

**From 'Apartheid' to the 'Rainbow Nation' and Beyond:
The Representation of Childhood and Youth
in South African Coming-of-Age Narratives**

by

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis examines the representation of childhood and youth in South African coming-of-age narratives set in the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. Although child and youth protagonists feature prominently in many South African literary texts, the trope of childhood has yet to be systematically and extensively examined by scholars. Thus, this research attempts to address this gap by surveying a wide-ranging selection of childhood narratives using a modified version of Franco Moretti's concept of 'distant reading'. The objective is to map something of the field of childhood and youth in South African texts in order to open it up to various analytical possibilities, hence making a useful contribution to this growing body of research. Indeed, one of the most important contributions of this thesis is the accompanying appendix, which comprises a list of two hundred and forty-five South African texts that feature the theme of childhood to varying degrees.

Throughout this study, I approach childhood itself as a critical frame and locus of concern, rather than as a subsidiary trope or lens through which other themes and concepts are highlighted and thus take precedence. In order for this type of comprehensive analysis of childhood and youth to emerge, I investigate and interrogate five main binary oppositions (victim/perpetrator, child/adult, domestic/political, agency/powerlessness, and identity/difference) that govern notions of childhood. These binaries form a major part of the analysis of apartheid and post-apartheid childhood texts in Chapters Two and Three respectively. One of the central arguments of this study is that despite the paradigmatically severed depictions of childhood that exist side by side (due to apartheid policies of segregation), childhood is nonetheless represented as a 'site of struggle' regardless of the race, culture, or economic class of the young protagonist. I maintain that these 'sites of struggle', which are often located within the aforementioned binaries, extend into the post-apartheid era, thus dissolving the utopian vision of a 'rainbow nation' and a 'new' South Africa.

Opsomming

Hierdie tesis ondersoek die manier waarop kinders en die jeug se volwassewording-vertellings in die tydperke van apartheid en na-apartheid uitgebeeld word. Alhoewel jeugdige en kinder-protagoniste prominent voorkom in talle Suid-Afrikaanse tekste, is daar tot nog toe nie 'n sistematiese en uitvoerige bespreking van dié gebied gedoen nie. Daarom be-oog my navorsing om hierdie leemte te vul deur 'n wye verskeidenheid kinder-narratiewe met behulp van 'n aanpassing van Franco Moretti se se konsep van “afstand-lees” te gebruik. Die doelstelling is om 'n riglyn te skep wat verskillende analitiese benaderings ten opsigte van jeuglektuur sal voorstel en om sodoende 'n nuttige bydrae tot hierdie groeiende studieveld te lewer. Dit beteken dat die meegaande aanhangsel die belangrikste bydrae tot hierdie tesis kan wees, aangesien dit bestaan uit 'n lys van tweehonderd-vyf-en-veertig Suid-Afrikaanse tekste wat tematies in wisselende mate op kinderjare gefokus is.

Ek benader deurgaans die kinderjare self as 'n kritiese raamwerk en uitgangspunt, eerder as 'n ondergeskikte besprekingsveld en lens wat ander temas en konsepte uitlig wat dan voorkeur geniet. Om 'n omvattende analise van kinder- en jeugjare daar te stel, het ek vyf binêre teenoorgestelde wat 'n rol speel in beskouings van kinderjare ondersoek, naamlik slagoffer/aandadige, kind/volwassene, huishoudelik/polities, bemagtiging/ontmagtiging, identiteit/identiteitsverksille. Hierdie binêre speel veral 'n groot rol in die analise van apartheid- en na-apartheid kinderlektuur, onderskeidelik in Hoofstuk Twee en Drie. Een van die sentrale argumente van hierdie studie is dat, ten spyte van onversoembare beskouings van kinderjare wat naas mekaar bestaan, word kinderjare nogtans voorgestel as 'n plek van verzet, ongeag die ras, kultuur of ekonomiese stand van die protagonis. Dit is my mening dat hierdie verzetvelde wat dikwels binne die gemelde binêre bestaan, oorvloei na die na-apartheid era en daardeur die utopiese visie van 'n 'reënboognasie' en 'n 'nuwe' Suid-Afrika negeer.

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“Who is this one? Look at her now! She arises from her desert of difficulty clinging to her Beloved” – Song of Songs 8:5.

Soli Deo Gloria.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The theme of childhood in African literature rose to prominence after the publication of Camara Laye's novel *The African Child* in 1953 (Okolie 29-30, Oyegoke 102). In subsequent years, the pervasiveness of this trope has steadily increased, as a mere glance at the titles of contemporary African literary texts clearly shows: *Yoruba Girl Dancing* by Simi Bedford (1994), *The Slave Girl* by Buchi Emecheta (1995), *Boy* by Lindsey Collen (2005), *The Icarus Girl* by Helen Oyeyemi (2005), *Burma Boy* by Biyi Bandele-Thomas (2007), *The Boy Next Door* by Irene Sabatini (2009), *Black Mamba Boy* by Nadifa Mohamed (2010), *Kid Moses* by Mark R. Thornton (2011), and so the list goes on. Scholarly interest in the representation of childhood in African literature has correspondingly burgeoned over the past few decades, as demonstrated in recent work by Robert Muponde (Zimbabwean childhood), Christopher Ouma (Nigerian childhood), Edgar Nabutanyi, Jack Kearney, and Richard Priebe (African childhood). However, in terms of South African literature in particular, portrayals of childhood and youth have only been investigated in piecemeal fashion, thus leaving an area of research that has not yet been comprehensively and extensively mapped out and surveyed by scholars. An important and valuable part of this research is the appendix, which contains a wide-ranging list of two hundred and forty-five novels (including 'novelistic' autobiographies – discussed in a section below) set in South Africa wherein childhood is a main theme. Thus, as the abundance of texts evinces, the figure of the child as protagonist or narrator features prominently in the apartheid and post-apartheid South African literary canon. The overarching objective of this thesis is to map out something of the field of childhood and youth in South African literature in order to open it up to various analytical possibilities, in the hope of making a useful contribution to this relatively small body of research.

In this introductory chapter, I begin by providing an overview of childhood, both in general and in relation to African and South African childhoods. I examine the question of whether one can indeed speak of a 'universal child', and discuss the constructedness of literary children/childhood, ideas of vulnerability, innocence, and 'possibility', the position of the child in Africa, and common themes and features of African childhood novels. I then present the theoretical framework (binary oppositions and the theory of entanglement, life

writing and the *Bildungsroman*) and research methodology (a modified version of the ‘distant reading’ approach) that underpin this study, and conclude with an overview of the ensuing chapters.

1.1 An Overview of Childhood and Youth in African Literature

The topic and theme of childhood is vast and varied, thus causing scholars to question whether “it [is] ever possible (or desirable) to speak meaningfully about ‘childhood’ as a unitary concept,” or whether it should be referred to as a plural phenomenon (i.e. ‘childhoods’) (James, Jenks, and Prout 125; Honig 62). Although this type of approach “acknowledges the complex, plural realities contained under its rubric,” it becomes increasingly difficult to analyse the theme of childhood in a broad, general way, since from this perspective, “[c]hildhood does not exist in a finite and identifiable form” and thus “there is no universal ‘child’ with which to engage” (James, Jenks, and Prout 27, 125). While I agree that childhood is a “plural and heterogeneous [category], with varied and multifaceted experiences and expectations” (De Boeck and Honwana 1; Comaroff and Comaroff 27), I maintain (along with scholars such as Jens Qvortrup (5)), that there are threads of commonality that weave their way through sociological and (in this context) literary depictions of childhood. It is these commonalities that I wish to tease out and address.

The adoption of a more universal view of the theme of childhood is especially important when examining the representation of childhood and youth in apartheid (and therefore post-apartheid) childhood narratives. As Judith Lütge Coullie and Stephan Meyer remind us:

When experience is largely determined [...] by racial classification, it is obvious that the experiences of one individual in a group will be similar in many respects to those of others in the same group (bearing in mind that racism, like most social systems, is not gender neutral). This is true of white South Africans to some extent, although there were important class and gender differences, but it is particularly true of apartheid’s victims, whose lives were rigidly controlled by the state. What this means for life writing is that accounts of oppression tend to be remarkably paraphrastic [...] and] the experiences of one victimized individual can serve metonymically as commentary on the lives of millions [...] The iterativeness of many of the life stories of the oppressed is also due in part to the

fact that many writers chose not to focus on the *distinctiveness* of the subject's experiences, but rather on its *typicality*. (26-27, emphasis in original)

Coullie and Meyer are specifically referring to life writing in the above quotation; however, their observations can be applied to many instances of fictional writing wherein the author is addressing a collective concern, perspective, or experience. This study does not intend to be all-encompassing and makes no claim to totality: literary representations of childhood and youth in apartheid and post-apartheid South African literature are heterogeneous, multifarious, and multifaceted; thus, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss all singular representations of childhood. Rather than providing an in-depth analysis of unique and exceptional childhoods, my intention is to examine widespread themes of childhood (within a broad spectrum of narratives) as a way of contributing something new and fresh to a relatively little-researched area in literary studies. There are numerous aspects of the theme of childhood that are universally applicable, regardless of the race, culture, or economic class of the child figure. I argue that the overarching commonality found in childhood texts is the way in which childhood and youth are represented as 'sites of struggle', and I contend that these 'sites of struggle' are located within several binary oppositions that form the crux of this study.

Before we turn to a discussion of childhood in African literature, it is important to note that childhood and youth pose a challenge in terms of representation (Dodou 248).¹ Childhood is nearly always filtered through the lens of the adult and thus literary children are in effect a product of adult construction. Adrienne Gavin notes:

Created from authors' autobiographical or biographical imperatives, social intent, historical inspiration, or literary imaginations, the fictional child is an artefact that expresses memories or intuitive understanding of childhood or symbolically pictures the child as innocent, victim, blank slate, born sinner, infant tyrant, visionary, or signifier of nostalgia, hope, despair, or loss. Literary children often carry substantial weight in texts, and, in envisioning the child, writers have constructed images and characters that serve various functions: instruction, allegory, pathos, escapism, satire, identification, demonization, or idealization. Childhood sometimes reflects a desire to return to a world without responsibility, of freedom and unsullied imagination where magic lies [...] At other times it represents a state thankfully escaped from... (2; see also Lejeune 53)

¹ See Susan Honeyman's book *Elusive Childhood: Impossible Representations in Modern Fiction* for an extended discussion of this issue.

It is therefore clear that authors deliberately construct and wield ‘childhood’ in order to achieve a specific end or effect. However, in spite of its constructedness, the literary child remains an important figure for both literary studies and literature itself. In the following sections, I discuss different ways in which the child is constructed by authors, touching on the notions of innocence, vulnerability, potentiality, and hope.

Children and youth in Africa occupy a tenuous position that often places them at opposing extremes. For example, although children and youth in Africa comprise the majority of the population and are often at the forefront of social, political, and economic interactions and transformations, they are usually positioned on the outskirts of the “public sphere and major political, socio-economic, and cultural processes” (De Boeck and Honwana 1). As Coulter argues, children and youth are an “emerging influence,” but they are also “submerged by power” (qtd. in De Boeck and Honwana 3), and while they play an important part in *shaping* society, they are still continually being *shaped by* society (James, Jenks, and Prout 6, emphasis added). In other words, they operate as “both *makers* and *breakers* of society, while they are simultaneously being *made* and *broken* by that society” (De Boeck and Honwana 2, emphasis in original). Filip De Boeck and Alcinda Honwana further elaborate on this phenomenon and state that children and youth:

make themselves through inventive forms of self-realization and an ingenious politics of identity [...] and they make society by acting as a political force, as sources of resistance and resilience, and as ritual or even supernatural agents and generators of morality and healing through masquerade and play [...] On the other hand, they appear as ‘breakers’ in various ways: as risk-factors for themselves through suicide, drug use, alcohol, and unsafe sex; by breaking societal norms, conventions, and rules; sometimes by breaking limbs and lives [...] and sometimes by breaking the chains of oppression, as the role of young people in fighting South African apartheid so powerfully illustrated. (3)

Accordingly, they are represented as “both perpetrators and victims in civil conflict, as leaders and led in movements of political reform and religious renewal, as innovators and dupes in the globalization of culture” (Honwana and De Boeck ix), and as both “creative and destructive forces” (De Boeck and Honwana 1; see also Falconer 38). Children and youth are uniquely able to mediate and traverse these contradictions in the social, political, economic, and cultural spaces and places that they occupy (De Boeck and Honwana 12). As would be expected, this precarious status is brought to the forefront in literary representations of

childhood and youth, and I approach many of these contradictions in my analysis of childhood through the binary oppositions that form the framework of this study (for example, victim/perpetrator, insider/outsider, and child/adult).

The idea of possibility and ‘the future’ is intricately embedded within the notion of childhood (Priebe 41). Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff state that childhood and youth “stand for many things at once: for the terrors of the present, the errors of the past [and] the prospect of a future” (20). When childhood is linked to the idea of potentiality, it once again conjures up two opposing extremes that highlight its “intrinsic bipolarity, its doubling”: on the one hand, childhood and youth are signifiers of “exclusion, of impossibility, of emasculation, denigration, and futility,” but on the other hand, they “remain a constant source of creativity, ingenuity, possibility, empowerment, a source of alternative, yet-to-be-imagined futures” (Comaroff and Comaroff 29). It should therefore come as no surprise that there is a wealth of literature that focuses on the lived experience of the child in South Africa. Whilst not discounting the harshness of reality, the use of child narrators by black writers during apartheid often serves to point to the hope that marginalised South Africans had for the future. Conversely, post-apartheid childhood narratives seem to paint a rather bleak future, one fraught with uncertainty and only a glimmer of hope, thereby unravelling the dream of a ‘rainbow nation’. Indeed, Pamela Reynolds has argued that “[c]hildren in southern Africa often live on the edge of dreadful things – community violence, state oppression, warfare, family disintegration and extreme poverty” (83). Moreover, in terms of the continent as a whole, Lekan Oyegoke observes that in reality “the situation of the child in Africa remains largely dismal. The child, more than anyone else, is under assault from hunger, malnutrition, disease, ignorance and child abuse” (103). These factors expose the limits of potentiality, and reveal the dependence and vulnerability of children and youth regardless of how politically active or independent they may appear to be.

The view of the child as essentially vulnerable is often linked to the idea that the child is a symbol of innocence and ignorance, thus implying the need for adult protection (Dodou 239-240; De Boeck and Honwana 3). Indeed, the move from childhood to adulthood has been seen as a descent from innocence (childhood) to corruption (adulthood), or alternatively as an ascent from savagery (childhood) to civilisation (adulthood) (Cunningham 2; see also James, Jenks, and Prout 10, 13 for an extended discussion of this phenomenon). Thus, “[c]hildren are often seen either as little angels or little monsters, but rarely as complex human beings”

(Gillis 122). South African childhood narratives offer a multifarious view on the ostensibly inherent innocence of children. While some South African childhood narratives (many of these written during apartheid) effectively reinforce the notion that young people are naturally innocent, many apartheid and post-apartheid narratives confront and problematise this idea. In such novels, the ideal of an innocent, carefree, and unconstrained childhood is shattered. Children are instead seen as culpable and as a “source of adult anxiety and a threat to the societal order” (Dodou 240). In the following two chapters, the differences within and between apartheid and post-apartheid notions of innocence as revealed in literary texts shall be examined at length.

As stated in the opening paragraph, the child protagonist/narrator has become a notable and preponderant feature in recent African literature of the past few decades. This of course raises the question of why this is so, and thus I briefly discuss possible answers to this question here as well as throughout this study. Ogaga Okuyade suggests that this phenomenon could be a “strategic rhetorical design to interrogate the human rights condition in Africa” or that authors use the child figure to represent the “stunted growth and development of the African continent” (“Continuity” 7). In a similar vein, Njabulo Ndebele states that depictions of children are used as “powerful metaphors of indictment, calling for the urgent redemption of society” (“Recovering Childhood” 322), which is especially true of South African texts, as will be discussed elsewhere. The proliferation of African childhood narratives has resulted in attempts to demarcate and establish a distinctive genre. One such attempt includes Richard Priebe’s notion of the literary genre of ‘African Childhood’ (African narratives that feature child protagonists) (41), which is exemplified by the following six characteristics:

- 1) a focus on education, generally formal classroom education and the acquisition of literacy;
- 2) identity formation;
- 3) growing up in a multicultural/transcultural world (between two worlds, the story of two transitions: from child to adult and from monocultural to transcultural world);
- 4) a clear presence of the political context in which the child is growing up;
- 5) an unusual power the child has in actuality or potentiality;
- 6) an allegorical connection between the child and Africa; and
- 7) exceeding versus succeeding one’s parents.

Two other elements pertain to many of the narratives. There is often a tension between city and country where country tends to represent the past and the city the future of the protagonist. Additionally, there is often the fact of the protagonist going into exile

on reaching maturity and thus effecting a rupture in the allegorical connection with the condition of the land. (51)

All of these characteristics are present to a lesser or greater extent in South African childhood and youth narratives, but due to space constraints, only a select few will be the subject of examination in this thesis. With reference to the above list, the most prominent aspects of the representation of childhood and youth in South African literature include: identity formation, the child as a metaphor for the nation, the unusual power possessed by children, children surpassing their parents, and (at times) a clear presence of the political context as the child grows up in a multicultural/transcultural world. Although South African childhood and youth narratives draw on features of ‘African Childhood’ texts, it is important to note that depictions of childhood and youth in South African coming-of-age narratives are often significantly different to other ‘African Childhood’ texts. This is mostly due to the country’s history of apartheid, which has led to a contemporary post-apartheid context fraught with unique predicaments and struggles. Thus, the historical context of South African literary texts is of central importance in this thesis and will be a vital part of the discussions in subsequent chapters.

Priebe’s description of the genre of ‘African Childhood’ is a useful contextual starting point; however, for the purposes of this study, I do not regard the topos of childhood as a *genre* as Priebe proposes, but rather as a prominent *theme* within different genre categories. Indeed, the characteristics listed above closely correlate with the features of the *Bildungsroman* genre, which is an important component of this thesis, since it allows childhood to be examined within a specified framework as a theme rather than a genre. Turning the theme of childhood into a definitive genre results unsurprisingly in an effort to define and demarcate the boundaries of this genre (since, of course, a genre has to be defined), which then causes the notion of childhood to be constrained and limited (as Priebe’s definition shows). However, the treatment of childhood as a theme allows the representation of childhood to be analysed from a variety of angles and broadens the possibilities of interpretation. It follows that this study is not concerned with producing *definitions* of childhood, but rather focuses on the fluidity and both the heterogeneity and commonality (to lesser and greater degrees respectively) of the evocations of childhood in South African literature. Thus, the notion of childhood is approached and viewed as “a shifting set of ideas” (Cunningham 1), an idea which points directly to its fluidity and the “multiple meanings” that

emerge from childhood texts (Ouma 26), signifying that it should not be reduced to restricting definitions. Childhood is often examined through the lens of adulthood (N. Lee 8) or is used as an analytical frame to explore concepts such as memory, trauma, ideology, and the adult search for self. However, along with scholars such as Christopher Ouma, I argue that childhood itself can be used as a “category of critical analysis more than just a historical vehicle for socio-cultural and political debate” (2). Thus, childhood and youth become the critical frame and point of focus, rather than functioning as a subsidiary trope or lens through which other themes and concepts are highlighted and hence take precedence (James, Jenks, and Prout 22).

It is indisputable that there are two completely severed ideas of childhood and youth that paradigmatically exist side by side in South African coming-of-age narratives. This dichotomy is most obviously seen in apartheid literature; however, I argue that wide disparities, often determined by race, are still present in representations of childhood and youth in post-apartheid literature. Much has changed in terms of opportunities and the laws of the land, but in many ways, there is much that has *not* changed, as inequality and racial divisions are still present in post-apartheid South African childhood narratives. Ashwin Desai and Richard Pithouse echo this when they state that “[a]partheid South Africa teemed with struggles, and neoliberal South Africa still teems with struggles because to live is to struggle” (870). As one young character laments in Kgebetli Moele’s novel *Untitled*, the “struggle has not changed its face” (209). Thus, despite profound differences in race, culture, and economic class, South African childhoods are fundamentally depicted as ‘sites of struggle’ and conflict, even if these struggles and conflicts sometimes vary in terms of significance.

Throughout this thesis, I use the overarching term ‘site of struggle’ (since it crosses racial, cultural, and economic boundaries) to refer to the conflicts (physical, emotional, and psychological) that young people experience in South African coming-of-age narratives. I posit that these ‘sites of struggle’ are often located within the various binaries that govern the notion of childhood (for example, child/adult, private/public, domestic/political, tradition/modernity, continuity/change, universal/particular, rural/metropolitan, local/global, and victim/perpetrator), and that they include questions surrounding the construction of identity (identity/difference), the problematics of agency (agency/powerlessness), and the negotiation of citizenship (insider/outsider). These dichotomies form the backbone of the manner in which the chosen texts will be analysed in the following chapters, and in the section below, I

set out a theoretical framework justifying the use of such binaries. In focussing on the representation of the figure of the conflicted youth, the main objective of this study is to explore the aforementioned tensions by examining how they manifest in South African coming-of-age stories. I aim to provide a wide-ranging analysis of the figure of the child in South African literature and to explore the ways in which this representation has changed from the apartheid to the post-apartheid context. Thus, rather than focusing intensively on three or four novels, I shall draw on a wide variety of South African texts in order to provide a broader and more extensive view of childhood and youth. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I do not examine novels and autobiographical novels in order to illustrate a theory, but rather to map something of the South African ‘sioscape’ that children and youth navigate on a daily basis, revealing the various ways in which childhood and youth are constructed in South African narratives.²

1.2 Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

In the following section, I set forth the overarching theoretical framework and methodology used in this thesis. It is important to note from the outset that the focus of this study is on children and youth in literature rather than children’s and youth literature. The texts under examination include both fictional novels as well as ‘literary’ or ‘novelistic’ autobiographical texts; consequently, a section on life writing has been included below. As previously mentioned, the aim of this research is to zoom out and survey a wide selection of literature, rather than zoom in on a selected few texts, and I therefore draw on various theories throughout the study when appropriate. Since I am not preoccupied with delving into intricate matters of strictly defining terms and genres, there are several terms that I use interchangeably throughout this study for ease of reference (whilst acknowledging that there are historical and semantical differences between them and that they are not strictly synonymous). For the purposes of this study, the terms ‘novel’, ‘narrative’, ‘text’, ‘writing’, and ‘literature’ are often used interchangeably, and, following contemporary parlance, so are ‘memoir’ and ‘autobiography’, although I am well aware of their historical difference (Smith and Watson 274; Gagiano, “...to Remember” 264-265). The terms ‘children/childhood’ and

² I am indebted to Annie Gagiano (“Moving Beyond” 133) for articulating what I am endeavouring to accomplish in this study.

‘youth’ are used interchangeably to signify young people under the age of eighteen. The term ‘adolescent’ is used to specifically refer to young people between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. Following academic convention, the term ‘black’ is used, unless otherwise specified, to collectively signify the apartheid-era racial classifications of black, coloured, Indian, and Asian (that is, people who were not classified as ‘white’ during apartheid).

1.2.1 Binaries: A Theoretical Defence

In order to examine the representation of childhood and youth in South African literature through the analytical frame of childhood itself, a framework was needed that would not only supersede the limits of genre, but would also allow a broad analysis to emerge that would encompass an extensive time span as well as varying childhood experiences. During the initial period of research, it became clear that childhood in South African literature is governed by numerous binaries; that is, opposing tensions that children and youth navigate on a daily basis. The examination of these binaries was thus considered to be the most useful way of not only analysing the figure of the child, but also as a means of organising this thesis. Although binary concepts become incredibly complex when analysed closely, they remain universal in their nature, thus signifying that any childhood text from any period or context can be examined from a binaric point of view. As a result, wide-ranging analyses of the literary child can begin to emerge.

The theory of binary opposition was a major component of structuralism that was subsequently critiqued and further developed by poststructuralist theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous. In poststructuralism, metaphysical concepts are understood in terms of their opposites, resulting in a “series of exclusions” (A. Bray 24; Cixous 90; Derrida, *Margins* 329; Kotilainen and Vuorinen vii). For example, identity is a concept that “only comes into being through an unacknowledged debt to difference” (A. Bray 24). Hence, these dichotomies are *not* mutually exclusive (this is a major point of contention between poststructuralist and structuralist views), as there are “slippages and seepages” in the eternal interplay, interactivity, and interdependency of binary terms (Ruthven 63-64). It is this attention to the “dichotomous logics of exclusion” that informs Derrida’s enormously influential theory of deconstruction (A. Bray 24).

