holocaust, he devoted much of his adult life advocating justice, peace and fighting against human rights violations across the globe. He was honored with numerous awards including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal, Medal of Liberty Award, and the

rank of Grand-Croix in the French Legion of Honor. In 1986, he won the Nobel Peace Prize. In the same year, together with his wife, he established The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity to fight against injustice and intolerance throughout the world. Wiesel passed away on July 2, 2016, at his condo in Manhattan.

2.4. Literary Profile of Mark Mathabane

Mark Mathabane from his real name Johannes Mathabane, was born in Alexandra, Gauteng, South Africa on October 18, 1960 to illiterate parents Jackson and Magdalene Mathabane. He was the eldest among seven siblings. As a child, his life was dominated by devastating poverty, violence and relentless humiliation under the oppressive system of the Apartheid. His mother greatly cheered him to excel in education in order to escape the confinements of the Apartheid; thus, he devoted himself to receiving an education and found survival in sports and books. In an interview with *Time* magazine, Mathabane declared: “At 10 years old, I contemplated suicide. What kept me going was my discovery of books. In the world of books I could travel around the world, go to the moon, do great things. That made it worthwhile to live another day” (qtd. in Mathabane, Mark 1960–).

In 1978, with the help of Wimbledon tennis star Stan Smith, Mathabane managed to obtain a tennis scholarship and immigrated to the U.S. to attend Limestone College in South Carolina. Subsequently, he changed colleges several times. He then went to the Dowling College in 1983, where he received a degree in economics and was appointed editor of the College newspaper. After obtaining an honorary doctorate degree from Wittenberg University, Mathabane dedicated himself to writing and lecturing. In 1986, he penned his first autobiographical account, *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*. The book became a national bestseller and earned him a Christopher Award as well as a considerable literary career.

In 1987, Mark married the Caucasian writer, Gail Ernsberger. After that, he went on to write several books reflecting racial issues mainly *Kaffir Boy in America: An Encounter with Apartheid* (1990), which is a sequel to *Kaffir Boy* (1986), and a non-fictional book titled *Love in Black and White: The Triumph of Love over Prejudice and Taboo* (1992). Co-authored with his wife, the latter reveals the nature of interracial relationships in America. Not to mention his other works including *African Women: Three Generations* (1994), *Miriam's Song* (2000), *The Proud Liberal: A Novel* (2010), and *The Lessons of Ubuntu* (2018).

Thanks to Matabane's literary works and reputation of a humanist and a speaker, he became amongst the few to secure a fellowship in the Whitehouse under U. S. president Bill Clinton. By 2000, he established "The Magdalene Scholarship Fund", to assist the needy children attending Bovet Primary School in Alexandra, South Africa. Today, he lives in Greensboro, North Carolina and works as a lecturer in schools, universities and libraries across America.

2.5. Plot Overview of *Night*

Night is an eyewitness account relating Elie Wiesel's traumatic experiences as a teenager in the Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Buna, Gleiwitz, and Buchenwald during the last year of the Holocaust. The narrative serves not only as a guide to prevent further destruction and death but also as a declaration of the plight that was the life of millions of European Jews during the Holocaust.

The book opens in 1941 in Eliezer's hometown in Sighet, Transylvania, where the twelve-year-old boy was conducting a peaceful Jewish life with his parents and three sisters. He was extremely devoted to religion and spent most of his time studying the Talmud and Cabbala. Unfortunately, the secure world of Wiesel was completely shattered when in the spring of 1944, the town was occupied and invaded by the Nazis. Eventually, all the Jews in

Sighet were deported to the concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. Upon arrival, Eliezer and his father were separated from his mother and sisters. During his confinement there, he was profoundly traumatized as he saw babies burnt alive in open pit furnace. Not to mention the never ending and exasperating selection processes he was subjected to. In the course of these selections, those who were in a good physical shape were kept for hard labor, whereas those too exhausted or too ill were sent to be put to death in the gas chambers or crematoria.

Weeks later, Eliezer and his father were shorn of their hair, dehumanized with prison clothes and ultimately stripped of their names, since they were identified with numbers tattooed on their arms. Not long after, both of them were transferred to Buna, a slave labor camp, where they were daily overworked, humiliated and exposed to hunger as well as torturous beatings. Eliezer also witnessed the merciless hanging of three Jewish boys suspected of blowing up a power plant in the camp, among them a young "Pipel". In the midst of these horrors, the orthodox Jewish boy started losing faith in God's deity and power.

In the winter of 1945, following Eliezer's surgery on the foot, the Germans implemented the last stages of the Final Solution. The SS troops began evacuating Buna as the Russians were slowly approaching with the attempt of liberating the Jews prisoners. All the captives including Eliezer and his father went on a fifty mile trek death march under a snowstorm to Gleiwitz. Those who could not keep up the pace were shot on the spot by the ruthless SS guards. After three days, they were once again forced on a terrible ten-day journey in roofless cattle cars. Because of starvation, icy cold, and exhaustion, many lost their lives before reaching the Buchenwald camp in Germany. In April 1945, three months after Eliezer's father succumbed to death, the camp was liberated by the Soviet Union.

2.6. Plot Overview of *Kaffir Boy*

Kaffir Boy is an autobiographical recounting of Mark Mathabane's horrendous childhood under the most repressive period of the Apartheid in South Africa. The book follows his transition from a demeaning life to a dignified one. Written eight years before the abolishment of the Apartheid, Mathabane made it clear that the narrative's purpose is to make the world understand that "apartheid cannot be reformed: it has to be abolished" (*Kaffir Boy* ix).

The book begins in the winter of 1965, with the five-year-old Johannes being awakened by the sound of the Alexandra police squad riding the shantytown of Johannesburg. Immediately after hearing the screams of the police, his parents escaped and left him and his siblings alone at risk of being imprisoned for not having a correct passbook. In consequence, Johannes had to deal with the harassment and threats of the Peri-Urban authorities who were questioning him about the whereabouts of his parents.

His father, a menial laborer, was constantly unemployed and thus imprisoned several times for pass-laws infractions. It is worth mentioning that according to the Apartheid laws, being unemployed was regarded as a gross crime and a violation of the white government's implemented legislations. During that time, Johannes and his relatives were daily exposed to arbitrary brutalities, extreme poverty and malnutrition. Because his father was the only one providing financial assistance, the family was left with neither money for food nor for house rent. Every day was a struggle; they nearly got expelled from their tiny dilapidated shack and had to dig in the garbage for leftovers every morning to assuage their hunger. Desperate from the situation, Mathabane started hanging out with a boy gang that almost got him involved in prostitution for male migrant workers in exchange for food.

Once Johannes reached seven, his mother managed to enroll him into school after numerous rules and regulations that acted as brick walls to prevent him from getting an education. There, he was frequently punished for his parents not being able to pay for his school supplies and uniform. In spite of the physical abuse he was subjected to, he was extremely intelligent and hard working as he finished his first year of school with top of the class marks. In the course of 1970, on a late Friday evening while Johannes was returning home after playing soccer at the stadium on Twelfth Avenue, he had the misfortune of witnessing a brutal murder that petrified and annihilated him to the point where he became suicidal. Fortunately, his mother helped him overcome his trauma as she taught him that throughout much strife in his life he must withstand.

Some time afterwards, Johannes' beloved granny began working for a wealthy white family that sent him old books. Through these books, he had learned to read English. The Smiths also gave him a tennis racket encouraging him to engage in sport. Since then, he found an immense love for reading and even stronger passion for tennis. He joined the high school tennis team and started playing in tournaments. In 1974, Mathabane won his first tennis championship and from then on, he played and won multiple matches. Eventually, he was noticed by the famous tennis player, Stan Smith, who helped him gain a tennis scholarship to an American college. Equipped with education and student visa, Mathabane flew for the United States on September 16, 1978 to pursue his dreams of becoming a well-known tennis player.