Chris Barker observes that “[d]econstruction is associated with Derrida’s ‘undoing’ of the binaries of western philosophy and the extension of this procedure into the fields of

literature (e.g. De Man) and postcolonial theory (e.g. Spivak)” (29). Deconstruction is based on the understanding that there is a “violent hierarchy” within binary oppositions: it is “never the face-to-face of two terms, but [...] an order of subordination” (Derrida, *Margins* 329) because “[o]ne of the two terms governs the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), or has the upper hand” (Derrida, *Positions* 41). Thus, rather than merely *neutralising* the binary opposition, which would mean “*residing* within the closed field of these oppositions, thereby confirming it,” deconstruction seeks to *overturn* the opposition by means of a “double gesture [...] a double writing” (Derrida, *Positions* 41; *Margins* 329, emphasis in original). However, it does not aim to simply overturn the hierarchy, but also to *displace* the conceptual order itself because only then will deconstruction “provide itself the means with which to *intervene* in the field of oppositions that it criticizes” (Derrida, *Margins* 329, emphasis in original). Thus, the purpose of deconstruction is to take apart, dismantle, and undo in order to “expose the blind-spots of texts”; that is, the “unacknowledged assumptions upon which they operate” (Barker 29). This also brings to light the “tension between what a text means to say and what it is constrained to mean” (Barker 29). Using the identity/difference binary opposition as an example, Abigail Bray cautions against a one-sided, negative view of deconstruction:

...deconstruction is not simply a negative practice which seeks to undo or tear down truth or meaning through a nagging attention to the complex hypocrisies which support truth or identity. Rather, recognizing that meaning is continually in the process of becoming, that identity is not fixed, means that by calling attention to the exclusions which enable identity to take up a position of truth or meaning, identity is opened up to a more ethical, positive relationship with difference. (24-25)

Thus, deconstruction attempts to *subvert* the tendency to privilege one side of the opposition by revealing how the favoured term “cannot be defined apart from its related, and undesirable, negative pole” (Durant and Fabb 42).

I am mindfully aware of the criticisms that have been levelled at such an approach. To be clear, and to address some of the concerns of scholars such as Ronit Frenkel and Craig MacKenzie (5), I am interested in *interrogating* difference, not reinforcing it as normative. In addition, as will be discussed in the following section on the theory of ‘entanglement’, I do not wish to invoke a strict polarization between binary oppositions – to simplistically and naively approach binaries as mutually exclusive concepts would be to “mask the blendings, interconnections, hybridities and ambiguities that characterize post-transitional South African

cultural formations” (Frenkel and MacKenzie 5). In addition, it should be noted that each of the binaries under examination here carry different universal and historical associations: for example, victim/perpetrator has a specific resonance in the apartheid context, especially in light of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; child/adult is universal but unfixed; domestic/political comes to the fore in the period of modernity; and identity/difference is fundamental and almost culturally ontological. Although it is not the objective of this study to engage in strictly deconstructive analyses, my aim is nonetheless to expose and problematise the binaries that govern the notion of childhood and youth in South African narratives, and to explore the dynamic conceptual tensions that emerge as a result.

1.2.2 Entanglement

Sarah Nuttall’s concept of ‘entanglement’, while not directly related to binary concepts, can also be used in order to explain my approach to the dichotomies used in this study. For Nuttall, a theory of entanglement is a ‘desegregated’ approach that does much to counter the ‘segregated theory’ that has often prevailed in postcolonial studies (*Entanglement* 31). She explains her notion of entanglement as follows:

Entanglement offers, for me, a rubric in terms of which we can begin to meet the challenge of the ‘after apartheid’. It is a means by which to draw into our analyses those sites in which what was once thought of as separate – identities, spaces, histories – come together or find points of intersection in unexpected ways. It is an idea which signals largely unexplored terrains of mutuality, wrought from a common, though often coercive and confrontational, experience. It enables a complex temporality of past, present and future; one which points away from a time of resistance towards a more ambivalent moment in which the time of potential, both latent and actively surfacing in South Africa, exists in complex tandem with new kinds of closure and opposition. It also signals a move away from an apartheid optic and temporal lens towards one which reifies neither the past nor the exceptionality of South African life. (Nuttall, *Entanglement* 11)

To reiterate, I do not approach the binaries that make up the framework of this study as mutually exclusive themes, but rather as entangled and enmeshed concepts – it is a ‘both/and’ not an ‘either/or’ manner of thinking (à la Derrida). Thus, this study brings together different and diverse representations of childhood in order to examine the “points of intersection” that Nuttall refers to above (*Entanglement* 11). I place diverging childhoods side-by-side,

juxtaposing them in order to bring to light the ‘sites of struggle’ that are common to many childhood stories.

There is an intermingling of opposing dichotomies not only within a specific binary itself, but also amongst the wider range of binaries that have been selected for analysis in this study. For example, in literary representations of childhood in apartheid literature, there is often an entanglement of domestic and political spheres, but this binary is also further entangled with other binaries such as child/adult and victim/perpetrator. Kagiso Lesego Molohe’s *Dancing in the Dust* is a good example of this: when young Tihelo comes to the point where she has to choose between remaining within the domestic realm and becoming politically active, the outcome of this decision means that she enters into a resistance against the adults in her life, while also battling issues of identity and difference. Therefore, binaries are not fixed concepts and even though this thesis is hinged upon the historical contexts of the novels under discussion, the aim is to go beyond ‘apartness’ and a fixation on race or black/white binaries. This is partly facilitated by the fact that each of the selected binaries pertain to children of all races and cultures. Nevertheless, the timeframe of this thesis signifies that apartheid’s bifurcation of society according to difference (and all the repercussions that that has entailed) will be examined at length. The binaries that have been selected as analytical lenses in this study were chosen according to what I believe to be the most important and prominent ‘sites of struggle’ in the South African childhood texts under examination.

1.2.3 Life Writing

Childhood and youth feature prominently in texts that fall under the broad category of *life writing*, and so a brief discussion of the term is warranted (Coullie and Meyer 48; Bloom 6). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson define life writing as “a general term for writing that takes a life, one’s own or another’s, as its subject. Such writing can be biographical, novelistic, historical, or explicitly self-referential and therefore autobiographical” (4). It thus encompasses a wide range of narrative types, including autobiography, biography, confession, and memoir. In terms of the history of South African life writing, the apartheid era saw many black South African writers turn to life writing as a weapon in the struggle for freedom and equality. Indeed, Coullie notes that “by the 1980s life writing by black South Africans outnumbered that of whites by about four to three” (42). Life writing played a vital

role in “[strengthening] and [broadening] the liberation struggle in part because life stories served to educate whites about the realities of life under apartheid and of the maltreatment of those who opposed it” (Coullie and Meyer 22). However, interestingly enough, life writing in the post-apartheid era is dominated by white South African authors (many of them writing about life during apartheid), a reversal which reinforces the notion that for black South Africans, “testimony was indeed perceived as a crucial weapon in the struggle; liberation having been achieved, this need no longer exists” (Coullie 43). Wamuwi Mbaio states that a nostalgic view of the past could be one of the reasons for the abundance of white South African autobiographies, and he goes on to speculate whether there are links between the “loss of formal white political power, the challenge to white economic power, and the surge in popularity of nostalgic (white) literature” (64). Therefore, life writing and autobiography remain an important and vital means of making sense of the country’s past, as will be discussed elsewhere in the following chapters (Mbaio 63-64).

When authors begin to “write the self,” they “engage in a complex process of fabrication/fiction entered into discourse as fact” (Mbaio 73). There is thus an intermingling of truth and fact in both autobiographical and fictive accounts of childhood and youth. Priebe observes that African childhood narratives are “[s]ometimes autobiographical, sometimes fictional, and often a mix” (41). J.M. Coetzee goes even further when he states, “[a]ll autobiography is storytelling, all writing is autobiography” (*Doubling* 391). While certain South African childhood narratives such as *Boyhood* by J.M. Coetzee and *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy* by Chris van Wyk are almost completely autobiographical, many of the texts that I shall focus on in this study are a combination of fiction and autobiography, where the authors draw on their own childhood experiences to a lesser or greater extent (for example, *Blood Orange* by Troy Blacklaws, *Young Blood* by Sifiso Mzobe, *The Children’s Day* by Michiel Heyns, *Thirteen Cents* by K. Sello Duiker, and *By Any Means* by Kurt Ellis). The distinctively autobiographical tenor of African childhood narratives is not surprising, since the “evocation of childhood, whether real or symbolic, for Africans is [...] a psychogenic impulse of self-assertion and self-search,” which is often due in part to Africa’s history of domination and oppression (Okolie 30). Maxwell Okolie further explains that the rise of Westernism has led African novelists to seek “refuge and psychological compensation in the evocation of their childhood” (31). In particular, South African authors who have written about childhood during the apartheid era seem to have undergone this selfsame cathartic

process of coming to terms with their oppressive past (this phenomenon shall be further discussed in Chapter Two).

The amalgamation of fiction and autobiography is a global phenomenon that has been variously labelled as ‘autofiction’, ‘autobiografiction’, ‘biografiction’, ‘faction’, or the ‘auto/biographical novel’ (Gratton 86; McNee 19; Saunders 7, 216; Smith and Watson 10). The first two terms, autofiction and autobiografiction, for example, can be seen as “double-jointed” in that “auto/biography can be read as fiction, and [...] fiction can be read as auto/biographical” (Saunders 7). Philippe Lejeune defines autobiographical novels as “fictional texts in which the reader has reason to suspect, from the resemblances that he thinks he sees, that there is identity of author and *protagonist*, whereas the author has chosen to deny this identity, or at least not to affirm it” (13, emphasis in original). These novels that present a “complex knotting of truth and fiction” fall under the umbrella term of ‘life writing’, and thus many of the texts that are referred to in this study can be classified as various forms of life writing (McNee 19). As with life writing, the autobiographical novel has been effectively used by authors writing about (and indeed often experiencing first-hand) the aftermath of colonial rule (Smith and Watson 12). These writers “create hybrid forms tied to local histories of struggle and claim the novel as a translation of their experience to distance themselves from autobiography’s alliance with colonial regimes” (Smith and Watson 12; see also Mbaio 63-64). Perhaps then, writers also disguise autobiography as fiction in order to disassociate their own name and identity with that of the protagonist so that any blame that might be attached to them, especially when such writing involves controversial or self-implicating views and actions, can be avoided. This is particularly pertinent to white South African authors writing about apartheid.

The majority of the novels that are discussed in this study belong to the *Bildungsroman* genre, which is characterised by fictional narratives that plot the formation or coming-of-age of the young protagonist. Apollo Amoko notes that even though the *Bildungsroman* “normatively eschews literal truth claims, it nevertheless makes, under the guise of fiction, large truth claims about specific historical, political, and cultural contexts” (195). The *Bildungsroman* has therefore strongly influenced the genre of life writing and, since it has been used as a vehicle for the self-representation of authors, it can be viewed as part of an “older tradition of the autobiographical novel” (Smith and Watson 119; Saunders 13; Gagiano, “... to Remember” 266). It thus follows that many of the first autobiographical

novels such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* were in fact *Bildungsromane* (Smith and Watson 10). I now turn to a discussion of this genre in the following section.

1.2.4 The *Bildungsroman*

As will be discussed in the section on methodology below, the narratives used in this thesis are limited to those that fall within the parameters of the *Bildungsroman* genre, one of the most influential genres of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Smith and Watson 119). While the purpose of this study is not to provide an analytical examination of the features of apartheid and post-apartheid *Bildungsromane*, the genre of the *Bildungsroman* can be employed as a useful framework in order to facilitate the examination of childhood through the analytical lens of childhood itself. Thus, while not being the main focus of my thesis, the *Bildungsroman* will be a common thread running throughout this study.

The *Bildungsroman* (literally: 'formation (or education) novel') genre is ostensibly one of the most prominent vehicles used by writers to provide compelling depictions of childhood and youth, and is thus a useful starting point for this study. Although the *Bildungsroman* genre is said to have originated in Germany, there have been various debates as to when it first emerged and who should be recognised as the originator of the term (Hoagland 18; Bakhtin 19). Karl Morgenstern is generally credited with the coinage of the term 'Bildungsroman' in 1819, although it was only some five decades later that the term was revived by the German philosopher and historian Wilhelm Dilthey, which led to the genre becoming a common feature of German literature before its influence spread across Europe and the world (Boes, "Modernist Studies" 231-233). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795-96) is deemed to be the prototype of the genre and other important examples include Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (Buckley 12; Hirsch 294; Moretti, *The Way* v; Slaughter 123). From the time of its emergence, there have been many debates on what in fact constitutes a 'novel of formation', and how loosely or rigidly the conventions of the *Bildungsroman* should be applied to novels that purport to subscribe to the genre (Boes, "Modernist Studies" 230, *Formative Fictions* 4; Esty, *Unseasonable Youth* 17-18, "The Colonial" 426). This has resulted in many subgenres and subversions of the *Bildungsroman* (for example, the *Entwicklungsroman* ('development novel'), *Erziehungsroman* ('education novel'), *Künstlerroman* ('artist novel'), female

Bildungsroman,³ postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, anti-*Bildungsroman*, etc.). Following the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* tradition, I apply the notion loosely, and hence use the terms *Bildungsroman* and ‘coming-of-age narrative’ interchangeably. The current concern is simply to present a framework from which the wide-ranging notions of childhood and youth, as evinced in South African coming-of-age narratives, can be examined. In what follows below, I shall provide an outline of the classical *Bildungsroman*, postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, and anti-*Bildungsroman*.

Mikhail Bakhtin and Franco Moretti have each authored seminal works on the nature of the *Bildungsroman*, which have been influential in the shaping of the genre. In his essay “The *Bildungsroman* and its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel),” Bakhtin states that the central theme of the traditional *Bildungsroman* is “the image of *man in the process of becoming*” (19, emphasis in original). This gives rise to the “conflict between the ideal of self-determination and the equally imperious demands of socialization” that Moretti examines in his book *The Way of the World* (15). This tension is usually resolved at the novel’s conclusion, with the “protagonist making some choice, thereby confirming that [he or she] has achieved a coherent self” (Mickelsen 418). Critics have found the genre to be somewhat contradictory, which thus reinforces and supports my premise of exploring childhood and youth through the various binaries that govern them, rather than through the unreliable lens of genre. Jerome Buckley provides a detailed outline of the characteristics of a typical *Bildungsroman* plot, which are as follows:

A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. His family, especially his father, proves doggedly hostile to his creative instincts or flights of fancy, antagonistic to his ambitions, and quite impervious to the new ideas he has gained from unprescribed reading. His first schooling [...] may be frustrating insofar as it may suggest options not available to him in his present setting. He therefore, sometimes at a quite early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence), to make his way independently in the city [...] There his real “education” begins, not only his preparation for a career but also – and often more importantly – his direct experience of urban life. The latter involves at least two love affairs or sexual

³ See Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland’s influential book *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, which moves “beyond the notion of *Bildung* as male” and sets up a framework for a female tradition of the genre (14). See also *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change* by Rita Felski.

encounters, one debasing, one exalting, and demands that [...] the hero reappraise his values. By the time he has decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon his maturity. His initiation complete, he may then visit his old home, to demonstrate by his presence the degree of his success or the wisdom of his choice. (17-18)

A novel need not display all of the above-mentioned characteristics in order to fulfil the requirements of the genre; however, Buckley states that the majority of the pattern described above should be adhered to in order for a novel to be labelled a *Bildungsroman* (18). Moretti claims that “[a] *Bildung* is truly such only if, at a certain point, it can be seen as *concluded*: only if youth passes into maturity, and comes there to a stop there (sic). And with it, time stops – narrative time at least” (*The Way* 26, emphasis in original), which is one of the points where the postcolonial rendering of the genre differs from its traditional predecessor. The protagonist of the traditional *Bildungsroman* is almost exclusively an “Anglo-European white male”⁴ (Slaughter 27). Therefore, in order for the *Bildungsroman* to continue to exist as a genre, its ‘classical’ margins had to be expanded since the original structure “does not respond to the necessities of women, racial and sexual minorities, or to the historical experience of the colonized peoples” (Vázquez 87; see also Boes, “Modernist Studies” 231).

Okuyade has recently observed that while the *Bildungsroman* genre has been extensively researched in the West, it has not received much scholarly attention in Africa (“Weaving Memories” 142). Significantly, very little academic work, both in the West and in Africa, has been published on South African coming-of-age narratives. Although the novels that are analysed in this study are all subsumed under the category of ‘postcolonial fiction’, childhood narratives set during both the apartheid and post-apartheid years can be categorised as either abiding by the conventions of the classical *Bildungsroman* (as detailed above) or the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*⁵ (including the ‘anti-*Bildungsroman*), which I turn to below.

Postcolonial coming-of-age narratives are typically more complex than their Western counterparts as they tend to perform a “double movement” of critiquing exclusions (historical, cultural, and economic) as well as outlining the individual’s emotional,

⁴ In the third chapter of *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding*, Buckley even goes so far as to describe George Eliot’s *Mill on the Floss* as centring on the *Bildung* of Tom Tulliver instead of his sister Maggie, who is indisputably the central character of the text (cf. Abel, Hirsch, and Langland 9; Boes, “Modernist Studies” 234).

⁵ As an aside, Simon Hay has recently questioned whether it is in fact possible for a novel to be both postcolonial and a *Bildungsroman* (318). He does not put forward any alternatives to the postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, but the question he raises is worth noting.

psychological, and spiritual growth and movement into the social world (Mackey 2, 123, 255; cf. Slaughter 100-101). The young protagonist's growth and development is often used as a reflection or symbol of national and political transition, thus linking personal stories and larger, national histories (J. Collins 29). Joseph Slaughter offers the following views on the postcolonial variant of the genre:

In many postcolonial *Bildungsromane* [...] the genre's traditional conclusive event of social, civil, and self-integration is perpetually postponed, so that the sovereign, undivided human personality remains a vanishing (plot) point beyond the frame of the text. [...] Contemporary first-person postcolonial *Bildungsromane* tend to be novels of disillusionment, in which the promises of developmentalism and self-determination are revealed to be empty, or at least exaggerated; *Bildung* thus becomes the process of recognizing the limits of personal development and the sociohistorically contingent condition of the idea and project of *Bildung* itself. (215-216)

To reiterate, the main difference between the specifically African variant of the *Bildungsroman* and the traditional Western *Bildungsroman* is the noticeable absence of a point of self-realization and harmonious reconciliation of the protagonist and society (Okuyade, "Continuity" 12). Similarly, the protagonist in the novel of disillusionment⁶ (or 'anti-*Bildungsroman*') fails to achieve a coherent self and therefore does not reach maturity. Many coming-of-age narratives written during the post-apartheid era are examples of the postcolonial 'anti-*Bildungsroman*' (for example, *Thirteen Cents*, *Untitled*, *Coconut*, *Skyline*, etc.). These novels "narrate the failure of incorporation" of the individual into society (Slaughter 181) and it is often nearly impossible to identify whether the "adequacy or inadequacy of the structure of the individual is due to the individual's success or failure or whether it is a comment on the structure itself" (Lukács 138). In the typical postcolonial *Bildungsroman*, the "self is defined in opposition to the "other" or colonizing culture," which is particularly true of South African *Bildungsromane* where individuals often define themselves in terms of the racial 'other' (Jussawalla 33). Other reasons for the "arrested adolescence" or "failed *Bildung*" of the protagonist include (but are not limited to) identity crises and a conflict of values, unemployment and economic marginalisation, exile or dislocation, poverty, or indeed combinations of all of these (Esty, *Unseasonable Youth* 208,

⁶ Georg Lukács examines what he terms a "novel of disillusionment" in his book *The Theory of the Novel* (118, 136-138).

211; Okuyade, “Continuity” 12). Many post-apartheid novels contain instances of failed *Bildung* that arise due to both internal (questions of identity and self-worth) and external (economic and political oppression) conflicts and struggles. Thus, the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is often characterised by open-endings, where the reader is left unsure of whether the protagonist has developed or matured in any significant way (Vázquez 97). Finally, many postcolonial *Bildungsromane* highlight the marginality of the narrator-protagonist (Slaughter 28), which accounts for the perception of the genre as “the most salient genre for the literature of social outsiders, primarily women or minority groups” (Hirsch 300). This aspect of the postcolonial *Bildungsroman* is particularly relevant to post-apartheid childhood stories (for example, *Thirteen Cents*, *The Violent Gestures of Life*, *Skyline*, *Rainmaker*, *By Any Means*, *Untitled*, *Young Blood*, etc.), since the protagonists are all portrayed as outsiders who are marginalised and alienated from society in different ways.

To conclude this section, the *Bildungsroman* genre, both classical and postcolonial, is used as the underlying backbone of this study, thus providing a framework for the analysis of childhood and youth in South African apartheid and post-apartheid literature. Due to the vast number of childhood texts within the South African literary canon, I have limited the narratives that I draw upon for closer analysis to those that can be categorised as *Bildungsromane*, although as previously stated, I apply the term more liberally than strictly.

1.2.5 Methodology: Distant Reading

Moretti’s notion of ‘distant reading’ provides a useful starting point in terms of the methodological framework of this study. In his seminal work *Distant Reading*, he confronts the concept of close reading, arguing that its dependence on “an extremely small canon” limits its effectiveness and reach (Moretti 48). Moretti furthermore states:

This may have become an unconscious and invisible premise by now, but it is an iron one nonetheless: you invest so much in individual texts *only* if you think that very few of them really matter. Otherwise, it doesn’t make sense. And if you want to look beyond the canon [...] close reading will not do it. It’s not designed to do it, it’s designed to do the opposite. (*Distant Reading* 48, emphasis in original)

While he does not discount the relevance and importance of close reading, Moretti puts forward the concept of ‘distant reading’ as the antithesis to close reading, since it can do what close reading could never hope to accomplish. Moretti defines distant reading as follows:

Distant reading: where distance [...] *is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say, Less (sic) is more. If we want to understand the system in its entirety, we must accept losing something. We always pay a price for theoretical knowledge: reality is infinitely rich; concepts are abstract, are poor. But it’s precisely this ‘poverty’ that makes it possible to handle them, and therefore to know. This is why less is actually more. (*Distant Reading* 48-49, emphasis in original)

Moretti specifically uses this approach as a way of examining ‘world literature’, but as Leon de Kock points out, this approach can also be usefully applied to South African literature (“Judging” 40). Likewise, Annie Gagliano argues that:

[a] consideration of a range of South African fictional and autobiographical texts has a better chance of encompassing the adaptive energies and realities of a society of this kind – one moving from intense, repressive and rigid structuring, and persistent opposition to the structuring regime and its assumptions – than the analysis of a single text by a single author (however famous) does. (“Moving Beyond” 133)

This is precisely the aim of this study: to draw on a wide range of childhood texts in order to gain a clearer picture of how the theme of childhood and youth operates in South African texts. Additionally, due to the lack of comprehensive research in this area of literary studies, a vital aspect of this research involved the compilation of an appendix consisting of South African texts that feature the theme of childhood. It is worth noting that as much as I discuss and refer to the select few major childhood texts, I am also interested in the marginal, lesser-known texts that feature the theme of childhood. Thus, this study includes neglected texts such as *Small Moving Parts* by Sally-Ann Murray, *Ruby Red* by Linzi Glass, and *Untitled* by Kgebetli Moele, as well as well-known narratives such as *Boyhood* by J.M. Coetzee, *The Smell of Apples* by Mark Behr, and *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa, which have been the subjects of much research. Both types of narratives are crucial to this study, as they provide valuable representations of childhood and youth in South Africa.

In terms of methodology, a modified version of ‘distant reading’ was employed in order to unearth the two hundred and forty-five literary texts that now make up the appendix that follows this study. The appendix is comprised of South African childhood narratives aimed (mostly) at an adult audience, and it includes texts from the pre-apartheid, apartheid, and post-apartheid years, covering a time span of over one hundred years. Naturally, given the vast number of texts as well as time and space constraints, it was not possible to read every book closely and so a number of ‘distant reading’ strategies were employed. Texts were handled in several different ways: 1) the text was closely read in its entirety; 2) only pertinent sections of the text were closely read; 3) the text was skimmed through in order to ascertain its relevance to the current study; and 4) in a few instances when a physical text was not available, scholarly articles and online synopses and reviews were read in order to determine whether or not the text was suitable. I have exercised critical judgement in terms of the narratives that are included in the appendix, but it is inevitable that there are books that have been overlooked – both in terms of texts that should or should not perhaps be listed. However, every effort has been made to ensure that the list that is presented in the appendix has been as thoroughly and exhaustively researched as possible.