3) Theoretical Context: Cathy Caruth's Theory of Trauma

3.1. Trauma Theory

Trauma theory is a literary theory that has gained recognition during the 1990s thanks to the Cornell Comparative Literature specialist, Cathy Caruth. She is one of the preeminent

theorists in modern trauma research alongside other scholars and psychoanalysts like: Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Geoffrey Hartman and Dominick Lacapra. Her popular works: *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), figure as standing points of reference for all researchers who seek to study trauma. For the purpose of this research, we will rely on her second book *Unclaimed Experience* (1996).

Indeed, trauma as a subject touches different works from a wide range of disciplines including psychology, sociology, history, neurology and literature. There is no doubt that trauma has always been a recurrent theme used by authors and writers throughout history. In addition, many literary critics, scholars, and psychoanalysts adopted and applied trauma theory to analyze and interpret literary texts. In this regard, Dolores Herrero and Sonia Baelo-Allué in the introduction to their book, *The Splintered Glass*, state that “trauma theory can prove to be useful in analyzing and understanding colonial traumas such as forced migration, sexual, racial and political violence, dispossession, segregation, genocide, and the intergenerational transmission of trauma, to mention but some” (xvii).

In her book, *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth has taken the Freudian groundwork of trauma and used it as a reliable tool to investigate the impact and representation of trauma in literature and history. She has drawn on Freud’s psychic manifestation of trauma to explore and analyze traumatic incidents in literary works. In essence, she reconsiders both Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Moses and Monotheism* to build her conception of trauma theory. In this respect, she claims, “If Freud turns to literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing” (3). What Caruth seems to imply here, is the fact that psychoanalysis and literature are two complementary fields; each one stands as a cornerstone to the other.

Trauma is regarded as a violent outer force that threatens to shatter and disrupt an individual's psyche. Generally, people get traumatized when they come across events beyond the usual human experiences which result in emotional distress and anxiety. Caruth defines trauma as "an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (11). Using the example of Tasso's *Jerusalem Liberated* from the Greek mythology, Caruth explains that "trauma is a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (3). She affirms that unlike a wound of the flesh which may heal gradually, a wound of the mind breaks the victim's experience of time, wholeness and sense of self (4). This mental wound is described as been endured "too soon, too unexpectedly to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (Caruth 4). From the above definitions, we understand that trauma is an intrusive phenomenon that comes as a repetitive never ending event in which the experience is so intensely painful that the mind is unable to properly assimilate it.

Throughout *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth also draws special attention on historical trauma, especially on the immensely traumatic Holocaust. Nonetheless, other individual and collective traumas that have "a history of oppression, victimization, or massive group trauma exposure" in common can be accounted as historical traumas (qtd. in Mohatt et al. 2). She has not only credited Freud with understanding personal and collective history but also elaborated on both. Caruth points out, among other things, that the trauma of an individual can lead to the trauma of the whole community. She states that "one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another" (14). For her, trauma is not limited to an individual, which means that the survivor is not the only proprietor of trauma. In this sense, she notes: "history like trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's

traumas” (24). This viewpoint denotes the intergenerational aspect of trauma that can be transmitted in the course of time and across the generations.

Accordingly, historical trauma can be defined as “a complex and collective trauma experienced over time and across generations by a group of people who share an identity, affiliation, or circumstance” (qtd. in Mohatt et.al 2). Equally important, Mohatt et al have noted that traumatic memories affect not only those who have personally gone through oppression and abuse but also future generations through the intergenerational aspect of trauma. To substantiate this claim, he asserts: “the trauma spans multiple generations, such that contemporary members of the affected group may experience trauma-related symptoms without having been present for the past traumatizing event(s)” (2). In this context, Michelle M. Sotero in his article “A Conceptual Model of Historical Trauma”, writes that the primary feature of historical trauma is that “the trauma is transmitted to subsequent generations through physiological, environmental, and social pathways resulting in an intergenerational cycle of trauma response” (95). From this perspective, one may argue that the symptoms of the Holocaust and the Apartheid impacted and still impact the contemporary generations of Jewish and black people today.

Moreover, Caruth conflates history and trauma and suggests that history fails to adequately depict traumatic occurrences such as wars. Just like Freud, she questions history saying: “we can begin to recognize the possibility of a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential” (11). Trauma’s literary representation for Caruth stems from its non-referentiality as it prevents the authentic writing of history. She adds that “through the notion of trauma” a “rethinking of reference” allows us to “resituate” history by “permitting [it] to arise where *immediate understanding* may not” (11). This means that understanding disastrous and tragic events cannot come about swiftly and straightforwardly since memory needs time to revisit the past and reconsider what has happened.

On the same note, Caruth has introduced her concept of the “inherent latency” of trauma in which the survivors of such incidents are unable to understand their trauma in immediacy but rather after a lapse of some time. Thus, there is a temporary dissociation in which the meaning and value of the experiences are undetermined and victims often feel like they are witnessing instead of experiencing the event. Caruth explains that trauma is “a shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind’s experience of time” (61). This dissociation of consciousness gives rise to not only the psychological distress but also the incapacity to pinpoint or understand the significance of a given incident. In this regard, Caruth describes the latency of trauma as “the period during which the effects of the experience are not apparent” (17). For her, the latency of trauma is what hinders a victim from fully comprehending or representing a traumatic experience because it is not known directly but only through the return of the event in the shape of overwhelming memories.

As we have already stated, the violent incidents are not properly grasped as they occurred but return later in repetitive phenomena. In line with this, it is worth mentioning that most of the persons who undergo traumatic psychic shock suffer from a multitude of emotional and behavioral symptoms diagnosed as “Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder”. The latter refers to the belated manifestation of trauma that comes as a delayed reaction to horrendous events. Such events are experienced as gaps; they are extremely outrageous and incomprehensible to the victim that they are not entirely endured at the moment of its occurrence and therefore become inaccessible to deliberate recall. As Caruth notes: “trauma is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all” (17). The victim ultimately suffers through this forgetting as the mind attempts to comprehend the event that was not consciously experienced. Consequently, the event paradoxically comes back in the form of literal reenactments, intrusive thoughts, hallucinations, flashbacks, and nightmares,

making the witness relive and feel the fear, helplessness, anxiety, and loss of oneself repeatedly as the past keeps on intruding the present.

Caruth further highlights the peculiar and paradoxical complexity of trauma, which according to her, falls primarily into two categories: the trauma of survival and the trauma of death. In her opinion, survivors of traumatic incidents experience a double burden in the sense that they face the death of the beloved, and paradoxically, they perceive their own survival as a trauma itself. The survivors are not able to grasp the calamity of death of so many people nor are they in a position to see their survival because they are constantly haunted by flashbacks from their cataclysmic encounter. Accordingly, the survivors' minds oscillate between the trauma of death and the trauma of survival hindering them to have a normal and stable life. The very fact of working through the trauma very much disturbs the survivors as they become submerged with the feeling of guilt for remaining alive, and this is exactly why "the survival itself can be a crisis" (Caruth 9).

Another important point is that trauma has both destructive and constructive effects on its victims. On the one hand, it can shatter the stability of the human mind, and on the other hand, it can be constructive since it acts as a means of construction that procures the victim with the force to fight and survive. To sustain this claim, Caruth notes that "trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival" (58). This argument is further explained by Caruth when she asserts that "trauma theory often divides itself into two basic trends: the focus on trauma as the "shattering" of a previously whole self and the focus on the survival function of trauma as allowing one to get through an overwhelming experience by numbing oneself to it" (131).