In what follows, I describe the research processes and methods that were employed in order to compile the appendix. The first step was to generate a list of over one hundred South African publishing companies and thereafter to search through their online catalogues as far back as possible in order to find coming-of-age texts that explore notions of childhood and youth. The next step was to comb through the sizeable and up-to-date selection of South African novels at the Stellenbosch University library before looking through the titles on-hand at local bookstores. Academic articles and dissertations were also studied extensively in order to discover as wide a range of texts as possible. Thus, after reading a myriad of synopses and books (either partially or completely), an initial longlist of over three hundred novels was compiled. This was then reduced to the two hundred and forty-five narratives that make up the appendix that follows this study. In Chapters Two and Three, I discuss certain aspects of the appendix in more detail, drawing out provisional conclusions from the data that expound on the theme of childhood and youth in apartheid and post-apartheid literature. Consequently, the appendix forms a critical and valuable part of this study, as it firstly confirms the pervasiveness, and thus the significance, of the theme of childhood in South African literature. Secondly, a statistical and quantitative analysis of the appendix provides an

empirical and tangible basis for many of the observations made in this study, thus strengthening the arguments that have been formulated and presented here. Finally, this particular list of South African childhood narratives (aimed (mostly) at an adult audience and covering a period of over one hundred years) does not exist anywhere else, although it is worth mentioning two other lists that are similar in form but different in focus. The first is Sandra Stadler's appendix of two hundred and forty-seven South African *youth narratives* published during 2000-2013, which she presents in her article "Debating Equal Representation in South African Youth Literature Written in English (2000-2013) – A Statistical Assessment." Stadler conducts a predominantly statistical analysis of the novels, focusing particularly on demographics. The second list is the bibliography of Elwyn Jenkins's book *Seedlings: English Children's Reading and Writers in South Africa*, where he draws up a comprehensive list of South African literature *written for children*. These studies focus on literature written specifically for children and youth, thus the appendix in this study is distinct from research carried out by other scholars.

Due to the plethora of South African childhood narratives that were found during my research, the longlisted texts that make up the appendix had to be further culled in order to arrive at the forty shortlisted narratives that have been selected for closer analysis in this thesis. Thus, there are novels that might be considered significant that, due to space constraints, are not included in subsequent discussions. I have ultimately exercised critical judgement in the selection of texts; however, a specific set of criteria were formulated in order to delineate, demarcate, and justify the boundaries and ambit of this research. For the purposes of this study, the chosen text(s) had to be:

- 1) written in English; however, English translations such as Behr's *The Smell of Apples* and Goosen's *We're Not All Like That* were not excluded.⁷
- 2) a 'novel' – a term admittedly used rather liberally since, for the purposes of this study, it encompasses autobiographically infused writing, which includes memoirs.⁸ However, the scope of this thesis does not extend to short stories, poetry, or other literary forms.
- 3) written by a South African author and set in South Africa within the timeframe of 1948 – 2016.

⁷ For a discussion of Afrikaans childhood narratives see H.P. van Coller's article "Between Nostalgia and Parody: The Representation of Childhood and Youth in Afrikaans Literature of the Nineties."

⁸ It should be noted that autobiographies are not comprehensively listed in the appendix – those listed are mostly literary autobiographies written by influential authors.

- 4) aimed mainly at an adult audience, which would exclude the genres of children's literature and youth fiction. However, once again, this criterion was not always strictly applied since the lines between adult fiction and literature written specifically for children and youth are often blurred. Even Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*, with its explicitly adult themes and subject matter, has sometimes been referred to as a youth novel. Thus, 'crossover novels' (discussed in Chapter Three) such as Molohe's *Dancing in the Dust* and Mzobe's *Young Blood*, which are examples of novels that blur the lines of youth and adult fiction, have been included. In order to determine whether a particular text would be suitable for this study, I took into account the prevalence of scholarly work on the text, the pervasiveness of the type of childhood portrayed, and ultimately used my own discretion.
- 5) a *Bildungsroman* – a coming-of-age story, where the majority of the narrative is centred on the development and lived experiences of the young protagonist. Thus, novels such as *What Kind of Child* by Ken Barris have been excluded, since the street child Malibongwe Joyini is one of three main characters and his story only occupies about a third of the novel.

Thus, each of the texts chosen for analysis in this study abide by these five criteria, and have been carefully selected in order to ensure that a broadly representative view of childhood in apartheid and post-apartheid South African literature is portrayed.

An examination of childhood that is grounded in literary studies is both vital and valuable, and therefore, as demonstrated in this chapter, the significance of this research is undeniable. Firstly, it provides an important and useful contribution to a burgeoning area of scholarly interest, namely childhood and youth in African literature. The theme of childhood and youth in South African literature in particular has not yet been comprehensively examined and therefore, this research attempts to address and fill this gap by providing a new perspective on the theme of childhood wherein childhood itself is made the locus of concern (James, Jenks, and Prout 22). Secondly, it investigates both the variety of reasons as to why authors have turned to childhood in their writings as well as the significance thereof, thus bringing to light aspects of the current state and direction of writing in South Africa. Finally, this thesis will unveil and acknowledge the complexities and intricacies that are inevitably involved in the coming-of-age process. Since much is expected of the youth, especially the so-called 'born free generation',⁹ who are coming-of-age in the post-apartheid era, it is imperative that both the 'state of youth' and past and current ideas of childhood and youth are

⁹ Those who have been born since the first democratic elections in 1994, which resulted in the election of Nelson Mandela as the first black president of South Africa.

investigated. It is also important to consider and grapple with the question of what the conflicts facing South African youth reveal about societal and national structures. Although this study is not preoccupied with lived childhood experiences (although I do occasionally draw on sociological studies), literature often functions as a mirror of society by reflecting actual concerns and issues (Ferguson 229). Not only does literature reflect, but it also constructs and creates, and since it is not tied down to facts and figures (as is sociology and journalism), it can grapple with social and cultural notions of childhood by examining broader questions of what it means to be a youth in South Africa.

There is naturally a disconnection between literary representations of childhood and reality; however, as Gavin states, “literature does not stand entirely apart from life, and literary depictions of children are not only influenced by views on childhood in their times [...] but also reflect and reveal concerns, cultural tendencies, and areas of interest in the period of their composition” (3). Accordingly, I concur with Pramoedya Ananta Toer’s notion that the personal experience of writers is

also the experience of their people, and the experience of their people is also their personal experience. A part of this experience, small or large or the whole lot, will erupt in their writings, and will return to their people in the form of new realities, literary realities. *That is why the truth of fiction is also the truth of history.* (8-9, emphasis added)

Consequently, this study examines texts that convey not only the “pleasures of the fictive but [also] the compelling powers of the real” (Greenblatt 23) in order to present wide-ranging perspectives of childhood and youth as represented in South African apartheid and post-apartheid narratives.

1.3. Chapter Overview

This thesis is comprised of four chapters, beginning with the present and preceding introductory chapter. Chapter Two (“Childhood as a ‘Site of Struggle’ in Apartheid Coming-of-Age Narratives”) is divided into two parts. The first part begins with an overview of the representation of childhood and youth in texts set during the apartheid era. These include novels written and published during apartheid, as well as those *published* post-1994, but that are *set* during the apartheid years, and I discuss the important differences between these two

groups of apartheid childhood novels. I outline common themes and tropes, and examine how the child is used as a metaphor for the nation, the link between childhood narratives and historical, national, and transnational narratives, and the notion of childhood as a ‘site of struggle’. The second part of the chapter analyses childhood through the lenses of four binary oppositions: victim/perpetrator, child/adult, domestic/political, and identity/difference. I analyse a wide range of apartheid coming-of-age narratives, including J.M. Coetzee’s *Boyhood*, Mark Behr’s *The Smell of Apples*, Kagiso Lesego Molope’s *Dancing in the Dust*, Chris van Wyk’s *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy*, Sally-Ann Murray’s *Small Moving Parts*, Christopher Hope’s *A Separate Development*, Pamela Jooste’s *Dance with a Poor Man’s Daughter*, Linzi Glass’s *Ruby Red*, and Sumayya Lee’s *The Story of Maha*.

Chapter Three (“‘The Struggle has not Changed its Face’: The Youth in Crisis in Post-Apartheid Coming-of-Age Narratives”) focuses on the representation of childhood and youth in post-apartheid coming-of-age novels. This chapter mirrors Chapter Two and is also divided into two parts. In the first part, I discuss the transition from apartheid to post-apartheid and the new literary canon that has consequently emerged, including prominent themes and trends. I provide an overview of the representation of childhood and youth in post-apartheid texts, with a specific focus on how this representation varies from apartheid narratives. I once again explore the notion of childhood as a ‘site of struggle’ and examine how childhood is used as a metaphor of the nation in the post-apartheid context. In the second part of this chapter, I examine how the following four binaries that govern the notion of childhood in post-apartheid South African literature are contested and confronted: victim/perpetrator, child/adult, agency/powerlessness, and identity/difference. The novels selected for analysis in this chapter include Kopano Matlwa’s *Coconut*, Patricia Schonstein Pinnock’s *Skyline*, Tuelo Gabonewe’s *Planet Savage*, Kgebetli Moele’s *Untitled*, Elana Bregin’s *Shiva’s Dance*, Tracey Farren’s *Snake*, Kurt Ellis’s *By Any Means*, Sifiso Mzobe’s *Young Blood*, and K. Sello Duiker’s *Thirteen Cents*.

In the concluding chapter, I summarise the main points of this thesis and offer my final conclusions on the representation of childhood and youth in apartheid and post-apartheid South African coming-of-age narratives. I once again discuss the value of the presented research and the accompanying appendix, which will be useful to other scholars who are interested in conducting further research on literary childhood in South African literature.

Finally, in light of the conclusions of this study, I provide suggestions and recommendations for further research.

Chapter Two

Childhood as a ‘Site of Struggle’ in Apartheid Coming-of-Age Narratives

It is up to him to somehow get beyond childhood, beyond family and school, to a new life where he will not need to pretend any more. Childhood, says the Children’s Encyclopaedia, is a time of innocent joy, to be spent in the meadows and amid buttercups and bunny-rabbits or at the hearthside absorbed in a storybook. It is a vision of a childhood utterly alien to him. Nothing he experiences in Worcester, at home or at school, leads him to think that childhood is anything but a time of gritting the teeth and enduring.

– J.M. Coetzee (Boyhood 13-14)

The representation of childhood in coming-of-age narratives set during the apartheid years (1948-1994) is particularly problematic to investigate because of the essentially severed notions of childhood that paradigmatically exist side by side in South African literature. On the one hand, there is the depiction of the childhood years experienced by privileged white children,¹⁰ and on the other hand, there is the portrayal of the lived experiences of children who were discriminated against because of their race. Thus, in the context of South African literature, the experience and depiction of childhood varies significantly due to the governmental policies that were instated by the apartheid regime. While one of the objectives of this study is to address the discrepancies found in the portrayal of childhood, the overarching point of interest is the commonality of this experience, both in apartheid literature as well as narratives that are set in the post-apartheid context (as discussed in Chapter Three). This commonality, broadly speaking, is the state of crisis and struggle that accompanies the theme of childhood and youth in South African literature, and it is this hypothesis that forms the crux of this study. I thus posit that despite differences in culture, race, and economic class, childhood is nevertheless represented as a ‘site of struggle’: children from all spheres of life experience their upbringing as one fraught with different

¹⁰ This privilege is still maintained even when the white child grows up in relative poverty (thirteen-year-old Timus Rademan in *Stargazer* by Jan van Tonder and young Gertie in *We’re Not all Like That* by Jeanne Goosen are good examples of this).

kinds of conflict. Therefore, in order to examine these struggles most effectively, this chapter provides a *survey* of the representation of childhood in various apartheid narratives, rather than an in-depth analysis of only one or two texts.

It is interesting to note how scholars have frequently overlooked the figure of the child in their examination of childhood narratives. For example, scholarly articles¹¹ on *The Smell of Apples* by Mark Behr investigate topics ranging from bisexuality to apartheid ideology and from the use of narration to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. While notions such as race and cultural identity are an important aspect of apartheid literature (and consequently this study), the aim is not to analyse ideas of childhood through the frame of race, for example, but rather through the analytical framework of childhood itself. In order to do so, a broad, expandable, and wide-ranging theoretical lens is needed. Hence, I examine childhood and youth in apartheid literature through the lenses of the following four binary oppositions: victim/perpetrator, child/adult, domestic/political, and identity/difference. By examining childhood through the framework of these specific binaries, a holistic analysis of the trope of childhood emerges in spite of the stark differences in childhood experiences that arise as a direct result of the apartheid regime's gross violation of basic human rights.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first section, I provide an overview of apartheid childhood narratives, discussing possible reasons for the large number of existing texts (including an examination of the child as a metaphor for the nation), and investigating the differences between apartheid narratives published during the era of segregation (1948-1994) and those published post-1994. I outline common themes and topics that emerge in apartheid childhood narratives, and discuss the chosen narratives and the process and logic behind their inclusion in this study. The notions of childhood as a 'site of struggle' and "a shifting set of ideas" (Cunningham 1) will also be explored. The second, and more substantial, section of the chapter shall consist of a comprehensive examination of the representation of childhood in nine literary texts through the lenses of the four binaries mentioned above.

¹¹ These scholarly articles include "Fissures in Apartheid's "Eden": Representations of Bisexuality in *The Smell of Apples* by Mark Behr" by Cheryl Stobie, "The Seduction of Narration in Mark Behr's *The Smell of Apples*" by Jay Rajiva, "*The Smell of Apples*, *Moby-Dick*, and Apartheid Ideology" by Rita Barnard, and "The Whole Country's Truth: Confession and Narrative in Recent White South African Writing" by Michiel Heyns.

2.1 Part One

2.1.1 An Overview of the Representation of Childhood in Apartheid Narratives

Childhood and youth feature notably in novels set during the apartheid years. Of the two hundred and forty-five narratives that constitute the appendix that follows this study, one hundred and sixty-four texts are set during the apartheid era. Of these narratives, approximately one hundred and thirty-two texts (over three-quarters) were published after 1994. It thus becomes apparent that in the years following the demise of the apartheid regime, South African authors frequently turned to the figure of the child in order to confront and process the tumultuous past of the country. Table 1 below shows the distribution of the publication dates and the number of childhood narratives set during the apartheid years:

<i>Published during:</i>	<i>Apartheid</i>	<i>Post-apartheid (132 novels in total)</i>			
Publication date:	1948-1993	1994-1999	2000-2004	2005-2010	2011-2016
Number of texts:	32	8	29	55	40

Table 1: Publication dates and the number of childhood narratives set during apartheid.

Approximately sixty percent of these texts feature a young white protagonist, and over sixty-five percent of the authors are white South Africans. This racial imbalance is rather telling, since it is mostly the privileged perpetrators (even if only indirectly guilty by association) and not the victims who are using the act of writing in order to come to terms with their past.

These figures also point to a seemingly shared approach that white authors in particular have adopted when writing about the past, which begs the following question: why is childhood such a commonly used trope, especially in apartheid narratives published during the post-apartheid era? My tentative response, as alluded to above, is that the act of writing about childhood and the coming-of-age period reveals a certain kind of cathartic process (which is not necessarily positive) of coming to terms with a perplexingly guilt-ridden and tortuous past. The transition to a post-apartheid context has opened up a temporary “safe place” for writers to “tell their stories” and “legitimately face the past, speak the unspeakable, [and] even celebrate” (Boniface Davies and Horrell 138). There is also a “widely shared feeling that the past has been newly opened to interpretation, while the future remains indeterminate and resistant to prediction” (Boehmer, Gunner, and Maake 559). Another

possible reason as to why writers have turned to the ‘innocent’ child figure could be because of a desire to present a view of South Africa that is devoid of adult hypocrisy (Jenkins, *Children* 133). In this way, “childhood and adolescent voices [are used] as subversive narrative techniques” in order to peel away the layers of hypocrisy until the truth is revealed (M. Williams, “*The List*” 1). The fact that many of these texts are to a greater or lesser extent autobiographical (well over a third of the listed narratives contain autobiographical features) suggests that these childhood and youth narratives incorporate aspects of ‘confessional writing’. Michiel Heyns claims that confessional fiction frequently employs a child or youth as the narrator or focalizer, and is most commonly written in the first person, thereby ‘privileging’ the protagonist (“*Whole Country’s*” 50). According to Georgina Horrell, the plethora of autobiographies and “autobiographical texts presented as novels” operate from a strongly personal perspective and they “resurrect childhood in order to construct a present truth” (60). Indeed, Anthea Garman argues that there was a resurgence of confessional writing in the wake of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, since the ‘confessional’ functions as a mode of facilitating truth finding (188-189). As a result, the foregrounding of childhood narratives is often related to ideas surrounding the representation of childhood innocence and guilt, which I shall discuss in more depth further on in this chapter.

Another explanation for the proliferation of childhood narratives can be found in Njabulo Ndebele’s call for a rediscovery of the child and childhood in the aftermath of apartheid, beginning with literary texts (*Fine Lines*; “*Recovering Childhood*”). He states that one of the effects of apartheid was the obliteration of the innocence of many children, particularly those who were both the victims and perpetrators of violence (*Fine Lines* 42-43). Ndebele thus arrives at the following conclusion:

Beginning with the recovery of childhood and innocence, there are so many other things to be recovered and even redefined: the family; the sense of autonomous and secure neighbourhoods rebuilding the concept of a community; the sense of nationhood and, beyond that, the sense of being part of a larger world. It is a task of enormous proportions. But we have to locate the process of rediscovery in the child and genuinely believe in the newness that will emerge from there. (*Fine Lines* 43)

According to Ndebele, it is only then that “South African literature may itself be reborn and then grow the society of its preoccupation” (“*Recovering Childhood*” 332). Perhaps this too

accounts for the surge of apartheid childhood narratives that were written and published after 1994.

In certain cases, the child or childhood in general is used as a symbol of the nation or as a means of critiquing the nation's political climate. Katherina Dodou states that the "metaphorical link between national history and identity, on the one hand, and the figure of the child, on the other, is one that has been repeatedly negotiated in contemporary works" (244). Childhood novels such as *The Smell of Apples* and *A Separate Development* are political allegories that present condemning portrayals of the twisted logic of apartheid. For example, the rape of Frikkie in *The Smell of Apples* "functions allegorically not only in terms of the Fall from prelapsarian innocence, but also – in a final symbolic *identification* – in terms of the rape of Africa by Europe" (Geertsema, "Inventing Innocence" 54, emphasis in original). The apples referred to in the title and elsewhere in the narrative are initially symbols of white supremacy, but are then used to symbolise the loss of innocence (the Edenic connotations are rife: the apple denotes an acquirement of the knowledge of good and evil – the witnessing of the rape is that moment of knowledge – and thus, paradise is lost) (Geertsema, "Inventing Innocence" 54-55). After the rape, the boys eat apples for breakfast and Frikkie says, "[t]hese apples are rotten or something" (179). They discover that the sour smell is coming from Frikkie's hand, which is still covered in semen. The reference to the rotten apples invokes the well-known line from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (1.4.90). Thus, *The Smell of Apples* functions as an allegory, revealing that there is something rotten in the state of South Africa, and ultimately condemning the apartheid regime.

There are often analogies between literary (in this case, specifically coming-of-age) narratives and historical and national narratives. Jed Esty claims that "the contemporary *Bildungsroman* continues to be a crucial symbolic form for placing the project of individual development in relation to local, national, and global concepts of progress" (*Unseasonable Youth* 213). In some novels, the child's attainment of personal freedom and true selfhood coincides with the liberation of the nation and the assumption of a new national identity. For example, in *Crocodile Burning* by Michael Williams, a group of young theatre performers achieve independence from their tyrannical manager soon after Nelson Mandela's release from prison. Similarly, *An Imperfect Blessing* by Nadia Davids, which is mostly set in 1993, ends with South Africa's first democratic elections. Alia, the novel's fourteen-year-old

protagonist, is said to be “coming of age *with* the country” (19, emphasis in original). Another example is Kagiso Lesego Molope’s novel *The Mending Season*, which is set during the early 1990s and maps the development of the teenage protagonist, Tshidiso, and her family alongside that of the country: “The country was mending many years of broken fences. And in our own way, so was my family” (10).

Since the majority of apartheid childhood narratives were published after 1994, it is necessary to examine the differences between novels written and published during apartheid, and those written and published in the years following the collapse of the apartheid regime. Naturally, there is a difference in the perspective of the narratives. Both kinds of novels are occupied (to varying degrees) with the social and economic repercussions of the segregation policies of apartheid. However, childhood narratives (especially those written by black South African writers) written before 1994 often look forward with hope (however uncertain that hope is) to the future (Nixon 73), whilst the apartheid novel written retrospectively after 1994 is more concerned with examining the fragments of the past. In addition, the fact that many literary works were strictly censored by what Peter McDonald terms the apartheid regime’s “literature police” (indeed, just under one quarter of the apartheid childhood narratives listed in the appendix were banned at one point or another) meant that writers’ freedom of expression was threatened and usurped (11). The consequences of this suppression were damaging and wide-ranging, although the direct effect on writers’ actual literary output is difficult to measure.

One of the main differences between the two groups of apartheid childhood narratives is the family environment in which the white child protagonist grows up, which naturally influences his or her views on segregation. In many of the childhood narratives written during apartheid, the child grows up in a family that is either completely in favour of segregation (for example, in *The Smell of Apples* by Mark Behr, Marnus’s father is a major-general in the South African Defence Force¹²) or is complacently indifferent to the government’s policies and unconcerned about the squalor in which their domestic servants live (such as Ruth’s parents in *Home Ground* by Lynn Freed). As a result, the young protagonist either subscribes to the ideals of his or her parents, or becomes increasingly uneasy with the inequalities that

¹² The SADF constituted the armed forces of the Nationalist apartheid government and while they were mainly responsible for counter-insurgency in Southern Africa, they were often called in to reinforce the South African Police Force in order to quell any opposition to white minority rule (e.g. during the Sharpeville massacre and the Soweto Riots) (Clark and Worger 88-89).

he or she witnesses at home and in society. For example, in *The Smell of Apples*, although acknowledging in theory that people of other races are “also human” (54), in actuality Marnus views black people as inferior to him, as is revealed in the following comment: “Of all the nations in the world, those with black skins across their butts also have the smallest brains. Even if you can get a black out of the bush, you can’t ever get the bush out of the black” (38-39). Whereas, in *Home Ground*, Ruth is referred to as the “[champion] of the underdog” whenever she questions the state of the living conditions of the family’s servants and attempts rather ineffectually to bring about change (20). *My Traitor’s Heart* by Rian Malan is an example of an Afrikaans boy who grows up in an apartheid-supporting family, but later as a teenager decides to become a ‘Communist’ and oppose the apartheid system. In short, the apartheid-era novels under examination here generally depict the white child’s family as exhibiting racist tendencies.

On the other side of the spectrum, a notable amount of apartheid narratives that were written post-1994 feature a young protagonist who grows up in a family where his or her parents are decidedly anti-apartheid (the examples are numerous and include, but are not limited to, *Ruby Red* by Linzi Glass, *Karoo Boy* and *Blood Orange* by Troy Blacklaws, *False River* by Dominique Botha, *The Syringa Tree* by Pamela Gien, *Heaven Forbid* by Christopher Hope, *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* by Jo-Anne Richards, and *Lucky Fish* by Reviva Schermbrucker). For example, in Glass’s *Ruby Red*, Ruby’s parents have “raised her to not see race or creed or colour” (62-63) and in Blacklaws’s *Karoo Boy*, Douglas and Marsden are sent to a mixed race private school because their father wants them to “grow up colour-blind” (18). With this in mind, it would seem that white South African writers employ the theme of childhood both because of the supposed innocence that accompanies those years, as well as the possibility of portraying the child as irreprehensible and free from the sin of racism. For the white writer, the childhood narrative is thus an appropriate vehicle with which to represent the time of apartheid from the perspective of the white population without any fear of condemnation. The author ostensibly embarks on a cathartic process of coming to terms with the past and assuaging the deep-seated guilt that haunts many white South Africans. This approach is not necessarily objectionable; however, it does complicate and problematise the notion of guilt, as I will discuss further on in the chapter. Paulina Grzęda makes the following observation:

The contemporary proliferation of confessional writing [...] can be seen as embedded in a wider shift of emphasis in South African writing of the period [...] namely the passage from the public domain of politics and resistance struggle which characterised South African writing under apartheid to the markedly more introspective, private realm of self-questioning, reflection, and reclaiming of space for expression of personal grief. (78)

This kind of contemplative, confessional writing directly applies to childhood narratives, since it echoes the cathartic process of coming to terms with the past that was referred to earlier. It is also yet another distinction between narratives written during apartheid and those written after 1994. The period of ‘writerly mourning’ that Grzęda alludes to can be seen in childhood texts as a grieving for the loss of the innocence and simplicity that accompanies those years, or alternatively, for the innocence and simplicity that *should* have accompanied those years (78).

In the typical post-1994 apartheid child narrative, the young white protagonist is sensitive, intelligent, and like his or her parents, sees the evils of racism, which often results in the child being teased and derided by others as a “kaffirboetie”¹³ (for example, Troy Blacklaws’s *Blood Orange* (100) and *Karoo Boy* (166), and Tony Eprile’s *The Persistence of Memory* (133)). The way in which these protagonists are singled out for ridicule and ‘othered’ by their peers highlights not only the uniqueness of the protagonist’s viewpoint, but also their difference (see the discussion on identity/difference in Part Two of this chapter). Naturally, there are also a handful of novels wherein the white child acknowledges his or her guilt and complicity (for example, *Boyhood* by J.M. Coetzee, *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* by Jo-Anne Richards, and *Karoo Boy* by Troy Blacklaws). A number of these texts as well as several others shall be examined in the section on childhood innocence later on in this chapter.