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have established some background information in order to set the base of the present dissertation. First, we have given an overall view of the two major historical phenomena, the Holocaust and the Apartheid, by bringing forth the main events that took place during those periods. Following this, the light has been shed on the literary contexts of the study. In this section, the focus has been laid on the Holocaust and the South African literature with special attention to firsthand writings. Then, we have explored the biographies of Elie Wiesel and Mark Mathabane by highlighting their foremost works and accomplishments. Thereafter, we have introduced the synopsis of *Night* and *Kaffir Boy* to provide a general insight into the texts. In the end, we have examined trauma theory as described by Cathy Caruth and covered the concepts of historical trauma, the belated symptoms of trauma, and the duality of trauma. All these elements will be expounded in the second chapter. Dealing with trauma, the upcoming chapter will be devoted to the examination of the traumatic experiences of the main characters, Eliezer and Johannes.

Chapter II

Trauma in Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Mark

Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy*

Introduction

The present chapter will consist of an analysis of the two main characters in *Night* and *Kaffir Boy* through the lens of Cathy Caruth's theory of Trauma. The first section will present historical trauma in both novels. Then, the second section will reveal Eliezer's and Johannes' belated symptoms to traumatic events. The third section will explore the duality of trauma that has both destructive and constructive repercussions on the protagonists.

1) Historical Trauma and its Continuing Impacts

The unspeakable events of the Holocaust and the Apartheid left in their wake indelible impacts not only on the survivors, but on the subsequent generations as well. That is why both phenomena are deemed as historical traumas passed down from one generation to the next. Historical trauma is defined as “a complex and collective trauma experienced over time and across generations by a group of people who share an identity, affiliation, or circumstance” (qtd. in Mohatt et.al 2). In *Night* and *Kaffir Boy*, the transference and permanency of the trauma caused by the Holocaust and the Apartheid are demonstrated through the perspective of trauma survivors, Eliezer Wiesel and Johannes Mathabane.

1.1. Historical Trauma in *Night*

The Holocaust was a distressing and shocking period in history that constituted a source of pain, torture, and trauma to its victims. It was deliberately orchestrated to terrorize and exterminate all the Jews across the face of Europe; therefore, it was regarded by many as a historical trauma. Indeed, the painful memories of the Nazis' tyranny and violence plagued the survivors from one generation to another. This means that the negative impact of the Holocaust did not limit itself to victims, but instead continued to exist among the extended generations. As Gamze Sabanci Uzun asserts, “The Jews will not stop remembering the Holocaust for it is a part of their collective identity” (454). It may then be understood that the

events of the Holocaust had and will always have devastating outcomes on the Jewish population because it was collectively experienced.

Throughout his memoir *Night*, Wiesel not only represents the disastrous effects and the ugly face of war but also bears all the psychological scars which have remained with him as well as his community. He vividly narrates the surreal chaotic realities of the concentration camps with crematoria chimneys ejecting human ashes and describes scenes of unspeakable tortures. In doing so, Wiesel plays the role of a witness and is the source of the legacy of genocide and the Jews' historical trauma. We deduce therefore that Wiesel's *Night* amply substantiates Caruth's observation that "history is not only the passing on of a crisis but also the passing on of a survival that can only be possessed within a history larger than any single individual or any single generation" (71). This explains that trauma is not a mere individual incident since it can be transmitted across time and space to affect later generations, including those who have never experienced the trauma directly.

At the end of the preface to *Night*, Elie Wiesel reveals the importance of the role of the witness in preventing future calamities and expresses concern for what his traumatic experiences may mean for the subsequent generations. He writes, "The witness has forced himself to testify. For the youth of today, for the children who will be born tomorrow. He does not want his past to become their future" (xv). This quote shows that Wiesel lives in a constant state of fear that the Holocaust will preoccupy the inner world of the coming generations who, in turn, will inherit the burdens of the past. He is anxious that the Holocaust events which have generated his trauma and consumed so much of his life and identity will cause lasting damages to the generations to come. This illustrates Caruth's stance when she argues that an individual's trauma is tightly linked to the trauma of others (14).

Towards the end of his preface, Wiesel also conveys that “For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead *and* for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory” (xv). He also incites future generations to never forget the barbarity of the Nazis by asserting, “To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time” (xv). These passages indicate Wiesel’s recognition that remembering history is important both for “the dead” and “the living”. Although the Holocaust has literally come to an end, Wiesel strives to engrave the terrors of the Holocaust forever in the collective memory of the Jews, so that the past will not repeat itself. Yet, it is irrefutable that in bearing witness, Wiesel not only acknowledges the shared responsibility of the survivors to narrate their horrifying encounters, but also educates the present-day Jews about their ancestral history under the dictatorship of the Nazis. Likewise, Wiesel alludes that even those who were not part of the past ordeals can be affected by the collective memory of the Holocaust which can easily linger in most people’s minds.

As we have outlined above, in writing his testimonial account *Night*, Wiesel hopes that his personal story will serve as evidence of the horrors of the Holocaust and ensure that such a man-made catastrophe will never happen again. However, against all odds, the legacy of the Holocaust continues to leave its mark on its direct survivors as well as second and third generation survivors. In this vein, Ellen Fine argues, “If survivors such as Elie Wiesel bear witness to their descent into Holocaust darkness, their legacy of night has surely cast a long shadow upon the succeeding generation” (“Transmission of Memory” 187).

Another point that is worth mentioning is that historical trauma is multigenerational since its aspects are endured by “specific cultural groups across generations” (Mohatt et al. 2). The idea of intergenerational transmission of trauma is clearly discussed in Wiesel fictional novel *The Fifth son* published in 1985. The theme of the text revolves around the fact that the

Holocaust will forever have an effect on the Jewish consciousness. Wiesel shows the continuing influence of the Holocaust trauma on survivors' descendants by narrating how the life of a child is impinged by the traumatic past of his parents. He writes, "children of survivors are almost as traumatized as the survivors themselves" (*The Fifth Son* 192). He adds, "I suffer from an event I have not even experienced" (192). The child suffers from the negative consequences of his parents' trauma without being present at the core of the traumatic incidents. This confirms the view point of Mohatt et al. who argue that "contemporary members of the affected group may experience trauma-related symptoms without having been present for the past traumatizing event(s)" (2).

1.2. Historical Trauma in *Kaffir Boy*

During the Apartheid era, black South Africans suffered from many discriminatory laws that shattered their lives and devastated their society. As a system of racial discrimination, exploitation, and oppression, the Apartheid left along its path an extremely traumatized community with its effect being felt by generations of black South Africans. As we have seen earlier, historical trauma is a common traumatic event that continually affects generations of offspring. For instance, the opening paragraphs of *Kaffir Boy* reveal the ubiquity of the Apartheid violence that had plagued South Africa and that had caused an enduring legacy of trauma. Like the Holocaust, the Apartheid impacts not only individuals and groups that have directly experienced the violence, but also multiple generations of the descendants of survivors.

Mathabane provides a detailed description of the blacks' experience highlighting the fact that the trauma of the Apartheid came into being long way before his existence. He starts to set the scene for the upcoming events by describing the warning signs written at the entrance of Alexandra and forbids black people to enter white areas, "Warning: This Road

Passes Through Proclaimed Bantu Locations, Any Person Who Enters The Location Without A Permit Renders Himself Liable for Prosecution” (3). He also refers to the separation of neighborhoods into “Indians”, “Coloureds” and “Blacks”, revealing the prevalent racial classifications that aimed at segregating race groups according to their ethnicity. In doing so, he divulges how blackness was a symbol of inferiority and the triggering factor of black people psychological shock and trauma. As Matshine claims, “apartheid chokes black lives, suffocates black minds, and fills them with pain and hate” (3).

Furthermore, Mathabane recalls the marginalization and alienation that relegated South Africa’s indigenous inhabitants to second-class citizens in their own homeland by asserting: “Many of these blacks were as poor as church mice. In South Africa, there's a saying that to be black is to be at the end of the line when anything of significance had. So these people were considered and treated as dregs of society, aliens in the land of their birth” (4). This shows the extent to which the Apartheid daily undermined the foundations of black people's identity and dignity since it degraded them as individuals and damaged the integrity of their home and community. Moreover, the above passage not only foreshadows the future life that is awaiting Johannes but also discloses the prevalence of interethnic violence in South Africa that would eventually generate notable repercussions on Mathabane's sense of identity and belonging.