Apartheid childhood narratives can be further distinguished according to the two categories that Heyns uses to group white South African apartheid literature: heroic romance and confessional fiction (“Whole Country’s” 48). The first category refers to fiction in which the white person “miraculously escapes complicity and heroically opposes the regime, often through union, sexual or otherwise, with a black protagonist” (Heyns, “Whole Country’s” 48). Heyns goes on to state that the “heroic tradition is a profoundly uncomfortable one in

¹³ The pejorative term ‘kaffirboetie’ literally means ‘kaffir brother’ and was used to mock white people who were sympathetic to those oppressed by segregation laws.

white South African fiction in that it tries to find in the spirit of an individual a redemptive resistance to the malaise of a nation,” which thus engenders and perpetuates stereotypes and clichés (“Whole Country’s” 49). The childhood narratives that fall under the category of heroic romance include many of those in which the child and his or her family are anti-apartheid, often being the only family in the community who have leftist political views. Thus, in the words of Heyns, the white protagonist is “miraculously” divested of any kind of responsibility and in his or her friendship with a black person (for example, Ruby’s friendship with Julian, a black artist in *Ruby Red*, and Douglas’s friendship with Moses, a black petrol attendant in *Karoo Boy*), he or she is said to “heroically” oppose the apartheid government (“Whole Country’s” 48).

On the opposite end is the form of autobiographical writing that is termed confessional fiction, which can be demarcated as “distinct from the *memoir* and the *apology*, on the basis of an underlying motive to tell an essential truth about the self” (Coetzee, *Doubling* 252). Derek Attridge claims that this “essential truth” is not a question of “historical or factual truth, which is the domain of the *memoir*, nor is it a matter of explaining or excusing the construction or deformation of the self, which is the function of *apology*” (144). Confessional fiction is not only “the revelation of what has been known all along by the author but kept secret for reasons of guilt and shame; rather, it is something that emerges in the telling, if it emerges at all” (Attridge 145). This signifies that the “text does not refer to the truth; it produces it”; that is, the act of writing generates a fundamental truth about the self (Attridge 145). Analogous to Coetzee’s idea of an “essential truth,” Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson claim that autobiographical truth is situated in “the intersubjective exchange between narrator and reader aimed at producing a shared understanding of the meaning of a life” (16). Thus, novels such as *The Smell of Apples* by Mark Behr, *Boyhood* by J.M. Coetzee, and *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* by Jo-Anne Richards can be placed within the category of confessional fiction, since these writers attempt to come to terms with the past by providing an ostensibly honest account of the self. The keyword here is ‘attempt’, since whether or not this is actually achieved remains to be seen. Confessional childhood narratives can be further divided into those that insist that the “child is implicated in the structures which guarantee the privileged childhood” and thus an “implicit amnesty [is] accorded the child-as-victim” (for example, *The Smell of Apples* and *The Innocence of Roast Chicken*) (Heyns, “Whole Country’s” 53), and those that highlight the complicity of the protagonist in the events and

structures he or she describes and refuse to grant him or her self-absolution or even a sense of remorse (for example, *Boyhood*) (Heyns, “Whole Country’s” 54-55). Thus, in *Boyhood* “[t]here is little mercy or compassion [...] and no self-pity. There is not even the guilt that would prompt to confession; there is only the implication that innocence is always already fraught with experience” (Heyns, “Whole Country’s” 56).

Apartheid childhood narratives examine a wide range of themes and topics that include love, relationships (familial and non-familial), schooling and education, poverty, racism, discrimination, oppression, sex and sexuality, abuse (sexual, physical, and emotional), murder, prostitution, teenage pregnancy, eating disorders, gangsterism, homosexuality, the environment and nature, politics, memory, secrets, betrayal, trauma, loss, and death. Accordingly, there is a collection of apartheid childhood novels that focus on *specific* incidents, issues, or ‘sites of struggle’. For example, *The Elephant in the Room* by Maya Fowler is about a girl battling a severe eating disorder, *Prodigy* by Oliver Findley Price is about a musical child prodigy, *Soliloquy* by Stephen Finn is about a child murderer, *Amandla!* by Miriam Tlali focuses almost solely on the 1976 Soweto Riots, and *Embrace* by Mark Behr, *Moffie* by André Carl van der Merwe, and *The Jack Bank* by Glen Retief are centred on a young homosexual protagonist. Abuse (especially sexual abuse) is a prevalent aspect of the representation of childhood in apartheid childhood literature. There are a handful of novels that focus almost entirely on the abuse of the child, be it assault, incest, or rape. These novels, which I term ‘narratives of abuse’, often contain autobiographical elements and include *Here be Lions* by Helen Brain, *Indescribable* by Candice Derman, *Jelly Dog Days* by Erica Emdon, *A Daughter’s Legacy* by Pamphilia Hlapa, *Little Girl, Arise!* by Thandeki Umlilo, *It’s Me, Anna* by Elbie Lötter, and *Whiteheart: Prologue to Hysteria* by Lesego Rampolokeng, which is both a narrative of abuse and violence, where the victim becomes the perpetrator of violence. The fact that children are so often portrayed as the victims of sexual abuse in South African literature is not surprising considering that the country has one of the highest rates of sexual violence in the world (Jewkes et al. 11; Richter and Dawes 79). Table 2 below provides an indication of the high level of child sexual abuse in South Africa over a time-span of several years.

Number of reported cases in South Africa of child sexual abuse:									
1994	1996	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
23,664*	22,220	28,179	21,805	19,585	27,417	28,128	25,862	20,702	18,524 ¹⁴

Table 2: Child sexual abuse figures (Table adapted from Pierce and Bozalek 819-820; RAPCAN Factsheet 1; DSD, DWCPD and UNICEF 10; Africa Check). *Child abuse in general, although the majority of these cases were indeed sexual offences.

Statistics on child sexual abuse during apartheid are not readily available, but even if they were, those figures would be far from accurate. According to a study done by Lois Pierce and Vivienne Bozalek, children who were not classified as ‘white’ were not included in sexual abuse statistics for many years during the apartheid era (819). Furthermore, many cases of child abuse are not reported and it is estimated that the numbers in the table above represent only a *ninth* of actual offences (DSD, DWCPD, and UNICEF 15). Thus, as shocking as the statistics above are, they are not an accurate reflection of the level of child abuse that occurs in South Africa, as the numbers are in all likelihood much higher.

2.1.2 The Selection of Narratives

As detailed in Chapter One, due to the large number of childhood narratives that were unearthed in the initial stages of research, a selection process was followed in order to narrow down the texts to the nine novels that make up the sample in this chapter. These nine texts will be used to analyse the representation of childhood in South African apartheid literature. The appendix contains two hundred and forty-five apartheid childhood narratives, which I first narrowed down to approximately sixty novels, some of which are referred to in this chapter but are not looked at in detail. The final nine novels that have been selected for closer analysis (to a lesser or greater extent) include: *The Smell of Apples* by Mark Behr (Afrikaans edition and English translation published in 1993 and 1995 respectively), *Boyhood* by J.M. Coetzee (1997), *Ruby Red* by Linzi Glass (2007), *A Separate Development* by Christopher Hope (1981), *Dance with a Poor Man’s Daughter* by Pamela Jooste (1998), *The Story of Maha* by Sumayya Lee (2007), *Dancing in the Dust* by Kagiso Lesego Molohe (2002), *Small Moving Parts* by Sally-Ann Murray (2009), and *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy* by Chris van Wyk (2004). In choosing the above texts, I endeavoured to make the sample as representative as possible of the different evocations of childhood in apartheid childhood novels (the

¹⁴ These are the most recent statistics that are currently available.

experiences of a coloured boy will be very different to that of a white girl, for example). Thus, the above selection is comprised of texts that were written both during and after apartheid, and feature white (both English and Afrikaans), black, coloured, and Indian male and female child protagonists of various economic circumstances. However, that being said, the sample does include a higher number of narratives featuring white children, which reflects the disproportionate ratio of white and black child figures in apartheid childhood texts, as discussed earlier. Bearing in mind the prevalence (or lack thereof) of scholarly work on the shortlisted novels, I chose a combination of well-known and lesser-known texts. The nature of this study, being a survey rather than an in-depth examination of childhood narratives, does not necessitate an extensive analysis of these novels, many of which have already been the object of much research. For each section of the latter part of this chapter, I shall draw on one or two main texts and several secondary texts in order to examine the representation of childhood through the lenses of several binary concepts.

2.1.3 Childhood as a ‘Site of Struggle’

Struggle and conflict are underlying themes in nearly every childhood narrative examined in this study. The young protagonists do not always express this idea verbally but its occurrence is ubiquitous. For example, in Coetzee’s *Boyhood*, John finds that his life experiences thus far have led him to believe that childhood is a “time of gritting the teeth and enduring” (14). Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to look at the representation of childhood in apartheid narratives from the viewpoint of the idea of childhood as a ‘site of struggle’ and as “a shifting set of ideas” (Cunningham 1). The term ‘site of struggle’ encompasses the various types of conflicts (be it physical, emotional, or psychological) that are depicted in representations of children and youth in apartheid coming-of-age narratives. It is thus imperative, particularly in light of South Africa’s history, that this notion forms the basis of this study, as it goes beyond the confining limits of race, class, and culture. These ‘sites of struggle’ and conflict can be located within the four main binaries that form the framework of the analyses in this study: victim/perpetrator, child/adult, domestic/political, and identity/difference. Furthermore, these binaries occur within a combination of several categories that begin with the individual and broaden to include the spaces of the home, school, community, and nation (for example, the child/adult binary is primarily located in the spaces of the home,

school, and community). These aspects collectively form the core part of the set of ideas pertaining to representations of childhood that underlie this research.

In a similar vein to Ndebele's appeal to South African writers to "move away from an easy pre-occupation with demonstrating the obvious existence of oppression," this study does not seek to simply demonstrate that children and youth of all races, cultures, and economic backgrounds are portrayed as experiencing various kinds of oppression (*Rediscovery* 171). In addition, I do not wish to focus only on the struggles and conflicts themselves; these simply form a backbone from which to examine ideas of childhood that are found in apartheid coming-of-age narratives. For this reason, I have not selected any of the 'singular' narratives (referred to earlier in this chapter) that focus on very specific 'sites of struggle' for further analysis, and have rather chosen narratives that provide portrayals of the everyday life of children and youth during apartheid. More precisely, the ultimate objective is to analyse the representation of childhood and youth in South African coming-of-age narratives by examining the binaries that govern notions of childhood. The advantage of using these binaries as a framework is that they serve as an appropriate organising principle as well as allow for much freedom. In light of the extensive scope of binary oppositions, I shall attempt to hone in on the most important and pertinent aspects of each binary in the discussions below.

2.2 Part Two

2.2.1 The Child Figure: Innocent Victim and Guilty Perpetrator

The victim/perpetrator binary can be approached in a fairly straightforward manner: children have been variously seen either as victims of abuse and violence, or as perpetrators of acts of violence. As detailed above, apartheid childhood narratives contain many instances where the child is abused sexually, physically, or psychologically. Indeed, many of the novels that are analysed in this chapter depict each of these kinds of abuse, particularly sexual abuse. For example, Tihelo is physically and sexually assaulted by policemen in *Dancing in the Dust*; Halley is sexually abused for long periods of time by a neighbour and her mother's fiancé in *Small Moving Parts*; Simon is molested by a minister in *The Children's Day*; Timus is sexually assaulted by a matric boy (the nephew of his parents' friends) in *Stargazer*; and in

The Smell of Apples, Marnus witnesses his father raping his best friend, which has severe psychological ramifications for the young protagonist. However, the representation of children and youth as perpetrators is more infrequent in apartheid narratives, although the opposite is true of post-apartheid literature. Novels such as *Dancing in the Dust* display this phenomenon when schoolchildren become involved in the struggle for freedom, which sometimes entails the use of violent measures. This mode of reading the victim/perpetrator binary is closely related to another binary, agency/powerlessness, which is discussed in the section below on the domestic/political binary.

Of course, the representation of childhood and youth as either victims or perpetrators depends on the frame through which childhood is viewed. When childhood is associated with innocence, the child is frequently portrayed as a victim, but when children are seen as culpable beings, they are more likely to be depicted as perpetrators. The victim/perpetrator binary thus implies the synonymic innocent/guilty binary, and the remainder of this particular section is devoted to teasing out the intricacies of these binaries by going beyond a surface-level analysis in order to explore the idea of the inherent innocence of children and how this notion is approached and employed by authors of apartheid childhood narratives.

The supposedly incontestable notion of the inherent innocence of children is one of the few aspects of the representation of childhood in South African apartheid childhood narratives that has garnered a reasonable amount of scholarly attention, and is thus a good starting point. Indeed, Dodou remarks that in contemporary fiction there is a particularly widespread endeavour to “scrutinize the idea that the child is inherently innocent and that his innocence is precious and worth protecting” (239). Novels such as Coetzee’s *Boyhood* and Behr’s *The Smell of Apples* have often been grouped together in order to compare and contrast notions of childhood innocence (cf. Heyns, “Whole Country’s”; Medalie). In addition, many of the novels under examination here are confessional in many respects, even if they do not entirely fulfil the requirements of the genre, as previously specified. In her article “White Lies, White Truth: Confession and Childhood in White South African Women’s Narratives,” Georgina Horrell argues that confessional writing is often “filtered through the rose-tinted hues of a child-like self” (60). She goes on to say that guilt in particular is “negotiated and managed via the defence identity of the traditionally innocent:

the figure too young to be held fully culpable” (Horrell 60).¹⁵ In accordance with this viewpoint, Heyns makes the following observation:

... the child’s voice [...] is granted absolution through the legal fiction that the child is not accountable, and the related fictional convention that children are “innocent” in a generally unspecified sense. There is, in short, a kind of absolution of form in the rite of passage novel, in its characteristic presupposition of the myth of prelapsarian innocence. (“Whole Country’s” 50)

Moreover, Johan Geertsema postulates that the idea of innocence is always invented (because it is “always already past,” thus invoking a degree of nostalgia and invention), which therefore signifies an “attempt by the inventors of that innocence to escape from history by regaining a utopian, prelapsarian purity, the absence of the corruption of knowledge, and the presence of full, complete harmony” (“Inventing Innocence” 46-47). In terms of ‘prelapsarian innocence’, the image of the farm is at times used as a symbol of Eden that relates to the child’s innocence and freedom, often before a specific event (or ‘fall’) takes place that shatters that time of innocence (for example, *The Innocence of Roast Chicken* (1, 301, 313) and *Boyhood* (22)).

Throughout the ages, children have been perceived as “savages and sinners” (see Cunningham 2), but their innocence has also been maintained, since it is a “quality we seem to need much more than they do” (Kincaid 53). Ndebele states that apartheid in South Africa destroyed childhood because children began taking on adult responsibilities (“Recovering Childhood” 331). He then poses the question of whether there can in fact be such a thing as innocence in a society in which there are no true children (Ndebele, “Recovering Childhood” 331). An example of what Ndebele is referring to can be found in Moloape’s *Dancing in the Dust*, where at the young age of fourteen, Tihelo feels like the adult of the house (65). When she is later arrested along with her sister and mother, her mother urges her to “act as if you’re too young to know anything [...] Act like you are just an innocent child, not a comrade. Otherwise they could lock you up for a very long time” (157). Thus, as Annie Gagiano observes, Tihelo’s childhood is “dominated by fear and precariousness and dreadful, too-

¹⁵ Horrell specifically examines the relationship between the white child and the black nanny or ‘maid’, and argues that the identity of the child as innocent is “often framed and nurtured by the deeply ambivalent figure” of the black nanny or ‘maid’ (59). Due to space constraints, I am unable to explore this observation further, but it is worth noting.

early adult responsibilities” (“Moving Beyond” 145). Ndebele makes the following point about adults and the notion of innocence:

For adults, confronted with all kinds of pressures, childhood innocence offers the possibility of refuge and redemption. Because childhood is vulnerable, we can be healed by offering it protection; in nurturing it, we confirm the need for culture, recreation, and creativity. That is why innocence has been such a powerful metaphor for social criticism. The loss of childhood signals the end of the metaphor. What is left is a world of instant adults with no experience of having lost something. If there is no sense of loss, there can be no sense of a paradise to be regained. To regain that philosophical paradise, in fulfilment of the yearning for a perfect society, we have to do no less than rediscover the child and childhood. (“Recovering Childhood” 331)

All of the above statements are related, both directly and indirectly, to the use of childhood narratives and narrators as a means of seeking refuge and psychological relief (Okolie 31) or alternatively as a form of avoiding responsibility (see Heyns, “Whole Country’s” 45). This in turn harks back to my previous speculative discussion about the possible reasons for the copious use of the figure of the child in confessional narratives written by white writers in their representations of the apartheid era.

The idea of the innocent child is founded upon a presupposition of the child as ignorant. Indeed, Horrell states that the “notion that the child “hardly ever knew” is a persistent refrain throughout these narratives of childhood” (66). This “not knowing” is “placed in an uneasy and disjointedly articulated balance with “subconsciously knowing” or “coming to know”” (Horrell 66). An interesting interplay thus arises between innocence and deception (invention), and fact and fiction both in narratives purporting to be fictional and in autobiographical accounts (Geertsema, “Inventing Innocence” 51). For example, in many of the childhood narratives under examination in this study, children are not held accountable since they ostensibly do not know any better or have not yet reached a level of maturity where they can question the ideology of their parents. In *The Smell of Apples*, for example, Marnus’s father encourages and cultivates a sense of white supremacy in the young boy, thus effectively indoctrinating him. Marnus is depicted as being ignorant of opposing viewpoints, even though he is vaguely aware of his Tannie Karla’s so-called ‘Communist’ anti-apartheid stance. In a sense, coming-of-age apartheid narratives often depict a process of “coming-to-know” (as Horrell points out), where the child’s existing knowledge is dismantled and his or

her ignorance is called into question. In what follows, I shall conduct a brief comparative analysis of Coetzee's *Boyhood* and Behr's *The Smell of Apples* (with supporting examples from other apartheid childhood narratives) in order to explore the notions of childhood innocence that are portrayed in these texts.

In his compelling memoir, *Boyhood*, J.M. Coetzee depicts his childhood years in the Karoo during the beginnings of the apartheid era in the 1950s. The novel is written in a uniquely terse third-person narrative style (instead of the conventional first-person narration of the *Bildungsroman*) and focuses on the introspective musings of the young John as he navigates the challenges of growing up. When the narrative begins, the protagonist (who is only named thrice in total) is a sensitive and intelligent ten-year-old who grapples with his sense of alienation and otherness, his love as well as his resentment of his mother, his hatred and distrust of his father, and the fearful anxiety that accompanies his schooling experience. The narrative ends with John on the brink of adolescence at the age of thirteen after his family narrowly escapes financial ruin due to his father's monetary mismanagement and alcoholism. The memoir offers very little political commentary and Coetzee rarely moves beyond the boundary of the 'provincial' and 'private' as he tells the "only story he will admit, the story of himself" (161) (Pugliese 497). However, the political situation does affect his life in significant ways (for example, John's father, a United Party supporter, loses his job when the National Party wins the election in 1948 (67)) (Pugliese 499). Through the gaze of the protagonist of *Boyhood*, cultural and social divisions between English and Afrikaans white South Africans, rather than racial segregation and schisms, are brought to the fore.¹⁶

Boyhood is unconventional in that the child protagonist is portrayed as 'sinful' and is thus never seen as innocent (Heyns, "Whole Country's" 52). The definition of childhood as "a time of innocent joy" that John reads in the *Children's Encyclopaedia* is a concept that is "utterly alien" to him (14). The boy is distinctly aware of his lack of innocence:

He knows he is a liar, knows he is bad, but he does not change. He does not change because he does not want to change. His difference from other boys may be bound up with his mother and his unnatural family, but is bound up with his lying too. If he stopped lying he would have to polish his shoes and talk politely and do everything that normal boys do. In that case he would no longer be himself. If he were no longer himself, what point would there be in living? He is a

¹⁶ Similarly, in *Small Moving Parts*, Murray provides a telling description of the social hierarchies and cultural prejudices between English and Afrikaans children, which results in divisive battles on the playground (27).

liar and he is cold-hearted too: a liar to the world in general, cold-hearted toward his mother. (34-35; see also 123)

The boy is acutely aware of his ‘guilt’ and since he is represented as *knowing*, he thus cannot be seen as ignorant.¹⁷ This is directly linked to the identity/difference binary, as John realises that his lack of innocence marks him as different to his peers: “Of all the secrets that set him apart, this may in the end be the worst. Among all these boys he is the only one in whom this dark erotic current runs; among all this innocence and normality, he is the only one who desires” (57). John believes that he cannot control his thinking and sexual desires, and so they “[return] to accuse him” (60). For him, the logic follows that “[b]eauty is innocence; innocence is ignorance; ignorance is ignorance of pleasure; pleasure is guilty; he is guilty. This boy, with his fresh, untouched body, is innocent, while he, ruled by his dark desires, is guilty” (60). The boy that he speaks of is coloured and thus John (who has obviously been influenced by the political climate of the 1950s and is both aware of his ‘superiority’ and power, as well as the coloured boy’s inferior, impoverished circumstances) feels that the boy, in being innocent, brings an accusation of guilt against him that he cannot refute (60-61). He comes to the following conclusion:

So this boy who has unreflectingly kept all his life to the path of nature and innocence, who is poor and therefore good [...] is nevertheless subjected to him in ways that embarrass him so much that he squirms and wriggles his shoulders and does not want to look at him any longer, despite his beauty. Yet one cannot dismiss him. One can dismiss the Natives, perhaps, but one cannot dismiss the Coloured people. The Natives can be argued away because they are latecomers, invaders from the north, and have no right to be here. (61)

The boy frequently experiences shame and embarrassment in his encounters with coloured people, which points to his uneasiness with the racism and oppression fostered by the apartheid regime (Attridge 150). However, at other times, he unquestioningly perpetuates the racist views of the apartheid government when, for example, he states that there are “white people and Coloured people and Natives, of whom the Natives are the lowest and most derided. The parallel is inescapable: the Natives are the third brother” (65) (Attridge 150). What makes Coetzee’s memoir unique is that it offers no apology or justification for his

¹⁷ In the same way, Kati, the protagonist of *The Innocence of Roast Chicken*, is burdened by her feelings of guilt and thus looks to the black farm workers to absolve her: “I didn’t want to feel bad about them any more. I was exhausted by the guilt and the sorrowing sympathy. I wanted them to feel OK, at peace with God whose plan this surely was. And I wanted them to exonerate me and my family” (160).

internalised racial and cultural prejudices; neither does it “attempt to take any credit for the moments of resistance to apartheid ideology” (Attridge 153). Attridge continues:

There is no ulterior motive at work that we can fathom, no design on the reader that we can sense [...] It is true that the complicity with apartheid that the young John shows is rather run-of-the-mill, though no less reprehensible for being that; but even the occasional moments of personal inhumanity are presented with a stark absence of explanation or justification. (153)

Boyhood stands apart in the way that its representation of childhood challenges and problematises the binaric assumptions that are present in the majority of apartheid childhood narratives. As seen from the above discussion, Coetzee’s text brings to light and exposes the way in which binaries operate by providing a view of the child figure that counters prevailing representations.

There is thus a stark difference between *Boyhood* and *The Smell of Apples*, which is a “confessional” narrative in a weak sense since it “shows how a boy can be lured into participation in the dominant racism of his culture in spite of a confrontation with some of its darkest manifestations” (Attridge 152-153). *The Smell of Apples* by Mark Behr is set in the 1970s and is narrated by eleven-year-old Marnus Erasmus. Marnus’s father, whom he idolises, is a major-general in the South African Defence Force, his mother was previously an opera singer, and they are both proponents of apartheid. Through Marnus’s observation of the world around him, his retelling of adult conversations (the narrative is littered with “Dad says”), and his responses to different events, the twisted logic of apartheid is exposed. In essence, Marnus’s family is used as a microcosm of a particular segment of apartheid society in order to reveal the horror and depravity of a nation that is rotting at its core. Marnus has been indoctrinated by his father not only to believe that “the Bantu” are an inferior race, but also that “[p]op music can cause you to become a drug addict” (67), for example. He is aware of other viewpoints but dismisses them as “foolish” and ironically says that the “ordinary people in those countries [that hate South Africa] have all been brainwashed” (67, 80). According to David Medalie, “[c]ulpability is thus presented as being consequentially absolute, always unremitting: the young Marnus believes that “[a] dirty thought is as bad as a dirty deed and there’s no such thing as a small sin or a big sin”” (158) (51). The narrative technique of *The Smell of Apples* “enacts the journey of discovery undergone by a narrator who moves from a state of prelapsarian innocence to the discovery that that innocence was

simply the absence of insight, and thus blindness” (Geertsema, “Inventing Innocence” 52-53, emphasis in original). Marnus’s loss of innocence occurs when he happens upon his beloved father raping his best friend Frikkie (174-177). His world unravels with the shock, as feelings of hatred towards his father rise up within him (194), and he begins to feel like “someone who’s scared of everything. And scared of nothing” (177). He thus undergoes a “painful transition from blissful ignorance to adult awareness of the corrupt society he inhabits” (Irlam 702). Unlike John, who was an outsider from the start, “*The Smell of Apples* depicts the process whereby a boy who is an insider becomes an outsider, in a sense, through being disaffected and no longer having anything to believe in” (Heyns, “Whole Country’s” 52). Hence, *Boyhood* and *The Smell of Apples* reveal two distinct ideas of childhood innocence: on the one hand, childhood innocence is represented as nearly non-existent and on the other hand, it is depicted as rendering the child ignorant, vulnerable, and susceptible to manipulation.