In order to understand how the trauma of the Apartheid is generated, it is important to evoke history and be aware that racial discrimination prevailed for centuries in South Africa leading to historical trauma that impacted and still impacts the psychic landscape of the contemporary generations of black people. South Africa is characterized by a history of mass violence and indescribable forms of human right abuse, not only from the legacy of the Apartheid, but long before. The arrival of European colonial powers such as the Dutch and later the British led to a history of exploitation and trauma in South Africa, where blacks were

constantly subjugated and used as indentured slaves. Hence, one may argue that the historical trauma of the Apartheid itself is a result of colonialism.

Unlike Wiesel, who is a first generation Holocaust survivor at the root of the cycle of the transmission of historical trauma, Mathabane is the one who inherited the legacy of the Apartheid and relives the memories of his ancestors. He was caught up in the historical and social process of trauma that violently and destructively shaped his life and actions and formed his self-perception. Although at only the age of five, he was not yet aware of the outside racist policies of the Apartheid, he felt the past trauma of his parents and endured its impacts through its present effects. As we have already mentioned, members of a given group may experience “trauma-related symptoms” although they were not part of the group who suffered the traumatic event or exposure (Mohatt et al. 2). It may then be deduced that the Apartheid is a collective burden that shows that even those who have never experienced traumatic stress can exhibit signs and symptoms of trauma.

In regard to this matter, Caruth underlines that the trauma of one individual can lead to the trauma of the whole community. She claims: “one's own trauma is tied up with the trauma of another” (14). Basically, the trauma of the Apartheid lingered on Johannes' mind and transferred to him via his parents mainly because he grew up in a constant fear that everything will fall apart, and with the apprehension that all blacks were at risk of being violated and killed at any moment at the hands of the merciless system of the Apartheid. As a result, he developed a feeling of fright and was constantly perturbed by nightmares he had been having since his infancy. He says: “I was wide awake and terrified. All night long I had been having nightmares in which throngs of black people sprawled dead in pools of red blood, surrounded by all sorts of slimy creepy creatures. These nightmares had plagued me since I turned five two weeks ago” (5).

This passage indicates that Johannes' repeated nightmares are manifestations of the debilitating consequences of the Apartheid trauma. From the beginning, he points out to the presence of anguish in his life; an anguish that has its roots not in his direct experience with racial discrimination, but in the effects transfused to him via his parents. Besides, the nightmares that Johannes has been having are regarded as "historical trauma response" (Sotero 96), in the sense that the manifestation of his emotion and conception of blackness came in the form of belated reactions that plagued him at a young age. In this regard, we may say that Mathabane is an example of how "history, like trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas" (Caruth 24).

2) The Belated Symptoms of Trauma

Trauma and the brutal way in which the past haunts and defines the present moments constitute the central issues of Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Mark Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy*. Indeed, the main protagonists, Eliezer and Johannes, represent traumatized characters that perfectly correspond to the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder victims. As Cathy Caruth defines it: "post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, [which] describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often uncontrolled, repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (57-58).

2.1. Trauma and its Belated Manifestation in *Night*

The story of the twelve-year-old Eliezer begins with his childhood in Sighet, Transylvania where he is strongly devoted to studying the Cabbala and Jewish mysticism. He is very religious and reached out to God repeatedly, "By day I studied Talmud and by night I would run to the synagogue to weep over the destruction of the Temple" (3). His life takes turning point when in the spring of 1944 the German soldiers invades Sighet and transports the Jews in inhumanly overcrowded cattle cars to Auschwitz camp. Once there, the

nightmarish journey of Eliezer starts. Upon entrance, he is immediately greeted by the dreaded words of the SS officers and the smell of burning flesh. He recalls how the German guard pointed at the crematorium announcing, “Over there. Do you see the chimney over there? Do you see it? And the flames, do you see them?” (Yes, we saw the flames.) “Over there, that's where they will take you. Over there will be your grave. You still don't understand? You sons of bitches. Don't you understand anything? You will be burned! Burned to a cinder! Turned into ashes!” (30-31).

The words uttered by the SS officer have a damaging effect on Eliezer's psyche as they leave him “petrified” and “stunned”. As Caruth asserts, “trauma is a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind” (3). Although Eliezer's trauma arisen from an external factor, it greatly overwhelms his internal state. This evokes that even if Eliezer is not physically harmed, the life threatening situation in which he finds himself weighted much on his psyche because it renders him hugely impotent and emotionally numb.

Thereafter, Eliezer is submitted to a selection where he is examined by the infamous Doctor Mengele to determine his usefulness, and then is appointed for hard labor. Subsequently, what the SS guard foreshows at the beginning becomes reality. While Eliezer is walking in the line towards the barracks, he witnesses small babies being tossed into the burning chimney. Wiesel narrates this heart rending episode by stating: “Not far from us, flames, huge flames, were rising from a ditch. Something was being burned there. A truck drew close and unloaded its hold: small children. Babies! Yes, I did see this, with my own eyes ... children thrown into the flames... So that was where we were going [...] A little farther on, there was another, larger pit for adults” (32).

The fact of seeing human beings burnt alive and thrown into flames very much sickens Eliezer. His experience is so far beyond the normal that he cannot be psychologically

prepared for. In this respect, Caruth notes, “the traumatic accident the confrontation with death takes place too soon, too suddenly, too unexpectedly, to be fully grasped by consciousness” (101). Eliezer is hugely shocked at seeing such a human-made catastrophe that he thinks he must be dreaming, that it is not possible that something like this could be happening. He writes, “I pinched myself: Was I still alive? Was I awake? ...No. All this could not be real. A nightmare perhaps... (32). This explains that the incident Eliezer witnessed was so unpredictable and difficult to discern that his mental status greatly impacted his psyche and caused him both pain and illusion.

Indeed, since Eliezer’s trauma remained outside the realm of understanding, he keeps wondering how men could act so violently towards another human being. It could be claimed that this “incomprehensibility” is formed by the fact that he was not fully conscious at that moment. Consequently, he cannot assimilate the event immediately but rather belatedly in the repetitive unconscious unwilling symptoms (Caruth 6). This point is further supported by Harold Bloom in his *Bloom’s Guides*. According to him, “*Night* is a mystical text. At its heart lies an unsolvable puzzle centering on the incomprehensibility of evil, an incomprehensibility that never ceases snagging the mind, engaging and perplexing it, thoroughly frustrating the understanding and defying the rational” (29).

Right after the aforesaid incident, Eliezer starts to suffer from sleep disturbance, “(Is it any wonder that ever since then, sleep tends to elude me?)” (32). This implies that Eliezer is in a continuous struggle with the image of the burning bodies and is completely haunted by the vision of the dead. In fact, the reason why he suffers from insomnia is that he cannot understand how and why such a thing is taking place. He is emotionally unstable and in a disturbed situation that he does not even realize what he saw. Equally important, Eliezer’s inability to sleep is caused by the failure to absorb the totality of his personal trauma into consciousness as he is absent-minded. In other words, it is Eliezer’s lack of presence at the

core of traumatic experience that disturbs and troubles his ability to sleep in such a way that he is helplessly trying to understand what is not grasped in the first place. In this perspective, Caruth claims, “trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature the way it was precisely not known in the first instance returns to haunt the survivor later on” (4).