In closing, there are several additional examples of the way in which innocence is treated and depicted in childhood narratives; however, due to space constraints, I will only refer to one example. In *Dancing in the Dust* by Kagiso Lesego Molepe, innocence is represented as a form of protection. In the following extract, Tihelo reflects back on her early childhood years before she became politically involved in the struggle for equality:

Things were perfect. I still maintain that a child’s innocence – although it can be their worst enemy – is often their best protection. Although the constant rioting was disturbing, I knew and understood very little about what exactly was going on in the law and so I played and loved and laughed carelessly in those years. We all did. (22)

This is reminiscent of Ndebele’s argument where he equates the loss of innocence with the loss of childhood, since for many black children, their childhood abruptly ended when their innocence was lost (“Recovering Childhood” 331). Thus, the representation of innocence takes on many forms for a variety of underlying reasons in apartheid childhood and youth narratives.

2.2.2 The Resistance against Adulthood

Childhood and youth are “often perceived through opposition to adulthood,” and indeed, this conflict between the child and adult is usually a given, especially during adolescence (De

Boeck and Honwana 3). Thus, this theme is often specifically highlighted in apartheid childhood narratives, especially those wherein the child disagrees with his or her parents' political views. Apartheid childhood narratives also depict the numerous ways in which young people continually cross the divide between childhood and adulthood, blurring its distinctions and recreating their roles (this is often linked to the movement from the domestic to the political sphere, as discussed below) (De Boeck and Honwana 4). In this section, I shall discuss the child/adult binary by briefly examining the relationships between children and their parents, teachers, and other important adult figures in their lives. In doing so, I shall draw on a wide range of novels that feature the dichotomy between the child and the adult. Nearly every novel examined for this study portrays children and youth as strongly resisting the idea of growing up and developing into the kinds of adults that they interact with throughout the course of the novel. Even the emotion of embarrassment constitutes a minor form of resistance. For example, throughout John van de Ruit's *Spud* series, John 'Spud' Milton's parents constantly embarrass him in front of his peers. In the first *Spud* novel, on one particular occasion, he "[sidles] up to some other people and [pretends] that they are [his] parents instead" in an attempt to disassociate himself from his own parents (7). Similarly, in *Boyhood*, John is filled with embarrassment because of his father and he wishes that his Uncle Son could be his father instead (51, 100).

Growing up is regarded with aversion and dread because of the way in which adults 'perform' adulthood to the children around them. For example, in *Dancing in the Dust*, Tihelo begins high school, which results in life suddenly becoming very "adult-like" and therefore "taxing" (44). Later on in the novel, she makes the following observation:

Sometimes older women said "womanhood" as if it was synonymous with "struggle", like it was one of life's greatest challenges, and that you could only face it when you were ready. When I heard the word I would sometimes cringe and feel apprehensive about getting older. They made it sound like nothing could be harder. (84)

Authors depict adulthood as a time of difficulty and hardship, and hence the youth represented in these childhood novels are understandably apprehensive about growing up. In addition, the world of adulthood is generally seen as a space from which the child is excluded and can only observe from the position of an outsider. It is a space where, as the adage goes, children should be seen and not heard. When young Chris in *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy*

visits his grandparents, he knows that he is “not allowed to make any remarks, say anything funny, ask something. I have to shut up. I’m in the heart of ‘speak-when-you’re-spoken-to’ country” (47). He thus has a negative perception of the adults in his world, stating, “[e]verywhere I go adults are trying to bite my head off, no matter how polite I am” (40). When writing about her childhood experiences in *To my Children’s Children*, Magona recalls that in all the “human activity, I, as a child, was an observer, a minor participant, at most; a child looking on and watching adults doing adult things” (36). Simon, the young protagonist in Heyns’s *The Children’s Day*, associates adulthood with power and keenly feels his exclusion from that realm: “I felt relegated to the outer world of childhood, excluded from the circle in which adults had their being” (185-186). Childhood and youth are therefore experienced as a constricting and inhibiting time of exclusion and alienation.

Along with the recovery of childhood, Ndebele believes that adulthood also needs to be salvaged from its threatened destruction (“Recovering Childhood” 331). He states that the “progressive loss of parental authority in the wake of the 1976 student uprisings was a significant sociological phenomenon” (“Recovering Childhood” 331). This phenomenon of the attack on, and in some cases the erosion of, the authority of adulthood by youth is represented in several texts. *Dancing in the Dust* is a prime example of this occurrence, as Tihelo tells of how teachers were often threatened by their pupils during the turbulent 1980s. She observes how the youth have lost all respect for adults in every position of authority (teachers, the police, and parents):

Any previous reverence we had had for teachers before entering high school had disappeared with our escalating frustration. No one thought authority was worth any respect. Students had come to see anyone in a position of power as useless and unintelligent. [...] Adolescents in high school were losing their desire to listen to those who had absolute power to wreck our lives. The police were detaining and killing students, and the teachers were only sharing about an ounce of their knowledge each week. We felt extremely angry with everyone. Even our parents were not protecting us. The days of mothers and fathers going into school and speaking to the teachers about their concerns were long gone. (77-78)

Like Simon, Tihelo recognises the power struggles that exist between the child and the adult. The student uprisings of the 1970s and 1980s constituted a shift in the balance of power in favour of the youth (see the domestic/political discussion below). This caused a rupture of the established boundary between child and adult, resulting in new ways of understanding and

perceiving childhood (which many white South Africans did not partake in). Thus, the apartheid years fostered a generation of (mostly black) youth in constant rebellion against the adults in their lives.

Another point of resistance and power struggle between the child and the adult occurs within the child's schooling experience. This 'site of struggle' is often depicted as a physical kind of conflict, since many teachers in the childhood narratives under examination use corporal punishment¹⁸ (for example, *To my Children's Children*, *The Children's Day*, *A Separate Development*, *Shirley*, *Goodness & Mercy*, *Small Moving Parts*, etc.). The use of physical punishment can easily be abused and become violent. For example, in *The Children's Day*, Simon becomes a physical target of his teacher, Mr. de Wet, who at one point hits him on the face, causing his jaw to break (80-86); and in *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy*, Chris receives "a hundred cuts" after failing to correctly answer a mathematical sum (205). In addition, Chris experiences another rather comical kind of 'betrayal' when he falls in love with his teacher, declaring that she is the "second prettiest woman in the whole world" after his mother (25). He feels "quite sure" that they are "boyfriend and girlfriend" only to discover with disappointment that she is married (25). He is distraught and thus concludes: "Mrs Abrahams, I realise, is just one big flirt. But I still like her" (28). Thus, in many childhood narratives, the child or youth's schooling experience is depicted in a mostly negative light.

The representation of parenthood in apartheid childhood narratives is largely negative. Very rarely is a child portrayed as having a particularly close relationship with his or her parents, and the close relationships that are portrayed are more detrimental than constructive. The figure of the father is frequently portrayed as either largely absent or non-existent in many apartheid childhood narratives (e.g. Molope's *Dancing in the Dust*, Magona's *To my Children's Children*, Jooste's *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*, Murray's *Small Moving Parts*, Blacklaws's *Karoo Boy*, Lee's *The Story of Maha*, etc.). Many of these literary children are either being raised by single mothers, or by other members of their extended family. For families who were not classified as white, the absence of a father figure was often due to apartheid governmental policies (for example, the Bantu Homelands Constitution Act and the pass laws) that prohibited men from bringing their families to live with them in the

¹⁸ Corporal punishment was legal during the apartheid era and was used as the main method of disciplining children in school; however, it was banned by the new post-apartheid government in 1996 (Richter and Dawes 84; Morrell 292).

cities, which were often the only places where they could find work (Thompson 190-195; Karis and Gerhart 10). However, the absence of the father is not only limited to novels that feature a black protagonist, since several young white protagonists are also depicted as fatherless for varying reasons. When the father is a present figure in the child's life, he is frequently either portrayed as hard and domineering (e.g. Behr's *The Smell of Apples*, Jooste's *Like Water in Wild Places*, Hope's *A Separate Development*, van Tonder's *Stargazer*, etc.) or as weak and loathsome (e.g. Coetzee's *Boyhood*). There are a few instances where fatherhood is depicted in a more positive light (for example, *Ruby Red* and *The Children's Day*), but the father figure does not feature prominently in the storyline. Thus, fatherhood is most often represented as being fraught with conflict, causing it to be a problematic 'site of struggle' for the child.

The notion of the father figure as the protector operates on the premise that the child is "vulnerable and utterly dependent," placing the sole responsibility and agency in the hands of the parents (Lupton and Barclay 120). Thus, it transpires that the father (and occasionally the mother) can abuse his role as protector, or fail entirely to fulfil it. For example, Harry, the protagonist of *A Separate Development*, tells of how his father victimises him:

Maybe [my father] took it out on my mother when I was asleep. But during waking hours I was the target. If I smiled before breakfast, let my hair grow or breathed with my mouth open he'd suddenly go white around the lips and start yelling his head off. I'd yell back. (32-33)

This passage demonstrates the palpable power struggle between Harry and his father, where his father verbally and emotionally abuses him on a regular basis. In *The Smell of Apples*, Marnus idolises his authoritarian father and wishes to be like him when he grows up (14-15, 49, 63). Unlike the portrayal of many fathers in apartheid childhood narratives, Marnus's father is actively involved in his young son's life and spends many hours with him every week. However, the image of a perfect father is shattered towards the end of the novel when Marnus witnesses him raping his best friend, Frikkie (174-177). When Marnus finally acknowledges to himself that his father has committed a terrible crime, he becomes aware of the feelings of hatred that arise within him towards his father (194). For the first time in his life, eleven-year-old Marnus is deliberately disobedient and his father retaliates by violently hitting him – this is the first time he has used corporal punishment to discipline his son (196-197, see also 53-54). Until this point, Marnus has always been a compliant child and in his

first instance of rebellion, he suffers the consequences of his defiance. As his sister points out, Marnus does not understand the significance of what has occurred, but he knows that he has lost all respect for his father and that “[n]othing is the same any more (sic)” (193).

John’s relationship with his father in Coetzee’s *Boyhood* represents an opposing depiction of fatherhood. From the beginning of the novel, the ten-year-old protagonist sees his father merely as an “appendage, a contributor to the economy as a paying lodger might be” (12). He “denies and detests his father” (79) and he is unapologetically cognisant of his callous feelings towards him:

His father likes the United Party, his father likes cricket and rugby, yet he does not like his father. He does not understand this contradiction, but has no interest in understanding it. Even before he knew his father [...] he had decided he was not going to like him. In a sense, therefore, the dislike is an abstract one: he does not want to have a father, or at least does not want a father who stays in the same house. What he hates most about his father are his personal habits. [...] Most of all he hates the way his father smells. (43)

Young John’s relationship with his father is characterised by embarrassment and shame – he is acutely aware of his father’s failings and prefers to think of himself as his mother’s son and as having two mothers: “He has two mothers. Twice-born: born from woman and born from the farm. Two mothers and no father” (51, 79, 96). His distaste and disgust increase as his father falls into debt, unemployment, and alcoholism by the end of the narrative. John wages “war” against his father as his feelings of abhorrence grow stronger:

He seethes with rage all the time. *That man*, he calls his father when he speaks to his mother, too full of hatred to give him a name: why do we have to have anything to do with *that man*? Why don’t you let *that man* go to prison? (156, emphasis in original)

His highest point of resistance occurs when he wishes that his father would give up and commit suicide; he sees his father wallowing in his total humiliation and degradation, and yet feels equally triumphant and aggrieved (158-160).

Finally, there are instances where the father is depicted as being present in the protagonist’s life, but this is largely harmful as he is either abusive and full of rage, or simply for the most part uninvolved in his children’s lives, even if he is physically present. For example, in *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy*, Chris’s father has a drinking problem and is verbally abusive towards his family: “His rage is so severe that he says to me, ‘You’re so

fucking useless that you should've been a girl, a little bitch.' The words stay with me all my life. And what does Ma do about it? Mostly nothing..." (123). The words that Chris's father and other adults in his life (such as his teachers (213)) speak to him and about him have long-lasting effects. However, Chris's only desire is for his father to talk to him and to guide him through the racist world that he is trying to navigate through as he comes of age:

...you know what I'd really like? I'd really like Dad to take me and my brothers to a movie, to tell us who Walt Disney is, why we've had two World Wars, to explain what a terrorist is, why Mandela was jailed. Why are we called Coloureds? Why do I have to use the small counter at the post office? What is a 'non-white'? If apartheid is a bad thing why does the government allow it – in fact why did they create it? He never once takes us anywhere or tells us anything. (228)

Young as he is, Chris is astute enough to realise that his father is sending his children "out into a racist world without any preparation" (197), and this accounts for Chris's ignorance of the world around him and why he only becomes politically active later on as a young adult. The above examples all contribute to forming an unfavourable portrait of the father figure as a bully, an intimidating and threatening presence, a coward, and a failure.

Several apartheid childhood narratives feature households that are made up entirely of women (for example, *Dancing in the Dust*, *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*, *The Mending Season*, and *Small Moving Parts*). The female child protagonists in these texts are fatherless for varying reasons: Tihelo's father was arrested for contravening the Immortality Act and died in prison, and so she is brought up by her aunt; Lily does not know who her father is and is raised by her grandmother and aunt after her mother abandons her; Tshidiso is brought up by her mother and two aunts, as the whereabouts of her father is unknown; and Halley's parents get divorced and her father remarries and fades out of her life. Halley, who is obsessed with numbers and counting, tells the story of her family as follows:

Wherever she began, numbers were stories [...] A woman was 3. Curved. Curvaceous. But in Halley's family, their mother become The One, through slow excoriation taking away from her rounded self almost completely to provide for the two little girls. The one raised finger and the only firm footing. In between were the children, 2. Halley, and Jen. Daddy was gone, so he was 0. But even nought was something, not nothing. Not a big loser. O 0 o was part of a keyhole. (7)

Similarly, Lily Daniels, the protagonist of *Dance with a Poor Man's Daughter*, lives in a house of women and she states that, "the men in [their] family are not worth much" since they are either gangsters or drunkards (16-17). Lily's mother, Gloria, "upped and offed" when she was two and a half years old; however, she still provides for her financially by sending money every month (24, 38). When Lily is twelve years old, her mother returns, but Lily is uninterested in forming a relationship with her: "I don't want her there. As far as I'm concerned, she can go right back where she came from and she can't go fast enough to suit me" (115). Her mother is unconventional and according to Lily, she "doesn't know how to act like a mother at all" (139). When her mother attempts to oppose the Group Areas act, which declared that the area (District 6) in which they currently live would become a whites-only region, Lily concedes that "no-one else has a mother like mine" (249). However, she still feels that having a "mad woman for a mother is not the easiest thing in the world" (249). At the end of the novel, there is a moment of connection between the mother and daughter when Gloria affirms that Lily has turned out to be "the kind of person she would like [her] to be and [that] she wouldn't want [her] any other way," but they are never truly reconciled (330).

Conversely, the protagonist of *Boyhood* senses that his bond with his mother is too strong: "He is too close to his mother, his mother is too close to him" (37). He is confused by her contradictory beliefs and lack of pride, and wishes that she were "normal" because then he could be "normal" too (32-33, 37-38). The young adolescent boy thinks of her love as a cage and a trap, and "yearns to be rid of her watchful attention" (122). In this instance, motherhood is represented as stifling and oppressive in that John feels that he cannot be free of his mother's love, and he thus fears her judgement (161). Two final examples of the representation of motherhood can be seen in the novels *Home Ground* and *Ruby Red*. Ruth and Ruby, the respective protagonists of these two novels, each have a moment of revelation where they realise that their mothers are more devoted to their careers than to their daughters. Ruth accuses her mother of only caring about herself and her theatrical career (240-241), while Ruby comes to the realisation that her mother's artists and art gallery are what matter most to her (111). Ruby therefore sees her father as her "protector against the world" and the "one who would put nothing before my safety" (112, see also 30). As demonstrated in the above examples, the representation of motherhood in apartheid childhood narratives reveals

that the child/mother relationship is marked by a complex power struggle, albeit to a lesser degree than the child/father relationship.

To conclude, childhood is most often represented as being in conflict with adulthood, and there is a strong resistance by the child and youth towards the adults in their lives. It would therefore appear that apartheid has fostered both a culture of disrespectfulness and the rebellion of children against adults. Rather than the traditional anticipation of growing up and living ‘happily ever after’, the representation of childhood in apartheid narratives displays and exposes attitudes of trepidation, unease, and apprehension towards coming-of-age.

2.2.3 The Interplay between the Domestic and the Political

As previously mentioned, the binaries that are used in this study are intertwined and entangled, which requires an approach that hones in and focuses on the central aspects of each binary. The domestic/political binary is closely connected to many of the other binaries that are under examination here in that it involves a resistance towards adulthood, the powerless exerting agency, a certain loss of innocence, a move from the private to the public sphere, victims becoming perpetrators, and outsiders attempting to attain a sense of citizenship. Since the agency/powerlessness binary can be directly linked to the domestic/political binary, I have incorporated it into this section, rather than examining them separately. In many apartheid childhood narratives, the young protagonists are represented as straddling the boundaries of domestic and political spaces. The domestic space is most often associated with passivity and powerlessness, whilst the political space is frequently associated with agency and power. To a certain extent, the lives of the children and youth in nearly every text in this study are represented as being deeply impacted by the political climate of the time (whether or not it is explicitly made clear by the author). However, children are excluded from the political sphere due to their ineligibility to vote, which thus relegates them to the status of ‘non-citizen’. In this section, I wish to focus specifically on the uprisings of the 1970s and 1980s, and explore the ways in which childhood and youth are represented in literature depicting these turbulent years.

In the 1960s, many prominent black political leaders were either exiled or imprisoned after the apartheid government banned all major black political organisations. This resulted in a political void that was filled by increasingly younger participants, a phenomenon that culminated in the uprising on June 16, 1976 when thousands of school-aged black children

rallied to protest against the use of Afrikaans (along with English) as the major language of instruction in black schools (Ndebele, “Recovering Childhood” 324). The South African police opened fire on the protesting youth, which led to nearly two hundred deaths and the injury of thousands of scholars.¹⁹ Never before had so many young people together taken a stand against the apartheid regime. Thomas Karis and Gail Gerhart explain the rise of politically active youth as follows:

For most African parents, mired in the desperate daily reality of survival, [the apartheid government’s decision to make Afrikaans the language of instruction in black schools was] just one more burden to be borne. But for school children in their teens – not yet faced with the full responsibilities of adulthood, but experienced enough to know how unfairly life’s deck was stacked against them – the injustices of “gutter education” suddenly seemed unbearable. White arrogance, suffered for so long by their parents and teachers, seemed intolerable, as did the very meekness of the adult generation. (170)

“And so,” Ndebele writes, “the children of South Africa effectively entered national politics as active participants” (“Recovering Childhood” 324). This is also reflected in Miriam Tlali’s *Amandla!*, when the adults say, “[w]e’re in the hands of the children now. They are as good as our parents” (35). Thus, the uprisings reveal a resistance towards a range of adults (as discussed in the previous section), including police, teachers, and parents, as young people began to exert their agency.

In the years that followed the 1976 Soweto riots, several novels (written mostly by black South African writers) that focus on the period of political violence and unrest in the late 1970s and 1980s and the effects thereof were published, many of which were subsequently banned. In his study *Narrative as Creative History: The 1976 Soweto Uprising as Depicted in Black South African Novels*, Aubrey Mokadi terms four of the most well-known and influential of these narratives the “Soweto Novels.”²⁰ As is to be expected, two of the “Soweto Novels” (*Amandla!* by Miriam Tlali (1980) and *The Children of Soweto* by Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane (1982)) feature a young protagonist or narrator who departs

¹⁹ The exact number of deaths is uncertain since the apartheid government frequently falsified statistics. Leonard Thompson states that by February 1977, at least 575 people (many of whom were under the age of eighteen) had died as a result of the political uprisings (213).

²⁰ These novels are *Amandla!* by Miriam Tlali, *The Children of Soweto* by Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane, *A Ride on the Whirlwind* by Sipho Sepamla, and *To Every Birth its Blood* by Mongane Wally Serote. See also Kelwyn Sole’s article *The Days of Power: Depictions of Politics and Community in Four Recent South African Novels*.

into exile at the novel's conclusion. In addition to texts that focus almost entirely on the events surrounding the Soweto riots, there are a number of childhood narratives (such as *Dancing in the Dust* by Kagiso Lesego Molohe, *Ruby Red* by Linzi Glass, *The Syringa Tree* by Pamela Gien, and *Kaffir Boy* by Mark Mathabane) that are either entirely or partly set during the uprisings of the late 1970s and 1980s. Each of these novels portray the riots to lesser or greater extents and from varying perspectives. Whilst I refer to a few other novels in this section, I have selected *Dancing in the Dust* and *Ruby Red* as the respective main and secondary texts that shall be examined in more depth. These two novels feature female protagonists (one black²¹ and one white) who differ in terms of their economic status, culture, and race, and yet whose lives are significantly affected by political events, albeit in different ways. I have selected these particular texts because together they offer a broad perspective on childhood and youth as seen through the lens of the domestic/political binary. These texts portray the riots through the eyes of youths from 'opposite sides' of the conflict; that is, one of them is directly involved in the uprisings, while the other is not. This serves to substantiate my point that the 'sites of struggle' located within representations of childhood are not simply restricted to those who were oppressed and marginalised during apartheid, as would initially be expected. To reiterate, childhood as a whole is represented as a 'site of struggle' – the struggles are different and they can vary in the degree of hardship, to be sure, but they are nonetheless present.

In *Dancing in the Dust* by Kagiso Lesego Molohe, there is a direct interplay between the domestic and the political: children and youth are represented as being unable to escape the political, but they do have a choice as to whether or not they exert their agency and become involved in protesting against the apartheid government. The novel follows the journey of thirteen-year-old Tihelo Masimo as she is increasingly drawn into the struggle for freedom during the height of apartheid oppression and resistance in the 1980s. Preoccupied with the dilemma of her light skin and her sense of otherness, she grows up in a township where she is very much aware of the political unrest surrounding her, and yet she is initially uninterested in becoming actively involved in the political activities that the older youth (ANC²²-supporting 'comrades') are engaging in. Interestingly enough, Tihelo's earliest

²¹ Tihelo, the protagonist of *Dancing in the Dust*, is in fact coloured, but she only discovers her true identity towards the end of the novel, so for most of the novel she is perceived as and understood to be a black girl.

²² African National Congress, an anti-apartheid political party that went on to become the ruling party of South Africa in 1994.

memory is of the Soweto schoolchildren's uprising in 1976 (105). She was six years old at the time, but she remembers seeing schoolchildren running and throwing stones at police vehicles. Her mother pulls her to the floor to escape flying bullets and explains to her that the students are protesting because they do not want to learn in Afrikaans, but in their own language. When Tihelo asks her mother why the students are running, she speaks these chilling words: "Because the police are shooting at them [...] They are shooting at schoolchildren" (105). This memory proves to be a foreshadowing of the future when Tihelo declares that someday, she too will "run to dodge bullets, bang on strange people's doors, and beg for shelter," all of which come to pass (105). Her life as she knows it begins to change when her friend, Tshepo, tells her that he was involved in the bombing of a post office and has become an ANC comrade:

The comrades were damaging everything around them as a cry for help, a way of sending a message to the government telling them to get us out of there. It had become clear that the high-school students – the ones who were at that point feeling that the streets were not enough for them, the ones who had begun to understand how trapped we all were in the *makeishenes*²³ – were the ones screaming and seething. But I thought that we – me and Tshepo and Thato and everyone else our age – were still caught up in our own innocence; that conversation pointed out that I was wrong, and this was deeply saddening and painful. The riots were now taking someone away from me, they were coming *right into my own backyard*. (26, emphasis added)

At this point, Tihelo prefers to watch "all the rioting and boycotting" from the safe haven of the domestic space and she finds it "unnerving" that someone as young as Tshepo is already politically active (30, 27). As time passes, the older youths are either imprisoned or forced to go into exile, which results in younger children rising up to take their place and fill the political void (cf. Ndebele, "Recovering Childhood" 324). Thus, when the apartheid government's policies cause the political to infringe on Tihelo's everyday life by "coming right into [her] own backyard," her "years of childhood innocence [come] to an abrupt end" (notice the overtones of the innocent/guilty and victim/perpetrator binaries) and she is compelled, albeit with a degree of reluctance, to join the fight for freedom (26, 42). Without the knowledge or permission of her mother, she becomes involved in SASO (the South African Students' Organisation), an illegal anti-apartheid ANC student movement. However,

²³ *Makeishenes* is the seTswana word for 'townships'.

she is still torn between the domestic and the political, between her loyalty to her family and her loyalty to her people and her nation:

All the riots and marches were draining to me. At this point I felt no strong connection with the comrades, even if I was working with them daily. Instead, I resented their zeal. I even sometimes blamed them for being so forceful and determined because I thought that if they were a little more calm then the township might have been less chaotic. (67-68)

It is at this moment that Tihelo decides to distance herself from politics and she stops working at the SASO headquarters. Dikeledi (a fellow comrade) thanks her for her help and says, “You know, we could do the fliers and the newsletters, we could even paint the shirts. But we feel strongly about all youths being part of this, because we are all living the same crisis, you know?” (68). According to Karis and Gerhart, children as young as ten years old were detained and killed during the uprisings of the 1970s and 1980s (173). This fact, together with Dikeledi’s comment, serves to demonstrate how young children were encouraged to exert their political agency and potency in the struggle for freedom, which resulted in a political space abounding with the youth of the nation.

After a major event that results in many comrades being held in detention or being forced to go underground, as well as the government declaring a state of emergency, Tihelo resolves to return to work for SASO. She finally begins to overcome her feelings of powerlessness and gains a newfound sense of agency: “Unlike at the beginning of my work at the office, I felt that I was fully involved in deciding what shape my life would take. It no longer seemed like someone else was dictating it all for me” (115). She realises that she has a choice between remaining in the relative safety of the domestic space and moving into a more dangerous political space:

This is what I had been born into and there was no escape – I could either sit at home and be afraid alone, or I could be on the front lines and be afraid with everyone else. Either way, fear was a close companion that had come to stay. It was nothing new; my life had been in jeopardy since long before I was born [...] I was involved in the SASO so that I could believe in the possibility of us living in a place where there were no guns aimed at our futures. I reminded myself over and over again of my mother’s words: “If you didn’t choose to rebel, you would probably be resigning yourself to a life of despair.” And that was enough to keep me focused and willing to do whatever I could to bring back our comrades, friends, and neighbours – also, to fight for a different world. (127)

However, inasmuch as the domestic/political binary is most often depicted as passive/dynamic (which thus implies a bad/good (or good/bad) hierarchy), children and youth who become embroiled in the space of the political inevitably suffer a range of consequences for that decision. For example, towards the end of *Dancing in the Dust*, a now fourteen-year-old Tihelo is incarcerated for over six months for her involvement in both SASO and a student-led protest, and is humiliated, beaten, sexually assaulted, and tortured during that time. However, in spite of all these hardships, Tihelo emerges at the end of the novel as a strong young woman who has finally discovered her true identity, which is largely due to her involvement in the political realm.

The political is also present (usually to a lesser extent) in childhood novels that feature a white protagonist. However, it is not often that it directly infringes on the domestic, as white children are seldom depicted as exerting their agency in a political sense. Ironically, white children are instead represented as more politically immobilised than children who are disenfranchised due to racial discrimination. Linzi Glass's *Ruby Red* is set in 1976 and tells the story of Ruby Winters, a seventeen-year-old girl who lives in Johannesburg. Unlike most white literary children, her political activist parents directly expose her to the political sphere:

...at a tender age my parents had shown me that the world we lived in was wrong – that people shouldn't have to live in separate areas or ride in separate buses or be treated differently because of the colour of their skin. But by lifting the veil of ignorance from my young eyes they created another kind of division. They separated me from my peers, for I lived in a hidden world that existed behind our large iron gates. Here in the safety and privacy of our home, people were treated as if colour didn't matter. Underground meetings of the illegal African National Congress were held sometimes in the late hours of the night, where Father was often the only white person present [...] The ever-present threat that a raid by police could turn our world upside down in an instant forced me into a life of even greater secrecy at school. What happened at home was to stay at home. But we did not realize then that our iron gates could not keep out the hate. (4-5)

In Ruby's case, the political is not easily separated from the domestic: not only are clandestine ANC meetings frequently held at her home, but her mother, who runs a controversial art gallery and exhibition, also offers protection and support to Julian Mambasa, a poor black artist from Soweto, who comes to stay with them. It is through Ruby's friendship with Julian (who is only a few years older than she is) that she comes face to face with the escalating political tension in the country during the year of 1976. He tells her of

what life is like in the townships and describes his vision of a free and egalitarian South Africa. Julian's artwork (which the governmental authorities see as subversive) presents a compelling depiction and critique of the political climate of the nation, as well as conveys a sense of hope for the future (for example, he paints a portrait of Ruby reading a Xhosa book). Thus, in *Ruby Red*, the political spills over into the domestic, and in the process, nullifies the notion of 'home' as a safe, sheltering haven. For it is in the domestic space that political ideology is generated, as Ruby's parents teach her to see beyond the political system of apartheid.²⁴

Chapter Twenty-Four begins with these words: "Wednesday, 16 June 1976. The day that changed my life. The day that changed the lives of thousands of people, forever" (175). In this chapter, Glass provides an interesting portrayal of June 16, 1976 in that she compares and contrasts Ruby's day at school to that fateful day in the township of Soweto. One paragraph shows Ruby writing an essay, while the next describes the moment when the police begin shooting into the crowd of schoolchildren, which results in the death of twelve-year-old Hector Peterson.²⁵ At the end of her school day, the principal makes the following announcement on the intercom system:

Students, it has been reported on the radio that unruly blacks in Soweto have started rioting. There is nothing for you to be alarmed about. It doesn't affect any of you. The township is miles from here but as a precaution we ask that you all travel home with a friend and not alone. (179)

Ruby is the only student in her class who is in fact affected by the Soweto riots. She arrives home to discover that Julian has left to be part of the student uprisings and her mother confirms that he is both an artist and an ANC activist (182).

On the other side of the political spectrum, *Ruby Red* also depicts the animosity between white English and Afrikaans South African people: "As much as there was forced separation between blacks and whites there was almost as great a separation between the English and Afrikaans-speaking whites of our country, but that division was self-imposed by

²⁴ Thus, it is apparent that the opposite is also true: in narratives such as *The Smell of Apples*, the domestic space becomes political as Marnus is indoctrinated by his parents (especially his father) and is reared in the micro-practices of white privilege and apartheid ideology.

²⁵ Linzi Glass dedicates *Ruby Red* to "thirteen-year-old Hector Pieteron, the first child to be killed on 16 June 1976, and to all the children who lost their lives during the Soweto riots" (copyright page). The discrepancies between the age and spelling of Hector's last name in the dedication and the novel itself reflect the selfsame inconsistencies that exist in the various news reports of the incident and the boy himself.

both groups” (41). Ruby befriends an Afrikaans girl named Loretta Duikster and falls in love with her brother, Johann, who is the captain of the rugby team at an Afrikaans rival school. Her parents are uneasy with these new friendships and her mother says that the Afrikaners “hate us, they’re watching our every move” (61). Ruby calls them hypocrites for their “selective acceptance” of people and they acquiesce: “We can’t bring her into this. She’s made a new friend. We’ve raised her to not see race or creed or colour. It’s bad enough she can never bring anyone home” (103, 62-63). Unlike their racist father, Johann and Loretta do not support the apartheid government’s segregation policies, which thus causes much friction in their home. When Ruby learns of this, she begins to appreciate her relationship with her parents and she looks upon the way in which they brought her up with a sense of gratefulness.

Like Tihelo, Ruby also suffers the consequences of straddling both domestic and political spaces. She is harassed, alienated, and shunned by her peers, loses her prefectship, is almost expelled, and eventually has to change schools. She ironically finds solace in her new Afrikaans friend, Loretta, and her Afrikaans boyfriend, Johann. The novel ends with Ruby and her father fleeing to New York, having been warned by Johann of an ambush to kill Ruby’s father. These narratives display a characteristic of what Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsh, and Elizabeth Langland term “fictions of female development,” where there is a “movement from the world within to the world without, from introspection to activity” (13). Both Tihelo and Ruby embark on this type of journey, achieving a sense of self and identity as a result. However, there are child protagonists who do not venture out of the domestic into the political space. For example, in *The Story of Maha*, a state of emergency is declared and Maha’s friend Sabah urges her to make a difference by becoming involved in politics; however, Maha shies away from taking any kind of stand (85-86). In *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy*, Chris’s childhood years are mostly characterised by his ignorance of the political climate of the 1960s and 1970s: “This is apartheid into its second decade, its second phase if you like, with Mandela, Sobukwe, Sisulu and others safely locked up, thousands in exile, and the white people smirking and prospering. But of all this I know nothing” (12, see also 1, 215). Maha and Chris remain in the domestic space for much of their childhood years, which means that they are unable to exert agency and are therefore rendered largely powerless.

Thus, as stated at the beginning of this section, there is a complex interplay between the domestic and the political: sometimes the choice to remain within the domestic space is a political choice, which implies then that the ‘choice’ between the domestic/political is a false

choice between non-identity and self-fulfilment. For white child protagonists such as Ruby (*Ruby Red*), there is little opportunity for them to actively step into the political space to the degree that black child protagonists can and do. However, in many cases it is possible for the political to invade the domestic space, thus neutralising the divide between the domestic and political binary (*Ruby Red* is once again a good example of this phenomenon). Alternatively, for children such as Chris (*Shirley, Goodness & Mercy*), the domestic space is associated with ignorance and naivety, and for Maha and Tihelo (*The Story of Maha* and *Dancing in the Dust*) it is characterised by fear (although, for Tihelo, the political is also associated with fear). In short, apartheid childhood narratives offer intricate and complex representations of childhood from the viewpoint of the domestic/political binary.

2.2.4 Identity and Difference as ‘Sites of Struggle’

A significant and oft-recurring ‘site of struggle’ that encompasses every kind and type of childhood setting can be found in the identity/difference binary. Numerous apartheid childhood narratives represent the child as different to his or her peers (these include Blacklaws’s *Blood Orange*, Coetzee’s *Boyhood*, Freed’s *Home Ground*, Glass’s *Ruby Red*, Heyns’s *The Children’s Day*, Hope’s *A Separate Development*, Lee’s *The Story of Maha*, Magona’s *To my Children’s Children*, Molope’s *Dancing in the Dust*, Murray’s *Small Moving Parts*, van Wyk’s *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy* – the list goes on), which results in the child being overcome with a sense of alienation and isolation. This ‘site of struggle’ is most often located within the individual child (but is clearly externally influenced), and it thus consists of an internal conflict. The child’s sense of difference signifies that he or she is unsure of his or her identity and true self, which has significant psychological ramifications for the child. In apartheid narratives, childhood seems to be frequently represented as a time of distinct ‘othering’ and difference; a time where the child is searching for an identity, which is indeed a common feature of the adolescent period. The very notion of childhood therefore involves continuous grappling with “(re)definitions of cultures, races, ethnicities, nationalities, families, genders and histories in the quest for identity formation” (Ouma 39). John Gillis states that, “[c]hildhood remains a prime source of selfhood, the thing that adults use to explain themselves to themselves, and to others” (123). In addition, Walter Collins argues that African novels in particular “deal with perhaps even more complex conceptions of selfhood and notions of relationship of self to society” (1). This is possibly because of the

continent's history of colonialism and white domination, which often results in identity conflict for Africans of all races. It is not surprising then that many South African writers turn to the idea of childhood in order to rediscover their identity, or in order to come to terms with their past selves and actions. This section shall examine the various notions of identity and difference that emerge in South African apartheid childhood texts.

Identity is a particularly difficult concept to define. James Marcia describes it as a “self-structure – an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history” (159). He goes on to comment on the outworking of this “self-structure”:

The better developed this structure is, the more aware individuals appear to be of their own uniqueness and similarity to others and of their own strengths and weaknesses in making their way in the world. The less developed this structure is, the more confused individuals seem about their own distinctiveness from others and the more they have to rely on external sources to evaluate themselves. The identity structure is dynamic, not static. Elements are continually being added and discarded. (Marcia 159)

Many of the child protagonists examined in this study fall into this latter category because they are highly sensitive to their uniqueness, which thus causes them to evaluate themselves and their worth by looking to external sources.

According to Tim Morris, “[c]hildhood is a form of Otherness, possibly its archetypal form” (9). Indeed, there are many apartheid childhood narratives wherein the child is depicted as ‘other’ and as being acutely aware of his or her otherness, as mentioned above. The young protagonist in *Boyhood* by J.M. Coetzee, for example, is plagued by his feelings of alienation and at various times throughout the narrative, he senses that he is “unnatural,” “damaged,” “isolated,” “set apart,” “odd,” “different,” and “special” (6-9, 11, 15, 29, 108). At the tender age of ten, he is already sensitive to the fact that he and his family are different from his schoolfellows and their families: “He comes from an unnatural and shameful family in which not only are children not beaten but older people are addressed by their first names and no one goes to church and shoes are worn every day” (6). Moreover, he is also aware that “[h]is difference from other boys” is located within himself because of the deliberate untruths that he tells his parents (35). When he and his family relocate back to Cape Town, he feels that his new school is a “shrunken little world, a [...] benign prison” that is making him “stupider” (139-140). Thus, he feels that “[w]hoever he truly is, whoever the true ‘I’ is that ought to be rising out of the ashes of his childhood, is not being allowed to be born, is being

kept puny and stunted” (139-140). The boy knows that he has yet to discover and achieve his true self and the only place where he feels he belongs and is most like his true self is on his Uncle’s farm (95-96) (notice once again how the image of the farm conjures up the notion of an Eden, which was mentioned in the section on the victim/perpetrator binary). Ultimately, John is “always an outsider of one kind or another, an ‘outcast from paradise’” because of his feelings of difference (Heyns, “Whole Country’s” 52) (in this sense, the insider/outsider binary is closely entwined with the identity/difference binary).

The protagonist of Sally-Ann Murray’s *Small Moving Parts*, Halley Murphy, is also represented as other and different to her peers partly because she is highly intelligent, and partly because of her appearance: “Obviously, Halley Murphy has thick glasses and she reads too much. So all the dumb jokes about four-eyes and Coke bottles. Not to mention that some people think she’s got rocks in her head” (169). She is relentlessly teased by her classmates because of her peculiar mannerisms, although she does not seem to be much affected by it at the time (149). Like the protagonist of *Boyhood*, Halley’s true self has yet to be realised:

She’s been so alone and vulnerable that it’s as if she’s only just discovered a slender regional isthmus that links her imagined isolation to the unmapped landmasses of others. Seems really she’s not so weird, only complicated. She has exposed surfaces and hidden depths; solid and wet. (309)

At this point, the teenage Halley has met a boy named Marvin who “isn’t interested in being anything except exactly the right temperature for himself,” and it is through her brief friendship with him that she begins to understand that she is not so very different to other people (308-309). Their friendship is short-lived, however, and Halley once again finds herself alienated and left to struggle with her feelings of otherness on her own. Another example of a child protagonist whose sense of difference is located in their personhood is Chris in *Shirley, Goodness & Mercy*. Chris has a squint in his left eye and is therefore mercilessly teased by both children and adults alike, who call him names like “cockeye” and “six-five”²⁶ (180-181).

The second cause of the child protagonist’s sense of difference is located in cultural and political difference. *Boyhood* is once again pertinent to this discussion. Cristiana Pugliese makes the following observation:

²⁶ Township lingo for a person with a squint (see Motshegoa).

John's constant feeling of alienation has political roots too; it can be traced back to the historical division between the English and the Afrikaners in South Africa. The boy is Afrikaner, but his mother tongue is English, a problematic 'double identity' in a country where the two cultures have been in constant confrontation. To make things more difficult for him, he identifies with the British, but has no English blood. This is the product of his parents' design: his mother is half Afrikaner and half German, his father is an Afrikaner, but they speak English at home, admire the English and send their children to English-medium schools. John is neither Afrikaner nor British and he finds himself being discriminated against by both the Afrikaners and the English. (499)

As discussed previously, the young John disassociates himself from his father for various reasons, one of them being the fact that his father is Afrikaans and speaks English with an Afrikaans accent: "He mocks his father's speech [...] He is relieved he is not Afrikaans and is saved from having to talk like that, like a whipped slave" (49, 106). He is "forced to define himself by difference" since he is not Afrikaans, nor a "genuine member of the 'English' group," and he lives in constant fear that he will be exposed as a "false English [boy]" and thus be transferred to the Afrikaans classes at school (69) (Lenta, "Autrebiography" 165). He is also not a 'Christian', since, when asked at his new school about his religion, John chooses Roman Catholicism because he likes Rome and the letter 'R'. This results in him being bullied by the Afrikaans Christian boys and pestered by the Catholic boys to attend catechism classes (18-21, 27). Thus, in every context and situation, the boy is an outsider and an "uneasy guest" (79); he is "never fully at home, never at ease in his interactions with others, in language or in his own understanding of his identity" (Medalie 56). He continually grapples with his feelings of cultural difference, which inevitably leave him feeling conflicted and confused about his identity.

In *Ruby Red*, Ruby is acutely conscious of her 'political' difference and how she would be treated if her political beliefs were to be made known: "I knew I would be shunned and an outcast if my fellow schoolmates found out that blacks were people I actually spoke to and not just when I wanted extra mashed potato or lemonade served to me" (9). In a similar way to *Boyhood*'s John, she leads a double life and hides her true self from the world in order to be accepted by her peers:

"To make certain that I appeared to be 'normal', I worked hard and got straight As. I was a school prefect and popular with loads of friends and a drawer full of ribbons from winning athletic events. But my shameful truth was that I, Ruby

Winters, felt like a fraud and it was just a matter of time before I was found out.”
(9)

Ruby is indeed “found out” and her peers consequently shun her, just as she predicted and feared. After she strongly rejects Desmond’s forceful advances, he spitefully spreads rumours about her political tendencies and causes her to lose all of her so-called friends. Ruby’s schoolmates treat her like a “diseased leper” and she feels that she has been “tainted by a sickness they could not see but did not want” (141). This “sickness” refers to Ruby’s desire for and belief in racial equality. She suffers persecution as she is accused of being a Communist (as were all who opposed the apartheid regime) and is given the nickname ‘Ruby Red’: “Ruby Red. That’s what they had called me and, yes, that’s who I was. Ruby Red. Outlaw. Bandit. Desperado” (82). Similarly, Gecko, the central character in Troy Blacklaws’s *Blood Orange*, experiences the same kind of rejection and harassment: “Sometimes it is lonely there in my outcast corner of the school. The loneliness began slowly: a whisper of kaffirboetie, niggerlover, a jolt in a crowd, a bag of schoolbooks dropped down a stairwell onto my head” (99-100). John, Ruby, and Gecko all experience feelings of either cultural or political difference predominantly in the school environment, but also at home.

The final category of difference represented in narratives of childhood is that of racial difference. Instead of a straightforward discussion of inter-racial relationships, I shall rather examine the locus of racial difference within the protagonists themselves. Novels such as *Dancing in the Dust* by Kagiso Lesego Molope, *A Separate Development* by Christopher Hope, and *The Story of Maha* by Sumayya Lee feature mixed-race protagonists who respectively grow up in black, white, and Indian communities. It is apparent from the start of each of these narratives that racial identity is something that deeply troubles each of the central characters. In *Dancing in the Dust*, Tihelo feels that she sticks out “like a sore thumb” in the township because of her light skin (10). She feels “set apart” and different from even her own family, which causes people to comment on her “difference” (10). Tihelo is thus gripped by a sense of otherness because of her skin colour:

I had always been aware of how different I looked, how I was a lot lighter-skinned than most people I was growing up around. I obsessed over my colour, but that was nothing out of the ordinary because the entire country and its laws were based on obsessing over your colour. (13)

This quote demonstrates how this subsection of the identity/difference binary is strongly linked to the domestic/political binary: this type of difference might not have been so problematic if it were not for the political climate of the nation. For the first part of the novel, Tihelo is primarily preoccupied with her feelings of being different and she vehemently proclaims that, “I hated anyone who made me so aware of my difference in the township” (112). As the novel progresses, Tihelo becomes more and more involved in political activities and gradually becomes less concerned about the colour of her skin: “Occasionally I would spend some time before going to bed wondering about my difference, but it was never as consuming as it had been before high school. Life was presenting me with more challenges, ones that were more demanding of my attention” (116). Tihelo essentially exchanges one ‘site of struggle’ for another that is of greater significance for her future and which in the end gives her a sense of identity.

In *A Separate Development*, sixteen-year-old Harry Moto grows up in a white family and community, both of which cause him to be sensitive about his curly hair, fallen arches, and dark skin, since these bodily features set him apart: “Shuckel knew how wary I was on the subject of skin. Everybody knew it. Not that my skin was at all sensitive, you understand. Alas, no. But inside my skin I was sensitive” (10). Like Tihelo, Harry is preoccupied with his “condition,” which becomes the predominant trope of his boyhood (6):

The question of skin colour had surfaced in my mind about the age of ten and grew steadily more menacing [...] It worried my mother and father. It was never something we could discuss over the breakfast table – though it lay between us [...] all the days of my boyhood. For years my mother had tried to stop me swimming in summer on the grounds that I had a “delicate” skin. In fact I had a tough, buff hide that darkened in the sun. (19)

As the story progresses, his skin colour begins to cause trouble for him in a society that is stratified by race. The turning point for Harry is when he is thrown off a white bus because the conductor does not believe that he is white, and due to his father’s laxity, Harry does not yet have an Identity Card, which means that he cannot prove that he is indeed white. However, the incident proves to be an epiphanic experience for Harry in terms of his identity: ““White kaffir”: the words have a ring to them. I came to be grateful for them. Up until then I hadn’t any proper idea what I was. What the conductor gave me was an identity. Ever since, I’ve been an identity in search of a group” (31-32). Further incidents culminate in Harry

permanently leaving the ‘white camp’ in search of a place and a group of people where he can feel a sense of belonging and no longer be plagued by feelings of difference.

Another example of racial difference can be found in Sumayya Lee’s *The Story of Maha* where Maha Jacobs, the protagonist, encounters racial discrimination from her family and community. Maha’s mother, Maryam, a light-skinned Indian woman, married a coloured man, against the express wishes of her parents, who essentially disown her. However, after Maha’s parents are killed at a political rally when she is eight years old, she goes to live with her maternal grandparents in Durban. When she arrives at her grandparents’ house, her grandfather’s sister, Gorinani, yanks out a strand of Maha’s hair and proclaims, ““Lucky you got the light eyes, Maha,” she glared at me. “Look your waanku *Boesman* baal...and not even you got your mother’s rung!” She patted my cheek. “Sor nice colour your mother was, you knor? Sorr fair!” (28).²⁷ In Maha’s extended family’s opinion, she has unfortunately inherited her father’s curly hair, but not her mother’s light skin. When she starts school, her unique features immediately gain the attention of her peers, but Maha nonetheless makes friends and enjoys school (33-34). However, in the context of her family, her racial difference is a constant point of contention, causing Maha to take refuge in reading books (29):²⁸

Jaath – that haunting word again – Gorinani was constantly on the lookout for signs of my Adhman jaath. “What’s jaath?” I quizzed them, seizing the opportunity. Gora laughed snidely, “You so stupid, Maha. ... Shame...*your* jaath is half Charou, half Bruinou...your breed, man, your breed...” I puckered my brow in confusion. Aren’t we all just people? I reflected silently, before tuning them out and getting back into my book. (42, emphasis in original)²⁹

Unlike John and Harry, Maha has friends with whom she can share her innermost thoughts and feelings, and this provides her with the support she needs in order to process her feelings about her identity and her perturbation about her difference:

Like any normal teenager, all I wanted to do was fit in, but, fortunately, Gorinani had got me off to a good start. Her jibes about my status as an ethnic mongrel *and* illegal crossbreed helped me cope as a mildly pimpled, hairy teenager caught up in never-ending games of Chinese whispers, Charou-style! Not to say I didn’t

²⁷ *Waanku* means ‘crooked’, *Boesman* is a derogatory word for a coloured person, *baal* means ‘hair’, and *rung* means ‘skin’ in Gujarati (284-286).

²⁸ As an aside, in many apartheid childhood narratives, the protagonist is very fond of reading, and books are depicted as a ‘safe haven’ and a source of great solace for the child.

²⁹ *Charou* and *Bruinou* are Durban slang terms for an Indian and coloured person respectively (284).

care – but I coped by working through my feelings with my friends and making reference to gossipers and slanderers in the vilest of ways. (80)

Racial difference is a prominent theme in apartheid childhood narratives that intensifies when this ‘site of struggle’ is located within the protagonist himself or herself – that is, when the protagonist is of mixed-race but identifies with one specific racial group, which causes internal and external conflict. Thus, in short, the above discussion has served to demonstrate that apartheid childhood narratives repeatedly represent the figure of the child as ‘other’ and as experiencing conflict in terms of his or her identity. By problematising and interrogating the identity/difference binary, these narratives reveal the intricacies and intersections of identity and difference in a society plagued by racial tension.