Even before he experiences the concentration camps in the full extent of them, he already becomes a changed man. The child that he used to be, the hopeful child who believed so deeply and desperately in God is being devoured by the flames of the crematorium. Wiesel states, “I too had become a different person. The student of Talmud, the child I was, had been consumed by the flames. All that was left was a shape that resembled me. My soul had been invaded—and devoured—by a black flame” (37). At this point, Eliezer is truly hopeless because he has lost a sense of himself as a human being. He was violently ripped of everything that makes him who he is, namely his individuality and sanctity. This denotes the Caruthian standpoint when she argues that trauma is “the breach in the mind’s experience of time, self, and the world is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event” (4). In one single night, his harmonious life turned upside down since he changed into an utterly miserable and lifeless boy. As a consequence of the horrors and cruelty he witnessed, Eliezer becomes thoroughly estranged from “*The student of Talmud*” (emphasis added) he used to be. He was severely affected by the course of the events that his trauma caused him breakdown and destruction of identity, leaving devastating effects on his psyche and welfare.

Succeeding the aforementioned passage, Wiesel explains how after the shattering of his identity, he is cast out from reality and frozen in time, “So many events had taken place in just a few hours that I had completely lost all notion of time. When had we left our homes? And the ghetto? And the train? Only a week ago? One night? *One single night*? How long had

we been standing in the freezing wind? One hour? A single hour? Sixty minutes? Surely it was a dream” (37).

This quote indicates that Eliezer’s trauma came so abruptly that it disrupted the regular linearity of his experience of time. Caruth avers, “What causes, trauma, then, is a shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind’s experience of time” (61). The loss of identity Eliezer suffered from when he states, “*All that was left was a shape that resembled me*” (emphasis added), creates a distortion on his psyche in a way that he became fragmented and disconnected from the world. The first night in the Auschwitz death camp had so much impact on Eliezer that he loses the ability to remember or locate time. As Ellen Fine avers, “Once Eliezer enters Auschwitz, he loses his sense of time and reality” (*Legacy of Night* 12).

Because his thoughts are not stable and are shifted out of context, he is left with extremely blurred memories that he does not even remember where, when and how he got into the camp. One may say that Eliezer lost the notion of time because he was not aware of the sequences of traumatic incidents while it happened. He was seized by the feeling of terror; therefore, he was not entirely conscious and it is exactly this absence that led to his inability to consciously recall the course of the events. In this respect, Harold Bloom claims in his study of Wiesel’s *Night*, “The captives are not only locked in the death camp, they are locked in time” (*Bloom’s GUIDES* 33).

In the midst of the chaotic environment of the camps, Eliezer’s trauma worsen in stamps when he watches the prolonged hanging of a Pipel “a beautiful boy in service” along with two men for the crime of sabotage. Wiesel recalls how after the execution of those alleged conspirators, he is forced to march near the hanged corpses and watch the agonizingly slow death of the young Pipel:

Then came the march past the victims. The two men were no longer alive. Their tongues were hanging out, swollen and bluish. But the third rope was still moving: the child, too light, was still breathing... And so he remained for more than half an hour, lingering between life and death, writhing before our eyes. And we were forced to look at him at close range. He was still alive when I passed him. His tongue was still red, his eyes not yet extinguished (64- 65).

This passage denotes the inhumanities and hardships Jews were subjected to under the tyrannical system of the Holocaust. Although Eliezer assists to the extermination and execution of many Jews on a daily basis, the hanging of the child affects him much to the point that it has completely drawn him away from the God he used to believe in. Following this mind-boggling event, as Eliezer witnesses thousands of Jewish inmates unified praising God instead of mourning over the dead, he ironically asks,

Why, but why would I bless Him [God]? Every fiber in me rebelled [...] How could I say to him Blessed be Thou, Almighty, Master of the Universe, who chose us among all nations to be tortured day and night, to watch as our fathers, our mothers, our brothers end up in the furnaces? Praised be Thy Holy Name, for having chosen us to be slaughtered on Thine altar [...] My eyes had opened and I was alone, terribly alone in a world without God, without man. Without love or mercy (67-68).

This quote shows the searing consequences of his trauma as it has deeply robbed him from his faith in God and humanity. It could be said that his decadence of faith comes as a response to the highly stressful and traumatic experiences he went through. For him, God is unworthy of such admiration; he repudiates God's providential hand and turns pessimistic and nihilistic for God is a silent spectator. As we have already explained, religion played an integral part in Eliezer's daily life before the camp. However, after witnessing such an extreme display of inhumanity and barbarity, he has completely lost faith in God. In her book, *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman claims that traumatic events "undermine the belief systems that give

meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis" (51). As pointed above, Eliezer's trauma brought about a transformation in his religiosity because his faith was severely shaken as a consequence of what he had endured. Therefore, we deduce that Eliezer's trauma had a deeply religious impact on his psyche.

2.2. Trauma and its Belated Manifestation in *Kaffir Boy*

Right from the opening chapter of *Kaffir Boy*, Mathabane reveals the tensely violent and traumatic environment he belonged to by drawing on the midnight raids he and his family were subject to. During these incursions, the Peri-Urban police come searching for black residents who were living illegally in the ghetto of Alexandra. Johannes recalls his reactions to the intense police raids claiming: "I was instantly seized by a feeling of terror" (7); he adds, "I felt something warm soak my groin and trickle down my legs" (9). This demonstrates how the unexpectedness of trauma has been disruptively imposed on his young life and generated extreme physical and psychological reactions.

However, his mother's reaction once hearing the sirens and the police's footsteps approaching their rented shack worsens his psychological state. As described by Mathabane, "she had to flee from the police and leave us children alone as she had done many times" (9). His mother does not have a valid passbook so she has to hide from the police. Unfortunately, the moment she is packing her stuff to leave the house, she panics and cannot find her passbook. In despair, she asks Johannes to help her search for it, but he is in a state of horror and so petrified by the Peri-Urban police presence that he cannot remember where his mother's reference book is. He says: "I did not know; I could not answer; I could not think; my mind had suddenly gone blank [...] I could not snap out of my amnesia" (9). Johannes's inability to recall the location of his mother's passbook was triggered by a strong emotion of

fear and anxiety which are highly associated with what Caruth calls “the lack of preparedness”. In fact, amnesia defines another pattern of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In her study of trauma, Judith Herman avers that trauma survivors tend to “lose” authority “over their memory and their capacity to feel” (143).

It is pertinent to note that Johannes' episodic amnesia is in part provoked by his past trauma that obliterated the normal contextual information in his mind hindering him to concentrate. As Shoshana Felman claims, “The trigger of the [trauma] symptoms is often an event that un-consciously reminds the subject of the original traumatic scene and is thus lived as a repetition of the trauma (171). The remembrance of Johannes' previous encounter with the Alexandra authorities is displayed through his words when he says,

Will the two fat black policemen with *sjamboks**and truncheons burst open the door again? And will the one with the twirled mustache and big hands grit his teeth at me while threatening, "Speak up, boy! or I'll let you taste my *sjambok*!" and thereafter spit in my face and hit me on the head with a truncheon for refusing to tell where my mother and father were hiding? And will the tall, carrotty-haired white man in fatigues stand by the doorjamb again, whistling a strange tune and staring fear into Florah and me? (8).

This extended passage shows that Johannes' mind perceived the police's presence as a threat, and that is precisely why he couldn't respond to his mother's plea. As a five-year-old boy, the ghastly encounter Johannes faced impinged him much that he relived the incident in recurring thoughts and memories. This means that his memories of the Alexandra Police Squad were recouped in a form of temporal memory loss, caused mainly by a similar event. In this case, we can presume that Johannes' forgetfulness is the outcome of both his fright and his traumatic past encounter with the Peri-Urban police.

After experiencing traumatic past events that repeated themselves unconsciously and in an uncontrolled way, Johannes becomes unsettled and frightened because of the pain and remembrance of his encounter with the police. As Mathabane claims: “That brutal encounter with the police had left indelible scars. The mere sight of police vans now had the power of blanking my mind, making me forget all I had learned” (28). Since his life is confined to the police's flashbacks and memories of his atrocious past, he is unable to assimilate his trauma as it occurs. In this regard, Caruth states that traumatic events are experienced “too soon, too unexpectedly to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor” (4).

Similarly to Eliezer, Johannes's encounter with trauma is so unanticipated that he cannot understand it nor integrate it into consciousness. The everlasting impressions his encounter with the police squad left on his psyche traumatize and scare him to the point of making repetitive nightmares imagining the police chasing him and trying to kill him. In consequence, he suffers from nightmares which become daydreams and hallucinations later on. He recalls the sights and sounds associated with the police saying: “They haunted me in real life and in my dreams, to the extent that I would often wake up screaming in the middle of the night, claiming that the police were after me with dogs and flashlights trying to shot me down” (27-28). From this passage, it can be said that Johannes' trauma is not understood or even known while he experiences it, but only comes into being after a lapse of some time. This means that Johannes' distressing memory was lost over time but then regained in a symptomatic form leading him to constantly relive the traumatic encounter as former images follow his dreams and haunt him during the day. Essentially, his memories convey the fact that both the trauma and the broken past which still exist in his mind are histories impossible to forget.

Johannes' trauma peak at the tender age of ten years old when he witnessed a man from his township being stripped naked and disemboweled to death by the notorious gangsters, "the tsotsis". He describes the entire scene of the horrifying murder reporting: "What I saw made me gasp with horror. Having drawn gleaming, sharp knives, meat cleavers, and tomahawks, the *tsotsis* began carving the man as he howled for mercy" (163). After Johannes has seen the suffering of the victim and the diabolic cruelty and enjoyment of the gang members, he starts hallucinating. According to Caruth "the response to an overwhelming event occurs in the uncontrollable repetitive appearance of hallucinations" (15). Once the gang members left the crime scene, he became hysterical and delusional; he secluded from the real world and began to imagine the dismantled body of the black man coming to life and staring at him. He says:

An icy chill of death froze the world around me. For a long time I remained stock-still in the tall grass, in the limped night, scarcely breathing, watching the naked, mutilated, lifeless body contorted on the ground, in a pool of blood. Each gaze made it seem to come alive, to stare, to slowly rise, like an entombed Egyptian mummy coming back to life. I panicked, and shot out the grass and though I had been shot out of a cannon, howling like a maniac, as if tenscore devils were after me (164).

This indicates that Johannes' hallucinations are initiated by his failure to control and integrate his traumatic encounter into consciousness. The cry of pain of Johannes who is "*howling like a maniac*" (emphasis added) is mainly caused by the incomprehensible nature of the event that happened all of a sudden and is beyond his control. Like Wiesel, Mathabane's unawareness about what is happening around him stems from the unexpectedness and the incomprehensibility of the accident which distances him from reality.

In the aftermath of this incident, Johannes has his world irreparably fractured by an intrusive force that is beyond his control. The unexpected confrontation with the brutal

murder of the man causes him profound psychological effects since he is experiencing “repeated nightmares”. As it is stated by Caruth, “what returns to haunt the trauma victim is not just any event but, significantly, the shocking and unexpected occurrence of any accident” (12). He writes, “That evening the first of the nightmares about the incident began. For weeks they continued, festering like an open wound” (165-166). This shows that Johannes is in a state of reliving the horror again and again against his will. Caruth refers to “the returning traumatic dream” as “purely and inexplicably, the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits” (59). Accordingly, Johannes’ memories of the event dominate his mind as his present life is interrupted by cruel visions of the past which possess him entirely. In this sense, one might argue that the broken memories of Johannes unveil the reality of his trauma since they return to haunt him as if they are being experienced for the first time.

Indeed, what Johannes has undergone on the night of the black man's assassination is too awful to contemplate or even remember. Cathy Caruth explains that the persistent return of the past event comes with the inability to remember or even understand the reality of that incident (4). The only matter that keeps Johannes to remember and have contact with his past is his incapacity to grasp what had happened to him. This is well illustrated when the author claims: “One thing I do know was that I could not understand the morbid cruelty and satanic impulses that drove people to kill others” (166). He fails to understand the nature of what he has witnessed because he is fragmented and not fully conscious. Therefore, the violent occurrence is not fully grasped as it happened, but rather reappears later in repetitive symptoms. Caruth describes the recurrent and intrusive phenomena seen in those with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to the “enigma” and “incomprehensibility” of one’ survival. She writes, “having survived precisely without knowing it” and “awakening” suddenly to life often cause them to make attempts to "claim one's own survival" in various forms such as dreams, nightmares, or compulsive behaviors (64). On the whole, then, one may deduce that

Eliezer and Johannes's reactions to traumatic events are quite different because the triggering factors of their trauma are very dissimilar as well.

3) The Duality of Trauma in *Night* and *Kaffir Boy*

As indicated before, trauma is a disruptive experience that leaves its victims stuck in constant feelings of shock and incomprehensibility. It generates devastating effects and has the ability to utterly shatter an individual's sense of self and continuity in life. Paradoxically, trauma can be a way to reconstruct oneself in a way that it provides the victims with the faculty to struggle and eventually surpass the existing trauma. In line with the aforesaid, the main characters in *Night* and *Kaffir Boy* thoroughly illustrate how "trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival" (Caruth 58).

3.1. *Night*: From Dissociation to Resilience

Dissociation as Eric Vermetten and David Spiegel state, "is a complex phenomenon that compromises a host of symptoms and factors, including depersonalization, derealization, time distortion, dissociative flashbacks, and alteration in the perception of the self" (1). In the final lines of *Night*, following Eliezer's liberation from Buchenwald, he describes seeing his reflection in the mirror for the first time since his deportation from Sighet. He writes, "One day I was able to get up, after gathering all my strength. I wanted to see myself in the mirror hanging on the opposite wall. I had not seen myself since the ghetto. From the depths of the mirror, a corpse was contemplating me. The look in his eyes as he gazed at me has never left me" (115). This quote reveals how experiencing trauma eventually leads to the dissociation of Eliezer's sense of self. After having been under excessive and repeated traumas, he comes to be dislocated in time and space as if he externally looks to his body, unplugged from life and living someone else's life. In this regard, Vermetten and Spiegel assert, "*Dissociative*

disorders take various shapes, but one characteristic of the disorder is feeling as if one's entire body or a part of one's body does not belong to oneself' (2).

Eliezer does not understand or even realize the severity of the event while he experiences it because he is not fully aware and conscious. However, he stores all the profound sufferings he endured since the day of his deportation in his unconscious mind, which come into effect later in the form of psychological dissociation. In other words, Wiesel's trauma is too much to bear that his psychological landscape crumbles under his feet. As Caruth notes, "The experience of trauma, the fact of latency, would [thus] seem to consist, not in the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known but in an inherent latency within the experience itself" (17).

All the physical and psychological adversity Eliezer has gone through while being incarcerated in the hellish Auschwitz camp killed part of him, and stripped him from his youth, family, and faith. Not only that, it has also utterly disconnected him from his own image as it impels him to become detached from his body and more dissociated than ever. Wiesel describes watching a corpse contemplating him as if observing from a third-person perspective. In her book, *Legacy of Night*, Ellen Fine avers that switching from the first person to the third person in that passage imparts the "fragmented self" of Eliezer (25). In the same way, this dissociation also reflects a disconnection between the man Eliezer was before the Holocaust, a studious schoolboy who "*believed profoundly*" (emphasis added) in God to a diseased survivor who has been ripped of his individuality as well as his faith by an unexpected intrusive force.

Although he survives, Eliezer is unable to forget the horrible tragic things he saw since a big part of him was engulfed by the black smoke of Auschwitz which seems to plague him. However, his dissociation stems in part from his orphan-hood because he lost his parents and

his three sisters, and in another part from the harrowing events he underwent during his one-year lockdown in the camps. As a result, Wiesel faces a disconnection between his thoughts, feelings, and selfhood.