2.3 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter constitutes an attempt to map the representation of childhood and youth in South African apartheid childhood narratives by comprehensively examining a wide range of novels. In order to analyse the figure of the child through the frame of childhood itself, I have explored several binary concepts that govern notions of childhood (victim/perpetrator, child/adult, domestic/political, and identity/difference). Thus, a broad analysis has emerged that supersedes the limitations of simply viewing childhood through the lenses of race, culture, and class, which can so easily obscure and overshadow other equally important aspects of childhood. Even when focusing on race, I have endeavoured to limit the discussion to an investigation of the inner conflict and struggle within the child himself or herself. I have argued that the view of childhood as a ‘site of struggle’ is not only limited to those who were oppressed and victimised during the apartheid era; it in fact encompasses a multiplicity of childhoods. This allows for the examination of apartheid childhood narratives as a whole, rather than as completely disconnected representations that exist alongside each other.

As a final observation, it is important to note that whilst many South African representations of childhood are focused on the struggles and conflicts that accompany the coming-of-age process, as has been detailed in this chapter, there are a few narratives that portray childhood as a generally happy and idyllic time. For example, in his book *Native Nostalgia*, Jacob Dlamini explores what it means for black South Africans to remember their

childhood under apartheid “with fondness” (13). However, as he points out, “[t]o be nostalgic for a life lived under apartheid is not to yearn for the depravity visited on South Africa” (14). In *To my Children’s Children*, Sindiwe Magona gives an account of her “ordinary” (4) childhood that is optimistically positive, despite the fact that she grows up in abject poverty: “The adults in my world, no doubt, had their cares and their sorrows. But childhood, by its very nature, is a magic-filled world, egocentric, wonderfully carefree, and innocent. Mine was all these things and more” (24). However, she admits that although her childhood was “stable and happy,” it had a “reasonable mix of tragedies, both minor and major” (23). Sadly, these happy portrayals of childhood are the exception rather than the norm, since the majority of texts represent childhood as a site of conflict and struggle, as discussed throughout this chapter.

Chapter Three

‘The Struggle has not Changed its Face’: The Youth in Crisis in Post-Apartheid Coming-of-Age Narratives

There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. We come from a past in which the lives of our children were assaulted and devastated in countless ways. It would be no exaggeration to speak of a national abuse of a generation by a society which it should have been able to trust. As we set about building a new South Africa, one of our highest priorities must therefore be our children.

– Nelson Mandela (“Address by President Nelson Mandela at the Launch of the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund, Pretoria”)

We still have that apartheid mentality. Where we feel like rejects. Like we’re not good enough. Like we are other. That needs to fucking end.

– Kurt Ellis (*By Any Means 100*)

With the dissolution of the apartheid regime and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected president of South Africa in 1994, a new era of political freedom and equality was ushered in. Archbishop Desmond Tutu hailed the ‘new’ South Africa as the ‘Rainbow Nation’ and called upon all South Africans to embrace a vision of a unified country, celebrating its diversity of culture, race, class, and beliefs (“Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report” 22-23). However, in the two decades following the euphoria of 1994, the utopian ideal of a ‘Rainbow Nation’ has all but dissolved³⁰ as, “despite modest moves toward integration, [South African] society remains deeply divided racially and the gulf between rich and poor gapes wider than ever” (Irlam 697). White people constitute less than ten percent of the total population of South Africa; however, they (still) own approximately eighty-five percent of the country’s wealth, salaries, assets, and farmland (Milazzo 35). As a result, disillusionment is rife, as past and present ANC governments have failed more often than not to rise to the expectations of the electoral masses. The country

³⁰ Indeed, scholars such as Mary West argue that the “phenomenon of ‘Rainbow Nationhood’ [simply] promotes racialised thinking” (34) and should therefore no longer be invoked.

faces a horrific HIV/AIDS epidemic, high unemployment levels, a deficient educational system (affecting those who were historically disadvantaged in particular), extensive poverty, violence and crime, corruption, service delivery protests and strike action, and an ever-increasing failure to facilitate the redistribution of wealth and privilege (Irlam 696-697; Poyner 106; Attwell and Harlow 2-3). Of course, as Sarah Nuttall rightly points out, these realities do not signify that transformation has not taken place at all, as some have believed to be true (*Entanglement* 18; cf. Irlam 696-697; Attwell and Harlow 2). For example, South Africa's black middle class has now surpassed its white counterpart, revealing that South African society is anything but static (Nuttall, *Entanglement* 18); there are social welfare structures in place, housing and access to basic services have improved, there is a robust free press, freedom of association, enfranchisement, and a new and progressive constitution (including a Bill of Rights) (Coullie and Meyer 30). Much has indeed changed for the better; however it cannot be ignored that the vast majority of children and youth continue to live in abject poverty as victims of an unequal society and all that that entails (for instance, poor education, crime, and the absence of a stable nuclear family). For the youth of South Africa, the transition from apartheid to the 'new' South Africa has "engendered a mix of opportunities and disappointments, changes for the better and changes for the worse" (Bray et al. 21-22). Due to the increasing frustration and disillusionment amongst the youth of South Africa, there has been a recent resurgence of black militancy under the banner of black consciousness that has focused on the dissolution of non-racialism and the ideology of colourblindness. Therefore, it is clear that the struggle is far from over and it "cannot be said to have been won, once and for all, merely because apartheid is no more" (Lazarus 620). It will in reality be, to evoke Mandela's metaphor, a long walk before the nation is healed and free from its past, and is rebuilt on the foundations of peace and equality.

Echoing this antithetical state of affairs (where freedom has been gained and yet remains elusive), my central hypothesis is that childhood and youth in coming-of-age narratives set in the post-apartheid era continue to be represented as 'sites of struggle', perhaps even to the same degree as in apartheid narratives. The young female protagonist of Kgebetli Moele's *Untitled* points to this double bind in the following passage where she laments the mistreatment of women by men:

And though we pretend to breathe, we are not breathing. I heard it on television first: "The struggle has changed its face." *But this struggle has not changed its*

face. This struggle's face is the same as it ever was because it lacks a woman to lead it. (209, emphasis added)

The struggle is far from over and thus the 'sites of struggle' that are depicted in post-apartheid childhood narratives are not necessarily new or unique to the post-apartheid context. However, they are now brought to the fore and given prominence alongside the issue of race, which remains a significant point of focus in the post-apartheid literary canon. For instance, Lucy Graham argues that rape statistics have been consistently high during both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras, but that it was a "hidden social problem under apartheid," which is reflected in the lack of literary discourse on the subject in apartheid literature (4). The post-apartheid epoch has ushered in a greater awareness of many issues and has given writers the freedom to grapple with an ever-broadening range of topics. In the post-apartheid literary canon, children and youth are no longer resisting an apartheid state. However, much of the legacy and aftermath remains (a society still stratified by race, a lack of opportunities, poverty, violence and crime, poor education, the list goes on), and they have to come to grips with that which has changed and the vestiges that remain. Children growing up in the post-apartheid era (the 'born free generation') embody the untainted possibilities and hope for a future without racial division, since they have never directly lived under the tyranny of the apartheid regime (Barbarin and Richter 1). It is thus particularly significant that many issues arising from apartheid remain true for children today – both in society itself and in literary representations of childhood and youth, rendering it important to examine and grapple with the kinds of discourses surrounding the portrayal of children in post-apartheid literature. Ultimately, the ongoing representation of childhood as a 'site of struggle' is symptomatic of national issues and crises, and the dissolution of the image of South Africa as a 'Rainbow Nation'.

Analogous to the previous chapter, this chapter is divided into two parts. In the first section, I begin by examining the post-apartheid literary canon that has emerged over the past two decades in order to sketch a brief and overarching view of trends, concepts, and specific themes that inform contemporary South African authors' writing. I then present an overview of post-apartheid childhood novels and explore differences and similarities between these and the apartheid childhood narratives that were examined in the previous chapter. I also discuss common themes, genre types, and the construction of the child as a symbol of the state of the nation. The second part of this chapter examines the representation of childhood and youth

through the lenses of four main binary concepts, which are contested and confronted by the child and youth protagonists. The objective of using this type of methodology is to enable an analysis of the child figure that uses the frame of childhood itself, rather than using other subsidiary analytical frames. The binaries that govern the notion of childhood and youth in post-apartheid childhood narratives include victim/perpetrator, child/adult, agency/powerlessness, and identity/difference. It is hoped that through such an analysis, an understanding of how children and youth are represented in post-apartheid literature will emerge, thus revealing both the discrepancies and similarities between post-apartheid and apartheid childhood narratives.

3.1 Part One

3.1.1 A Brief Overview of Post-Apartheid Literature

The scenario that I have briefly sketched at the start of this chapter constitutes the social and political milieu in which South African authors soon found themselves functioning, as a post-apartheid literary canon began to form and take shape in the years after 1994. However, as is apparent from the discussions in the previous chapter, the ‘post’ prefix is something of a misnomer as it does not in any way signify that apartheid history and its concerns have been transcended or laid to rest with the emergence of a ‘new’ literary canon (Davis 799; Gqola 63). Unsurprisingly, apartheid remains a significant theme of post-apartheid literature and an abundance of confessional texts dealing with the horrors of apartheid were published post-1994³¹. As discussed in the previous chapter, over three quarters of the childhood novels that are set during apartheid were written or published after 1994. Only a few childhood texts were published in the 90s; however, the number of texts has steadily increased in subsequent years, reaching a peak of fifty-five texts that were published during the period of 2005-2010 (see Table 1 on page 30). Now that authors were at liberty to write about the past without fear of retribution, many South African authors began to contemplate the past as a means of healing the wounds inflicted by apartheid, or alternatively, to assuage the guilt of being

³¹ Confessional narratives are the hallmark of the transitional literary period that began anywhere from 1990 to 1994, and ushered in the current post-transitional phase of literature (Davis 799, 801). The focus of this thesis does not necessitate further discussion of the ‘subcategories’ (e.g. post-transitional, post-post-apartheid, neo-apartheid, post-anti-apartheid) that further demarcate the post-apartheid era, as I discuss it as a whole, whilst still acknowledging the presence of such subcategories.

implicitly or explicitly affiliated with the apartheid system. Writers also began to confront the complexities of betrayal by comrades and the violence, brutality, and internal conflict that often accompanied the resistance movements. In previous years, authors “produced their work within the historical and political constraints of their time and tended to write in response to the overwhelming oppression of the apartheid context” (Davis 798). However, in these narratives the author no longer functions as a social activist whose objective is to bring about transformation (at least, not in the previous sense of the word, where ‘transformation’ denoted political freedom). As Rob Nixon observes, “[having] forged their pens into swords, the nation’s writers [were now] summoned, from many quarters, to turn their swords into ploughshares” (69). Writers therefore set about “[bearing] witness to the past in order to build a better future” (Poyner 112). With specific regard to post-apartheid fiction during the years 1999-2005, Annie Gagiano states that writing about the past in the South African context can be a “forward-looking undertaking” as no matter which era the texts are occupied with, they are written within the “climate of change as much as that of stock-taking” (“Moving Beyond” 134). A social vitality is therefore discernible in much post-apartheid fiction, as texts and authors courageously engage with “where, what and why the cultures they depict are adapting or are managing to remain much as they were” (Gagiano, “Moving Beyond” 134).

Nonetheless, once apartheid was no longer the main theme of South African literature, what would writers turn to for their subject matter? This question was habitually asked and discussed by many literary scholars after 1994, and thus bears examining (Attwell and Harlow 3; see also Davis 797; Geertsema, “Passages” 3; Nixon 64). The demise of apartheid gave South African authors permission to produce “an array of texts on topics not previously part of South African literary discourse” and marked a “new era in creative production” (Davis 797; Frenkel and MacKenzie 1³²). In terms of the post-apartheid literary canon as a whole, there is a noticeable shift from the “public domain of politics and resistance struggle [...] to the markedly more introspective, private realm of self-questioning, reflection, and reclaiming of space for expression of personal grief” (Grzęda 78; see also Attwell and Harlow 4; Irlam 698-699; Nixon 77; Poyner 103-104). Commenting on this shift, Shaun Irlam states:

³² Frenkel and MacKenzie use the term ‘post-transitional’ to signify this “new wave of writing” in South African literature (2).

No longer is literary production quite so riven by the tension between political commitment and aesthetic formalism, or between the strident voice of political protest and the private voices of individual consciousness. The practice of writing no longer seems to demand the stark choice between history and literature. (698-699)

Irlam further notes that along with the rise of a “culture of introspection,” a “new literature of separate development is emerging” (698). This is of course apartheid terminology that Irlam turns on its head to describe how communities that were once fully devoted to their shared resistance to apartheid are now able to “exercise the liberty to explore their own histories and assert their own agendas” (698). In post-apartheid literature, the “micropolitics of a specific subculture” or “communal history” is frequently more important than “issues of *national* identity and nationhood” (Irlam 711, 714, emphasis added).

In terms of the presence of race in post-apartheid novels, Marzia Milazzo disagrees with scholars who argue that the significance of race is declining in post-apartheid South Africa (36-37). I concur with her contention that while racial concerns are arguably no longer a point of fixation, they are nonetheless still prevalent in novels set in the post-apartheid era (Milazzo 36-37). In contemporary literature, racism and racial concerns are typically portrayed in complex and multifarious ways; for example, issues such as “AIDS, xenophobia, dispossession, or identity displacement are deeply racialized (sic) realities in South Africa” (Milazzo 38). However, the visibility of the state is a different matter. Margaret Lenta observes that when “compared to the fictions of the apartheid era, the state is a remote presence” in post-apartheid novels, and while the plot of an apartheid novel would typically “involve the individual’s conflict with the state, this is no longer the case in the novels of 1999-2008” and beyond (“Expanding” 73). Along with Irlam, I do not read the post-apartheid tendency to avoid the political and its focus on introspection and the private sphere as a complete abandonment of the political or a sense of nationhood (714). It is rather the “mark of a self-examination and self-consolidation preliminary to the collective task of nationhood” and should be seen as the “first step on the long road to national recovery” (Irlam 714-715). Thus, protagonists in post-apartheid literature are often concerned with the act of ‘renaming’ themselves and of reclaiming an identity of their own choosing (Irlam 699), which is a common feature of childhood narratives, as shall be discussed further on in this chapter. According to Emily Davis, the rise in the number of varying social identities has developed into a “defining issue” for post-apartheid literature:

...not simply in terms of the categories of racial difference familiar from the apartheid era but also in terms of an increasing set of complex and overlapping positions and interactions related to sexuality, educational level, class status, urban versus rural location, HIV status, citizenship, and global mobility. (801)

Other common themes and concerns that are characteristic of post-apartheid literature include: love and relationships, the family and sexual taboo, rape, violence and crime, domestic violence, gender oppression, homosexuality and/or homophobia, prostitution, the trauma surrounding HIV/AIDS, xenophobia, truth-telling, the tension between memory and amnesia, reshaping of identity, betrayal and forgiveness, ecology, and fantasy and folklore (Attwell and Harlow 3; Green 6; Irlam 713; Poyner 105). Many of these themes and topics are also prevalent in post-apartheid childhood novels, as shall be discussed in the following section.

3.1.2 The Representation of Childhood in Post-Apartheid Literature

There is a notable decline in the representation of childhood and youth in novels *set* in the post-1994 era³³ (arguably due in part to the difference in time-span between the two periods: apartheid officially lasted for forty-six years, whilst the post-apartheid era is in its twenty-second year). This is nonetheless an interesting phenomenon in light of the fact that over three quarters of the apartheid childhood texts discussed in the previous chapter were *written* post-1994. Of the two hundred and forty-five narratives that make up the appendix, forty-five of them (approximately eighteen percent) are what I term post-apartheid childhood and youth narratives (out of a total of two hundred texts (about eighty percent) published post-1994). Regarding the demographics of the authors, half are female and half are male. Just over forty-five percent of authors are of white ethnicity, whilst over fifty percent are of black or coloured ethnicity, which differs significantly from the previous 67/33 white/black ratio of authors writing apartheid-era texts. The decrease in white authors who use children and youth as narrative focalisers in texts set in the post-apartheid era corresponds with my initial presumption in the previous chapter that white authors used literary children as a cathartic means of assuaging their deep-seated guilt of their association (whether legitimate or not) with the white apartheid government. In terms of the literary protagonists, black and coloured

³³ Note that by 'post-apartheid childhood novels', I am referring to texts that are written *and set* in the post-apartheid era, as opposed to texts written post-1994 but *set* during the apartheid years (these were discussed in Chapter Two).

children and youth feature in approximately sixty-two percent of the narratives, while white children and youth feature in thirty-five percent of the texts. Forty-two percent of protagonists are male and nearly fifty percent are female (the remaining ten percent is made up of narratives featuring a mixed group of male and female protagonists). These differences, when compared to apartheid childhood narratives in which nearly sixty percent of the narratives feature a white protagonist and over sixty-five percent of them were written by a white author, are a positive marker of the increase in the presence of black writers and protagonists in the post-apartheid context.

One of the ways in which post-apartheid childhood narratives differ significantly from apartheid childhood novels is the decrease in autobiographically infused writing. A handful of texts such as *Thirteen Cents* by K. Sello Duiker, *The Pavement Bookworm* by Philani Dladla, *The Violent Gestures of Life* by Tshifhiwa Given Mukwevho, *Nobody will Ever Kill Me* by Mbu Maloni, *Dear Bullet* by Sixolile Mbalo, *Holding My Breath* by Ace Moloji, and *Memoirs of a Born Free* by Malaika wa Azania are based on autobiographical experiences (to differing degrees). A practical explanation for this occurrence is that the ‘born free generation’ is still relatively young, since South African democracy is only in its twenty-second year. Thus, those who have experienced a largely post-apartheid childhood are in their mid to late twenties or, at most, in their early thirties. While apartheid childhood narratives are often distinctly autobiographical and ‘confessional’ in tone, post-apartheid childhood narratives are less so. If the ‘autobiographical’ texts listed above are ‘confessional’ at all, they are less likely to be a confession of guilt or remorse, and more likely to be a confession of the raw truth of the authors’ life experiences, which are often devastating. The authors write their life stories in order to break free from the bonds of silence and to find their own voice, as well as to come to terms with past trauma, such as rape, homelessness, or imprisonment.

A defining feature of post-apartheid childhood narratives (and indeed, post-apartheid narratives as a whole) is their treatment of the everyday and the ordinary. In his seminal essay collection *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture*, Njabulo Ndebele states how black South African literature in particular has historically been preoccupied with the representation of the spectacular (31-33). He defines the spectacular thus:

The spectacular documents; it indicts implicitly; it is demonstrative, preferring exteriority to interiority; it keeps the larger issues of society in our minds,

obliterating the details; it provokes identification through recognition and feeling rather than through observation and analytical thought; it calls for emotion rather than conviction; it establishes a vast sense of presence without offering intimate knowledge; it confirms without necessarily offering a challenge. It is the literature of the powerless identifying the key factor responsible for their powerlessness. Nothing beyond this can be expected of it. (Ndebele, *Rediscovery* 41-42)

If what Ndebele terms the ‘ordinary’ is understood as the opposite of the spectacular, then its preference for interiority, detailed observation, intimate knowledge, and “sobering rationality” corresponds with the views of Irlam and other scholars on the hallmarks of the post-apartheid literary canon, as discussed in the section above (*Rediscovery* 46). This is perhaps another explanation for the backgrounding of the political and the foregrounding of identity and self-discovery. Ultimately, Ndebele calls South African authors to rediscover the intricacies of the ordinary daily lives of people by focusing on a “range of complex ethical issues involving man-man, man-woman, woman-woman, man-nature, man-society relationships,” which will produce a “significant growth of consciousness” in South African literature and society (*Rediscovery* 46, 52).

Planet Savage by Tuelo Gabonewe is a prime example of a text that is preoccupied with the ordinariness of life. The novel is devoid of any kind of cataclysmic event, or eye-opening discovery, or even an overall focus on a particular theme or subject. Gabonewe instead provides a compelling portrayal of the daily life of nine-year-old Leungo over the span of few months. We are provided with detailed descriptions of the people that make up Leungo’s world, his interactions with family and friends, and his experiences of love, lust, frustration, shame, and belonging. The following passage demonstrates Gabonewe’s masterful attention to detail:

I am awake now. The clock in the living room announces with an amount of annoyance to my enquiring eyes that it is thirty-four minutes past eight. For a change I leave the TV alone and put on the radio. A jock with a high-pitched, irritating voice is at pains trying to link up with a traffic reporter and failing to reach him [...] I’ve had enough radio for one day. I switch the thing off and put on the TV, and what do you know, nothing interesting on the box either. I go into the kitchen and concoct a little meal for myself, and wolf it all in a couple of bites. From there I go to the bathroom and clean up. (38)

The celebration and amplification of the detail of everyday life is also evident in many other childhood texts including *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa, *Untitled* by Kgebetli Moele, and

Thirteen Cents by K. Sello Duiker³⁴ (Gqola 62). Even in a novel such as *Untitled*, which primarily focuses on sexual abuse and rape in a township community, the last sixty-eight pages of the book provide specific details in almost-hourly increments of the fateful Saturday when the protagonist is raped. As Pumla Gqola states, the “focus on the common textures of people’s lives and interiority is the common ground of post-apartheid literature” and even when apartheid is revisited, the reader’s attention is drawn to the “opening up of the possibilities and the daily preoccupations that characterise human life” rather than macro-political concerns (62). Ultimately, “South African literature has veered away from a preoccupation with the spectacular contest between dominant and disempowered to a textured exploration of emotion, possibility and entanglement” (Gqola 62).

The forty-five post-apartheid childhood novels that form part of the appendix encompass a wide range of topics, themes, and even genres. Major themes and topics include love and relationships (platonic and sexual), sexuality, death and loss, identity, self-discovery, truth-telling, belonging, peer pressure, the dangers of online chat rooms (*Dark Poppy’s Demise* by S.A. Partridge), beauty, schooling and education, cultural conflict, abandonment, homelessness, drugs and alcohol, imprisonment (*The Violent Gestures of Life* by Tshifhiwa Given Mukwevho), gangs, crime and violence, racism, poverty, HIV/AIDS, xenophobia, illegal immigration, sexual abuse and rape, prostitution (*Shameless* by Futhi Ntshingila), and circumcision (*A Man who is not a Man* by Thando Mgqolozana).³⁵ When compared to apartheid childhood texts, post-apartheid childhood narratives involve an expanding of genres to include paranormal fiction. Novels such as *Deadlands*, *Death of a Saint*, and *The Army of the Lost* by Lily Herne, *Apocalypse Now Now* and *Kill Baxter* by Charlie Human, *Time Twisters* by Sam Roth, *Devilskein and Dearlove* by Alex Smith, and *The Goblet Club* by S.A. Partridge fall under the subgenres of ‘fantasy’, ‘gothic’, ‘horror and ghost stories’, ‘magical realism’, and ‘zombie/apocalypse fiction’. In addition, novels such as *Hidden Star* by K. Sello Duiker, *Sister-Sister* by Rachel Zadok, *Nwelezelanga: The Star Child* by Unathi Magubeni, and *Rainmaker* by Don Pinnock feature a merging of African

³⁴ Many of the previously discussed apartheid childhood narratives that were written post-1994 (for example, Van Wyk’s *Shirley*, *Goodness & Mercy* and Molohe’s *Dancing in the Dust*) can also be included in this list.

³⁵ Novels in parentheses indicate themes and topics that are the predominant focus of only one post-apartheid childhood novel listed in the appendix.

folklore, fantasy, magic, and oral tradition with everyday township life.³⁶ Many of these ‘sci-fi’ novels portray a dystopian South African society, with Cape Town featuring as the city of choice.

Novels that fit into the diverse genre of ‘General Fiction’ can be further divided into the subcategories of ‘school stories’ (featuring novels predominately focused on the youth’s life at school: *The Club* and *Snitch* by Edyth Bulbring, *Fuse* by S.A. Partridge, and *Team Trinity* by Fiona Snyckers), ‘narratives of abuse’ (novels that are primarily focused (to varying degrees) on rape and sexual abuse: *Untitled* by Kgebetli Moele, *Dying in New York* by Ekow Duker, *Dear Bullet* by Sixolile Mbalo, *Do not go Gentle* by Futhi Ntshingila, and *This Book Betrays My Brother* by Kagiso Lesego Molope), and ‘juvenile delinquency narratives’ (novels that focus on the lives of gangsters, street children, and prison inmates: *Thirteen Cents* by K. Sello Duiker, *Young Blood* by Sifiso Mzobe, *By Any Means* by Kurt Ellis, *The Pavement Bookworm* by Philani Dladla, *Rainmaker* by Don Pinnock, *The Violent Gestures of Life* by Tshifhiwa Given Mukwevho, and *Nobody will Ever Kill Me* by Mbu Maloni).