It is significant to note that after the death of his family, Wiesel suffers solely without the interference of any savior from his entourage thus he cannot overcome his trauma in immediacy, but rather after a lapse of some time, through narrating his experience under the Holocaust. Throughout her analysis in *Unclaimed Experience*, Caruth argues that the role of the listener is of great importance because a victim cannot claim his own survival without an ear to listen. On the other hand, Eliezer's dissociation reflected by the split of his body at the book's end generates the possibility of his resilience towards the paralyzing effects of trauma. Because dissociation is an "adaptive defense mechanism" that allows victims "to cope with overwhelming threat" (qtd. in Krause-Utz et al. 2), Eliezer only comes to gradually recover from his trauma by writing about his near-death experience. This suggests that *Night* itself is a testimony to Wiesel's resilience and refusal to surrender to trauma. In his study of the Holocaust, Dori Laub avers that "the survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories, they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive" (78).

In the introduction to this section, we have explained that trauma cuts both ways since it has negative and positive consequences. In fact, trauma is not just a destructive tool because sometimes it can be a reason to survive. Despite all the prevalent agony and distress in Eliezer's life, he attempts to shield himself from trauma by breaking the border of silence and recounting his story. To substantiate this claim, Wiesel states in an interview,

After the war, for ten years I didn't speak, I was not a witness, for ten years... and I was waiting for ten years, really... I was afraid of language. Oh, I knew for ten years I would do something: I had to tell the story. One day, I visited an old Jew.... He sat down in his chair, and I in mine, and he began weeping. I have rarely seen an old man

weep like that. I didn't know what to do. We stayed there like that, he weeping and I closed in my own pain. And then, at the end, he simply said, "You know, maybe you should talk about it..." In that year, the tenth year, I began my narrative (qtd. in Schauer 2-3).

As we have already pointed out, it is Wiesel's self-dissociation that helped him work through his painful and frustrating hurdles in life in a way that it led him to accept the fact that trauma is part of his life and think of it as something that has already occurred. He represses his memories for ten years and learned that moving on must take place. Consequently, Wiesel succeeded to free himself from the cages of trauma, heal his wounds and overcome his psychic crisis by articulating his trauma into paper.

Another instance of Wiesel's resiliency lies in the fact that he swings between past and present in describing how after years from his liberation, he runs into the same girl who whipped the blood off of him and comforted him after he had been beaten by "Idek" the Kapo for no apparent reason, "MANY YEARS LATER, in Paris, I sat in the Metro, reading my newspaper. Across the aisle, a beautiful woman with dark hair and dreamy eyes. I had seen those eyes before. [...] We left the Metro together and sat down at a café terrace. We spent the whole evening reminiscing" (53).

Wiesel again oscillates between past and present in recalling how he will never forget Juliek and his violin performance to the dead bodies in the overcrowded barrack. He writes, "I shall never forget Juliek. How could I forget this concert given before an audience of the dead and dying? Even today, when I hear that particular piece by Beethoven, my eyes close and out of the darkness emerges the pale and melancholy face of my Polish comrade bidding farewell to an audience of dying men" (95).

Stepping outside the narrative setting of the camps and its harrowing realities, these passages suggest that in the aftermath of the Holocaust, Wiesel managed to come up with a

way to overcome the gripping force of his trauma, moved forward and exiled to France. In other words, blurring the lines of chronology serves as a proof of his resilience as he succeeded to heal his wound and regenerate hope for his future. After all he had gone through; at last, he created a life beyond that of a victim by being empowered to become a survivor.

3.2. *Kaffir Boy*: From Guilt to Resilience

Just like Wiesel, the trauma of Mathabane was something that occurred outside the realm of comprehension. Both were unable to understand their survival neither during its occurrence nor after. However, in comparison to Wiesel who fell silent for ten years after his trauma, Mathabane reacted to his trauma in a short period of time since his mind oscillated between the trauma of death and the trauma of survival leading him to question the legitimacy of his life. Because of the repetitive past that returned in the form of nightmares and dreams, Johannes was living an unstable and disturbed life, repeating and re-experiencing the same events of the past accompanied with memories greatly affected the course of his life.

After a couple of months, Johannes' memories of the black man's murder intensify as it consumed each day he spends rendering him psychologically disturbed. He develops strong sentiments of guilt and self-blaming for what happened to the black man; that eventually destroys his self-esteem and triggers negative feelings about him, such as the feeling of being worthless. He professes, "I felt unloved, unwanted, abandoned and betrayed by a world that seemingly denied me an opportunity to find my niche" (167). Moreover, Mathabane was also traumatized by his feeling of guilt for having survived that tragic incident unlike the black man killed by the "tsotsis". To quote the protagonist, "That afternoon I predisposed to exacting the same injustice on myself. I felt that if I had to die—and that afternoon I wanted to die" (168). The specificity of this quotation lies in Johannes' inability to understand the tragedy of the death of the man that took place in front of his eyes and the fact that he was still

alive. As Caruth asserts, “trauma is not simply an effect of destruction but also, fundamentally, an enigma of survival” (58). That is why Johannes has blamed himself for the tragic faith of the slain man, and at long run, he finds himself immersed in self-destructive behavior as he resorts to committing suicide. The words Mathabane employs demonstrate his critical state as it is reflected in the following passage:

That long afternoon, however, I felt that I had lived long enough. I felt that life could never, would never, change from how it was for me. Suffering had finally succeeded penetrating to my very soul and established within my consciousness a certain fear of living. Thus, as I stood dreamily by the stoop, twirling a switchable knife between my trembling hands, oblivious to the world around me, I thought of killing myself (167).

From this quote, we understand that the ghastly murder of the black man by the “*tsotsis*” has left an indelible impression of suffering and helplessness on Johannes’ young mind. After being an eyewitness of such an inhumane act, he is extremely traumatized that he can no longer cope with living in such a suffering world. The reason why Johannes finds no meaning in life and its continuation is because he is constantly living with the past tragedy that replayed in his mind. His trauma comes to dominate his life as his past encounter is prolonged through unconscious recurrence and unwilling symptoms hijacking his future. Eventually, because of the burden of the guilt he feels weighing on him for having survived the disastrous event, he wants to skip his trauma and forget his memories, putting an end to his life.

Despite the fact that Mathabane's past repeats itself to become a nightmare that accompanies him throughout his childhood, in the end, he mainly embraces the fact that trauma does not eliminate life but can simply be part of it. Unlike Eliezer who is compelled to face his trauma alone, Johannes is lucky to receive much help from his siblings. It is a remarkable fact that in the face of extreme trauma and ongoing diversity, his mother stands out as the supporting character in his life and without her commitment and encouragement, it

is clear that he would never have overcome his trauma. She provides him with the resilience with which to address the outcome of violence and repression leading him to self-generated resilience.

On the other hand, one can say that Johannes' resilience is born out of adaption that in many cases enables him to protect himself from the perpetuated abuse and turmoil. However, one could argue that Johannes' constant witnessing of trauma at the book's start generates the possibility of his resilience towards its terrifying consequences. In the wake of his encounters with the police raids, he learns to actively be prepared for their imposition and daily presence in his life. In this vein, Mathabane writes, "they [police] moved permanently into my consciousness [...] I came to accept, and to dread, their presence as a way of life" (27). He adds, "By witnessing raid after raid, week in and week out, month after month, I began learning from my parent ways of recognizing and interpreting specific cues about the movement of police once they had invaded the neighborhood" (28). These passages prove that the midnight raids launched by the Peri-Urban police become normality to Johannes. The daily nature of trauma compels him to psychologically and physically adapt to his hellish environment so that he could survive by navigating a life of precariousness.

More importantly, instead of giving up on his trauma, Johannes decides to become a top student and takes up tennis. He believes that only his schooling and sporting aspiration would save him from ending up like every other hoodlum or transient in his neighborhood. With great determination, he fulfills a life away from Apartheid, poverty, and suffering solely based on his dreams and ambitions. He attempts to gain access to a better life and make something of himself despite the many obstacles put in his way. At one point in his life, he realizes that the living conditions he attempts to carve out for himself cannot exist in Alexandra; thus, he immigrates to the United States. He states: I was leaving them to venture into the unknown, to cast adrift my ship in search of freedom and liberty in a new land. A

quest for a different life, different from the nightmare I had been living for eighteen years. A quest for a life whose ultimate goal, I hope would be the betterment of my life, my family's, and that of the black people of South Africa” (348).

This passage makes it clear that Johannes' trip to America is what discloses his capacity for resilience. The discrimination and cruelty of circumstances that surrounded him motivated him to run from degradation, submission, and bondage towards freedom in the USA. In this respect, Caruth asserts that even though trauma leads to destructiveness on one hand, it can be constructive on the other (58). In the same manner trauma provided Wiesel with the force to struggle and get through his trauma, it did likewise to Mathabane whose trauma gave him the power to fight and cope with it. It could be assumed therefore that Johannes' decision to fly to a foreign college implies that a self can be sustained and not ruined by traumatic encounters. In other words, Johannes' departure is evidence of both his resilience and refusal to submit to his trauma.

Immediately following the passage discussed above, Mathabane writes the following: “I felt the responsibilities piling on my conscience. By going to America I felt that I owed the duty to my race and country to use my life in a meaningful way, to see my success and failure as the success and failure of the black race” (348). Through this quote, it is noticeable that although Johannes managed to go beyond a life of misery and austerity, he never loses sight of his countrymen and women who simply didn't get the chance he did, and it is specifically this persisting feeling of bounding that serves as a proof to his resiliency.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined historical trauma, the belated symptoms of trauma, and the duality of trauma in *Night* and *Kaffir Boy*. First, we have demonstrated how historical events like the Holocaust and the Apartheid caused and can cause immense psychological

shocks for both past and future generations. After that, we have exposed the psychological outcomes of traumatic encounters on the protagonists, Eliezer and Johannes. At last, we have shown that trauma can be both a means of destruction and construction to its victims.

General Conclusion

Throughout our study of Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Mark Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy*, we have come to the conclusion that the depiction of traumatic experiences in both narratives is related to the presence of the oppressive regimes of the Holocaust and the Apartheid. Despite the fact that the two narrators lived in different traumatic environments, they have produced startlingly similar literary productions which are characterized by traumatized characters. The selected novels reveal through the authors' subjective and first-person voices of their protagonists the cause and consequences of being survivors of trauma. Indeed, the main protagonists, Eliezer and Johannes, stand as perfect examples of traumatized individuals who lived moments of despair, loss, and estrangement.

Surviving these events left a psychological scar not only on the individuals involved, but also on the subsequent generations. Wiesel and Mathabane shaped their accounts with the plight of their protagonist in order to reflect the transmission and permanency of psychological trauma across the generations. Although there is a noticeable difference between the events of Holocaust and the Apartheid, both have left a legacy of trauma that still impact the psychic landscape of contemporary generations. In *Night*, Wiesel acts as witness to the source of what will be a legacy of trauma connected to the Jewish community, whereas in *Kaffir Boy*, Mathabane shows how trauma is transmitted intergenerationally from parents to offspring revealing the effect of parental trauma.

Wiesel and Mathabane demonstrate how the individual's experience of trauma shaped and continues to shape the lives of the next generation. In other words, the two protagonists showcase how trauma can be inherited and passed from one generation to the next regardless of being directly exposed to the triggering environments. Therefore, we deduce that the representation of the historical trauma of the Holocaust and the Apartheid exhibited in the aforesaid texts are complementary in the sense that both writers suggest that history and the future are linked. While Wiesel explains how the impact of trauma can go on to impinge

future generations, Mathabane describes how the burden of trauma is carried and relived by later generations.

On a personal level, the experiences that Eliezer and Johannes suffered from under the Holocaust and the Apartheid respectively reveal the degree to which living at the edge of life and seeing terrible demonstrations of extreme violence and brutality affected their inner world. In fact, the main characters were victims of acute psychological traumas because of their unexpected encounter with extermination, oppression as well as physical and psychological abuse. Hence, each one of them illustrates how they reacted to trauma while under the state of oppression.

Bearing in mind that Eliezer and Johannes are two survivors who have faced and witnessed different forms of trauma; their Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders symptoms are significantly different as well. This means that human responses to intense incidents vary from one person to another. Even though Wiesel endured a more severe form of trauma, he displayed quite mild reactions including insomnia, the loss of the notion of time, and the loss of faith in God. In contrast, Mathabane's belated symptoms manifest themselves in uncomfortable symptoms such as amnesia, disturbing nightmares, flashbacks, and hallucination. One of their common symptoms is the recurring thoughts and memories of their horrendous encounters, which resulted in their failure to understand and integrate traumatic experiences into their conscious mind as an attempt to make sense of what was not grasped in the first place. In the end, we may conclude that, though their personal experiences of the oppressive state are extremely dissimilar, the human experience of their agony and woes are rather similar.

Another important point is that trauma acts as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it serves as a destructive tool since it generates dangerous effects and thus shatters and

annihilates the traumatized, and on the other hand, it serves as a constructive medium that provides the remedy through which trauma sufferers shield themselves from the devastating effects of trauma. In this regard, both protagonists exhibited resilient responses in the face of their trauma in a way that after their traumatic encounters they succeeded to get rid of their psychological shock, heal their wounds and surpass their trauma.

In the case of Wiesel, he went from being an utterly dissociated person to an almost cured one. After his liberation, he fell silent for ten years because he did not get any help from the surrounding environment; consequently, he took a long time to get through his trauma. However, once he articulated his experience in the camps, he succeeded to overcome the impacts of his trauma. In other words, writing about his traumatic experience helped him break the wall of silence, recover, and go forward in life. On the opposite, Mathabane went from being overwhelmed by the feeling of guilt to becoming a successful tennis player. Unlike Wiesel, he manages to deal with the repercussion of his trauma and reconcile with himself in a short period of time because he received much support from his environment.

On the whole, one could argue that trauma brings people together unlike any other event. In spite of Wiesel's and Mathabane's different backgrounds, the two authors address many similar issues. Both highlight the amount of violence and humiliation imposed on them under the control of the oppressive regimes of the Holocaust and the Apartheid. Moreover, they paint a vivid picture of their agonies and sorrows and use their personal accounts as a means of exploring issues regarding the traumatic history of the Jews and the black South Africans under these tyrannical systems.

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Résumé

Ce travail de recherche explore la façon dont le traumatisme est vécu sous l'état d'oppression dans Elie Wiesel *Night* (1960) et de Mark Mathabane *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa* (1987). Les romans sont étudiés à travers le prisme de la théorie du traumatisme de Cathy Caruth, présentée dans son livre, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1995). Au vu de cette théorie, *Night* et *Kaffir Boy* sont analysés en mettant en lumière les concepts du traumatisme historique, les symptômes tardifs du traumatisme et la dualité du traumatisme dans deux contextes différents: l'Holocauste et l'Apartheid.

Mots-clés: Apartheid, Holocauste, *Kaffir Boy*, *Night*, Théorie du traumatisme.

ملخص

يستكشف هذا العمل الطريقة التي شهدت فيها الصدمة في ظل حالة القمع في كل من رواية (1960) Elie Wiesel *Night* و Mark Mathabane *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa* (1986). الروايات مدروسة من خلال نظرية Cathy Caruth للصدمة التي تم تقديمها في كتابها، *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1995) في ضوء هذه النظرية، يتم تحليل *Night* و *Kaffir Boy* من خلال تسليط الضوء على كل من مفاهيم الصدمة التاريخية، الأعراض المتأخرة للصدمة، وازدواجية الصدمة في سياقين مختلفين: المحرقة والفصل العنصر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المحرقة، الفصل العنصري، *Night*, *Kaffir Boy*، نظرية الصدمة.