In many of the novels listed above, there is a distinct blurring of the line between Young Adult (YA) fiction and adult literature featuring a young protagonist. Indeed, it was often almost impossible to place some texts in one specific age category, as my research shows that they are enjoyed and read by both youth and adults alike. The didactic slant of novels such as *Flowers of the Nation* by Sandile Memela and *Zulu Dog* by Anton Ferreira demonstrate that they could arguably be labelled as YA, despite often being categorised and marketed as adult fiction. In terms of didacticism being an indicator of a YA novel, Silindiwe Sibanda states that because youth are often “regarded as the future and therefore contested terrain,” YA novels tend to be didactic with “specific thematic pre-occupation” (9; Jenkins *Children*). In her book, *The Crossover Novel: Contemporary Children’s Fiction and Its Adult Readership*, Rachel Falconer explores the difficulty of maintaining traditional distinctions between children’s fiction and fiction for adult readers (3, 6). Novels intended for children that are widely read by adults fall into the category of what has been termed ‘crossover fiction’, which is fiction that challenges the boundaries that previously defined children’s literature and stipulated what it should and should not contain (Falconer 27). The practice of cross-reading has grown in popularity as children’s literature increasingly addresses “some of

³⁶ There is also an element of African folklore and/or magical realism in novels such as *Snake* by Tracey Farren, *Zulu Dog* by Anton Ferreira, *Thirteen Cents* by K. Sello Duiker, and *Planet Savage* by Tuelo Gabonewe; however, it is not a prominent feature of these novels.

the major issues of our time,” revealing how “attitudes to childhood, adulthood, and the in-between state of adolescence are all shifting, becoming more flexible and porous, as we adapt to changing social conditions in the developed world” (Falconer 4). Falconer states that it is difficult to pin ‘crossover fiction’ down to a fixed definition because it “represents too varied a group of novels to be identified as a distinct genre or class of fiction” and “[t]here simply are no stable set of traits, no themes or motifs or modes of address or narrative dynamics, which are common to all – or even, most of – the fiction ‘ostensibly written for children’ which has recently been taken up by adult readers” (27). It should therefore come as no surprise that the *Bildungsroman* is a “natural crossover genre, because it typically represents a protagonist developing from child to adulthood” (Falconer 74) and thus, many of the narratives that are examined both in this chapter and this thesis fall under the broad category of crossover fiction.

Finally, in the post-apartheid context several authors use the growth and development of the child/youth protagonist in order to interrogate the development of the nation as well as to examine socio-political problems (Okuyade, “Continuity” 10-11). This is reminiscent of the way in which the authors of apartheid childhood narratives sometimes use children as a symbol of the nation, or how they simultaneously depict the coming-of-age of the child and the nation. However, in the post-apartheid context, the coming-of-age of the child is used allegorically in more complex and abstract manner, if it is indeed used at all in this way. In *Coconut*, for example, Matlwa “privileges the adolescent’s perspective” and this point of view becomes an “allegory for the new nation; their growing pains speak to the problems and difficulties facing the adolescent [‘new’ South Africa]” (Spencer, “Writing Women” 154). Another example is *Skyline* by Patricia Schonstein Pinnock, where the view of South Africa as a utopic ‘safe haven’ for the rest of the continent is dismantled, as economic opportunities for black foreigners dwindle, and xenophobic hostility and violence become widespread. The refugees’ stories of war and suffering are echoed in the broken home that the young protagonist and her sister grow up in (Fasselt 179). Their home, which should be a ‘safe haven’, is destroyed when their father abandons them, leaving them in the care of their drunken and violent mother, which significantly affects the young girl’s life and future.

3.1.3 The Selection of Narratives and Binary Concepts

Forty-five post-apartheid childhood narratives are listed in the appendix that follows this study. In order to limit the number of texts that are examined in detail, a selection process was followed, which resulted in the twelve main texts that are discussed in the present chapter. After having divided the novels into the subcategories mentioned previously, I eliminated the fantastical ‘sci-fi’ novels in order to focus on more conventionally realistic fiction, which comprises the majority of childhood narratives. It is both significant and interesting that once this category was eliminated and the remaining novels culled, I was left with a group of novels that mostly feature black protagonists. Out of the sixteen shortlisted novels, three novels feature a coloured protagonist, two novels feature a white protagonist, and eleven novels feature a black protagonist. In addition, these texts portray young protagonists from varying economic classes and circumstances, thus providing diverse representations of childhood and youth in the post-apartheid context.

In Chapter Two, several binary concepts emerged from my survey of the selected texts and were examined at length. These included victim/perpetrator, child/adult, domestic/political, and identity/difference. Correspondingly, in this chapter, the representation of childhood in post-apartheid coming-of-age narratives is also examined through a set of opposing binaries where the main ‘sites of struggle’ and conflict are located: victim/perpetrator, child/adult, agency/powerlessness, and identity/difference. Although the political is still present in post-apartheid narratives, it does not feature to the same degree that it does in apartheid childhood texts, and thus I have omitted the domestic/political binary from the following discussion, replacing it with the agency/powerlessness binary.

3.2. Part Two

In this section, I examine the following twelve novels, seven of which have been selected for closer analysis: *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa (2007), *Untitled* by Kgebetli Moele (2013), *Skyline* by Patricia Schonstein Pinnock (2000), *Planet Savage* by Tuelo Gabonewe (2011), *Shiva’s Dance* by Elana Bregin (2009), *Flowers of the Nation* by Sandile Memela (2005), *Snake* by Tracey Farren (2011), *The Story of Lucky Simelane* by Robin Malan (2005), *Rainmaker* by Don Pinnock (2010), *Young Blood* by Sifiso Mzobe (2010), *By Any Means* by Kurt Ellis (2014), and *Thirteen Cents* by K. Sello Duiker (2000). In each of the sections that

make up the second half of this chapter, I draw on two main texts and several secondary texts in order to analyse the representation of childhood and youth through the lenses of the aforementioned binaries.

3.2.1 Victimhood and Innocence Lost

In my examination of apartheid childhood narratives in Chapter Two, I discussed the representation of childhood and youth through the victim/perpetrator and innocent/guilty binary lenses. I explored how children and youth are often portrayed as innocently irreprehensible or as knowingly guilty, and how childhood innocence is frequently linked to ignorance of the political. Now turning to post-apartheid literature, it becomes apparent that children continue to be represented as victims of physical and sexual abuse, violence, blackmail, and the effects of HIV/AIDS. However, there is a substantial increase in the representation of children and youth as the perpetrators of crime, violence, and even rape (for example, *By Any Means* by Kurt Ellis, *Rainmaker* by Don Pinnock, *This Book Betrays my Brother* by Kagiso Lesego Molope, and *Young Blood* by Sifiso Mzobe). Most of these texts will be discussed as part of the section on agency/powerlessness further on in this chapter, thus I do not examine them here. The notion of innocence itself is most often related to the loss of sexual innocence, whilst the emotion of guilt is associated with that of shame. In the following section, I examine the representation of children and youth as victims of crime, violence, and rape, with a particular focus on sexual awakening and the loss of sexual innocence in post-apartheid *Bildungsromane*. The narratives that will be analysed in this section include *Untitled* by Kgebetli Moele, *Planet Savage* by Tuelo Gabonewe, *Flowers of the Nation* by Sandile Memela, *Shiva's Dance* by Elana Bregin, and *Snake* by Tracey Farren.

Childhood innocence is not something that is taken for granted in post-apartheid childhood texts. Children of the 'new' South Africa have to navigate a society in which rape, AIDS, abuse, crime, and violence are commonplace, as will be examined below. For example, HIV/AIDS is the focus of Sandile Memela's novella *Flowers of the Nation*, wherein Zenzele and her sister, Mpumelelo, are at risk of falling prey to the effects of AIDS, as their father is dying from the disease. The sisters embark on a journey in order to elicit help from their uncle so that they do not become one of "the country's millions of Aids orphans" (3). As an aside, the didactic intent of the author is markedly evident in passages such as the following: "[Zenzele] was horrified by the young woman's situation. I must not get involved

with men, she thought. I will not have sex until I am married and both my partner and I have been tested for HIV” (78). While AIDS is present in other childhood texts, it is only mentioned in passing, and in those instances, there is a tendency for the issue to be treated with dismissive flippancy by the literary character (*Untitled, Shiva's Dance*).

A different example of the victimisation of the youth is found in Elana Bregin's novel *Shiva's Dance*, where young Gerry is a victim of her mother's controlling and extreme behaviour. Furthermore, both Gerry and her mother, Moira, are directly and indirectly victims of rape, as Moira was raped and fell pregnant with Gerry, who has had to bear the brunt of Moira's resulting emotional pain and anger. Gerry also experiences guilt and shame when she discovers the truth surrounding her conception and learns of how her mother wanted to get rid of her. She thus laments: “All my life I've been made to feel like a criminal just for being born. I didn't do anything!” (126). Her feelings of shame manifest themselves in her defiant and self-destructive acts throughout the novel.

In Tracey Farren's *Snake*, Stella becomes a victim of blackmail and intimidation by Jerry, a strange white man who arrives in their town, who is later revealed to be her uncle. When Stella witnesses Jerry's involvement in the disappearance and murder of her best friend Nita's father, who is a police officer, Jerry forces her to keep silent through intimidation and blackmail: “Jerry is terrible. He's a monster who murders. Jerry will kill us all if I talk” (174, see also 67, 127). Stella feels miserably guilty about her silence and feelings of shame overwhelm her: “I'm not a star. I belong to the devil, if there is one” (177). Towards the end of the novel, when Jerry begins attacking the people living on the farm, Stella stabs him in order to save her mother from being killed: “I hold the heavy sword high above my head. I cry from my own violence. ‘I'll kill you, I will!’ [...] ‘I think I was a killer!’” (246). When Stella eventually breaks her silence and tells the truth to the detective, including where she saw Jerry bury Nita's father, she continues to think of herself as a murderer (263). Her guilt about her actions has a far-reaching effect on her. Stella is musically gifted and music was once a source of great joy to her, but she now no longer sings (8) and does not want to have anything to do with music: “I don't touch my bottles, they've got Jerry in them. I don't want any music, never, ever” (259). Stella used to make music by tapping the green bottles that hang on her favourite tree (17, 20), but her childlike innocence has been lost and she now sees them for what they actually represent: “A broken bottle hangs cruel near my face. That's when I see for the first time in my life [...] They're not music notes. They're just ugly green

bottles that make my pa weak” (183). Innocence is so intrinsic to the time of childhood, that once this innocence is lost, childhood is essentially left behind, as Stella’s situation demonstrates.

Childhood is traditionally seen as a site of sexual innocence. However, in post-apartheid childhood and youth novels, this notion is confronted and overturned. In addition, almost every novel under discussion here refers to rape or sexual abuse, even if it is only mentioned in passing (for example, *Coconut*, *Snake*, *Untitled*, *Flowers of the Nation*, *Shiva’s Dance*, *Nobody will Ever Kill Me*, *Thirteen Cents*, *By Any Means*, and *This Book Betrays my Brother*). The rise in discourse on sexual violence in post-liberation South Africa (‘post-apartheid apartheid childhood narratives’ constitute a large portion of these texts) is due in part to an increased awareness of gender issues, but can also be read as an “expression of complex anxieties about the new nation and the transition to black governance” (Graham 4). For example, in Tracey Farren’s *Snake*, Stella says: “I know what rape means. In South Africa they rape babies. I’ve heard it on the radio. Pa always mumbles and looks like he’s going to cry. Sometimes I ask why. Pa says he’s so, so sorry for the whole country. I know what rape means”³⁷ (216). These anxieties also come to the fore in Moele’s *Untitled*, as will be discussed later on in this section.

Planet Savage offers an interesting view on the representation of children and sex. Nine-year-old Leungo is already aware of his sexuality and his feelings of lust towards women (35, 64). For example, this is his response when he watches an age-restricted movie with his mother and aunt without them realising it:

The film has an age restriction of eighteen. Next to ‘18’ are the three letters I love: NVS. My mouth slavers. Something inside my clothes turns to stone, in advance. I jump on a sofa and they don’t chase me out. They’re too engrossed in chat they don’t even realise that I should not be in the audience for this one. I hope I’ve missed nothing, at least not the part represented by the letter N. That’s always my favourite part in any movie. (63)

His remark after this is telling: “I have seen enough. I go to my bedroom to lie on my back and cool down. I’m tired of being a child” (64). He is acutely aware of the limits of being a child, especially when it comes to the expression of sexuality. Towards the end of the novel,

³⁷ As an aside, there are a few instances in *Snake* where Stella says “I know” that relate to sexual innocence: “I know what sex is” (125) and “I know what rape means” (216). This is her attempt to validate her voice, since adults view children as unreliable purveyors of truth in this novel (262).

Leungo travels to the “bundus” to visit his grandparents and on one occasion spends time with a group of children who pressurise him to have group sex with them when they discover that he is still a virgin (130-131). He protests that he is “still too young to even think about [sex]” (130-131) and describes it as a “nasty thing” and the “[g]ross kids” as “[d]isgusting, twisted children” (135). He thinks, “[s]ex? I squirm. I shudder [...] What do children know about sex?” (134). This is an interesting response in light of the above passage, where it is clear that he knows more about sex than other children of his age (indeed, his best friend’s father dislikes Leungo because he teaches his son, Legofi, “stuff” that he does not want his son to learn (61)). Leungo is relieved when his grandmother punishes him, as this provides him with a way out of being pressurised into having sex: “They try to persuade me to disobey Grandma and I refuse. I refuse to be a victim of peer pressure for the second day in a row [...] They’re not bad guys. It’s just that I don’t dig that sex thing very much. What happened to children being children?” (138). These remarks contradict Leungo’s previous frustration at being a child, as this ‘state’ involves the curbing of his sexuality. However, when actually presented with the opportunity to have sex, he realises that he is in fact too young. In short, even though Leungo is well acquainted with lust and sexual arousal, he nonetheless ultimately views the act of sex as something that lies exclusively in the realm of adulthood.

The loss of innocence, which is usually related to sexual innocence, is portrayed in two ways in post-apartheid childhood and youth narratives. The loss of ‘innocence’ refers either to the sexual ‘coming-of-age’ of the youth or to the violence of rape or abuse. For female protagonists, the “burden of being a young woman in the world” and the fear of becoming a rape victim is expressed in several texts (*Flowers of the Nation* 9, 11-12; *Shiva’s Dance* 97; *Untitled* 91). Numerous novels emphasise both the joy of young love and the horror of rape (*Planet Savage*, *Skyline*, *This Book Betrays my Brother*, *Young Blood*, *Shiva’s Dance*, *By Any Means*, *Rainmaker*, *Untitled*), with the latter four of these novels depicting the first sexual experience of the adolescent protagonist. The protagonists experience this both positively (*Rainmaker*, *By Any Means*) and negatively (*Shiva’s Dance*, *Untitled*). Due to space constraints, the discussion below shall be focused on Moele’s *Untitled* and its representation of sexual violence.

In Kgebetli Moele’s novel *Untitled*, seventeen-year-old Mokgethi is raped by Thabakgolo, a man beloved by the community (193-196). She begins her story by pronouncing herself “deflowered”; that is, deprived of her sexual innocence (1). She says,

speaking of herself in the third person (as she does throughout the novel), that she loved “Mokgethi the innocent girl” and that “if she had been granted one wish, she would have wished to remain Mokgethi the virgin” (5-6). The loss of her sexual innocence is labelled as a type of murder: “I am writing this verse to try to understand the coming Mokgethi. Trying to find a way for her to live comfortably with herself. She will have to enjoy being this Mokgethi first, just as the murdered Mokgethi enjoyed being Mokgethi” (6). After being threatened by Thabakgolo numerous times (191-192), she is raped by him even though she struggles, begs, and pleads with him to stop (193-196). When she tells him that he “cannot do this to [her] without a condom,” she feels overcome by guilt: “It just comes out of my mouth. It is my first thought, but by saying it I feel like I have given him permission to do whatever he wants with me. I feel worse than a sinner denied redemption” (195). Thabakgolo’s violent and violating actions make her feel less than human and she blames herself for not being able to stop him: “If I could take a bath, I could wash away what just happened. I feel dirty, inhuman. I need to take a bath” (196). Mokgethi not only loses her virginity, but she feels that the essence of her identity and, indeed, the very dignity of her status as a human being have been painfully stolen as a result of Thabakgolo’s actions:

This morning I was very sure of the Mokgethi that I was but that was this morning. I am not that Mokgethi any more (sic) and I can never be her again. This is what scares me the most, that after today I am not going to be a me that I understand. What am I going to be? (208)

This is a defining moment in Mokgethi’s life, but she decides that it is going to be an “introduction to another life” and not a conclusion, as it has been for so many girls before her (209). She vows that after she dies, “no woman will ever suffer as I have,” for she is taking up the struggle for the freedom of women from sexual violence (209). Although Mokgethi is a victim of rape, she does not allow this fact to render her powerless, and so the novel concludes with a statement of her agency and her intention to rise above her circumstances.

Throughout the novel, Mokgethi continually tells of how the community³⁸ of Teyageneng mostly ignores the fact that many girls have become victims of rape, and when they do pay attention, they lay the blame upon the girls instead of the men (87, 91-92). Phrases such as “[s]he is lying,” “[s]he wanted it,” and “[s]he was trying to extort money from him” are commonly heard throughout the community (100). Mokgethi tells the story of

³⁸ Notice the overtones of the public/private binary here.

Little Bonolo who was raped at the age of eleven and says that Bonolo may have “made [men] hold their breath as they thought this or that. But that doesn’t make her responsible for their actions and it doesn’t *un-child* her. She accused a senior teacher of raping her but all the community could do was point their fingers at her” (99, emphasis added). When a young girl is raped, she is in effect ‘un-childed’ – stripped of her rights to be a child – and has to fend for herself, often with disastrous consequences (including sexual promiscuity, teenage pregnancy, abortion, HIV/AIDS, and the premature ending of her education) (62, 98, 100). The community labels the victims as the perpetrators, thus reversing the truth and stripping young girls of their innocence as well as their agency, for they are powerless in the face of the adults that rule their lives.³⁹ Mokgethi says, “[t]here is a phrase I hear all the time in the community: “Young girls grow up fast these days!” I get scared when I hear this phrase. Aren’t we still young girls even if we look like we are women? Aren’t our minds still young?” (103). When Mokgethi herself is raped, her brother warns her to keep silent, otherwise she will suffer the wrath and scorn of the community (206). The community of Teyageneng is depicted as a microcosm of the South African nation, and the novel ends with Mokgethi’s soliloquy about the state of her community, which she clearly links to the nation as a whole:

Cry, little girls of my beloved country, the Bonolos, the Pheladis, the Lebos and the Dineos that have to live, are living, in communities full of men who prey on us every day [...] The community will victimise us, no matter the reality of the situation [...] Even if you did not do anything, the community will still victimise you, calling you names [...] I am crying for help but where I am expecting this help to come from? Who is it I expect to come and help us? (208)

This quote is a direct reference to Alan Paton’s renowned book *Cry, The Beloved Country* (which was published in 1948 – the year that apartheid officially began), and brings to mind the following quote: “Cry for the broken tribe, for the law and the custom that is gone [...] Cry, the beloved country, these things are not yet at an end” (66). In *Untitled*, Moele stresses that “these things” (sexual and physical violence, poverty, crime, racism, etc.) that were prevalent during the apartheid years are sadly still “not yet at an end.” Young girls (as well as boys – Duiker’s *Thirteen Cents* (discussed further on in this chapter) is an important text in

³⁹ This phenomenon is also depicted in Molohe’s novel *This Book Betrays my Brother* when the community castigates and ostracises Moipone when she alleges that she was raped by her boyfriend, eighteen-year-old Basimane (the protagonist’s older brother).

this regard as it reveals the sexual violence that is committed against young boys in post-apartheid South Africa) like Mokgethi are victims of both sexual predators and the people in the communities they live in, since they heap verbal and emotional abuse upon the victims of rape. Mokgethi hears it said that the “struggle has changed its face,” but she insists that in reality it has not, since true freedom has yet to be achieved (209). Paige Sweet notes that “Mokgethi’s conflation of the “struggle” against apartheid with the “struggle” against gender inequality in general (and sexual violence in particular) positions her within an unfinished project of freedom” (298). Thus, *Untitled* points the reader away from racial fixation and instead underlines the fact that sexual violence, especially against children, is a major part of the ‘unfreedom’ of the nation (Graham 16).

3.2.2 The Power Struggle between Child and Adult

It will come as no surprise that the struggle between the child and the adult, which was examined in several apartheid childhood narratives in the previous chapter, continues unabated in the post-apartheid era. The majority of post-apartheid childhood and youth texts depict the relationships between the young protagonist and their parents, teachers, and other authoritarian figures in their lives as a power struggle fraught with conflict. Indeed, in the post-apartheid literary context, there is often more resistance within the child/adult binary than in the preceding era. This is in accordance with Adrienne Gavin’s claim that “[b]oth the presence and absence of adults in contemporary fiction cause problems for child characters. Absence causes neglect, victimization, or feralization of the child, while presence causes restrictions on childhood freedom, excessive adult dependence on the child, or abuse of children” (15). In this section, I shall draw from a wide range of texts, as nearly all of the texts selected for this study represent the child/adult binary as a ‘site of struggle’, in order to demonstrate the differences and similarities between the literary representations of this binary across the two eras under discussion in this thesis. Akin to apartheid childhood texts, the world of adulthood is more often than not unfavourably portrayed in post-apartheid childhood narratives. In Tuelo Gabonewe’s *Planet Savage*, the protagonist describes himself and his world thus:

I am nine years eleven and my name is Leungo. *An unlucky kid wedged with no chance of escape in a world of savages*. That’s me. My old man, my mom, their

friends, their friends' friends, our relatives, the lot of them. There's a barbarian everywhere you look. (1, emphasis added)

There is an interesting reversal of perceptions here. Throughout *Planet Savage*, the adults are depicted as self-centred alcoholic “savages” and “barbarians” who cannot exert self-control, whilst the child is represented as self-sufficient and mature enough to know not to follow their example. At one point in the novel, Leungo's father says to him: “Don't be like your uncle when you grow up, Prof. Don't be like me. Be a better man than all of us” (30). When Leungo's father leaves him behind in a strange place with his unknown grandparents in order to go drinking, Leungo says he'll come back “smelling like a brewery” and that his father “must just grow-up one day” (106). As discussed in the previous chapter, children rather than adults have historically often been depicted as ‘savages’, but in this post-apartheid text, the opposite is true.

Unlike apartheid childhood narratives where growing up is viewed negatively, many of the young protagonists in post-apartheid childhood narratives look forward to growing up so that they can escape parental control and the damaging effect that their parents have upon their lives. There are numerous examples of this. When Stella, the young protagonist of *Snake* by Tracey Farren, finds her father drunk at a bar after school, she wishes she could escape her broken home: “I don't want to go home, I want to fly far away from the fights and the lies. I want to float far away from our breaking dreams” (119). The unnamed female protagonist of *Skyline* by Patricia Schonstein Pinnock, whom I shall call ‘Girl’, looks forward to the time when she can leave behind her abusive and alcoholic mother and the chaos of her home life: “One day I will leave Skyline and live with Mossie in a nice house up on the side of the mountain. Then I'll find words in places other than wind and war and traffic. I will find beauty and words of a new order” (51). Finally, Gerry, the protagonist of *Shiva's Dance* by Elana Bregin, wishes to escape from her life where she is stuck in an unrelentingly destructive relationship with her mother:

Oh to be somewhere different – anywhere, except in this place, this life that was hers right now! Only two more years to go, and then she would be out. If she hung around the planet that long. She already knew what she wanted: a pack on her back and a ticket to somewhere. Europe, Australia, America – she didn't care. Just as far away from this psycho hole as she could get. (40)

When her mother decides to send her to boarding school, Gerry tries to convince Adigar, the elderly Buddhist monk she has befriended, to take her with him to Sri Lanka (135, 141). When this fails, she opts for the ultimate form of escape and attempts to take her own life (148-151).

In Chapter Two, I examine the phenomenon of the loss of adult authority over children in the aftermath of the 1976 Soweto uprisings; however, this loss of authority takes a different form in years following apartheid. While there is the ‘normal’ teenage rebellious and defiant attitude towards teachers and parents in novels such as *Shiva’s Dance* (15) and *Skyline* (40, 51) (which in both these cases is due to problems at home), in the post-apartheid context, the loss of respect for those in authority, rather than being politically motivated, ostensibly stems from another basis entirely. In Moele’s *Untitled*, the protagonist, Mokgethi, describes how the teachers at her local school do not inspire respect in their pupils due to their laziness (185). Even more reprehensible is the number of Mokgethi’s teachers (including the principal, Mr. Shatale) who are paedophiles and have sexual relations with their oft-willing pupils, which Mokgethi finds repulsive and rightly labels as statutory rape, even if the girls are willing (66, 70, 90, 105). Mokgethi’s teachers, Shatale, Letshele, and Ngwarele, have all tried to convince her to sleep with them, to the point of attempted rape on Letshele’s part (84, 95-97, 150). Mokgethi deplores the fact that the community knows about what these teachers are doing, yet they do not address the issue and still accept the men as the educators of their children (88):

Except for Miss Kgopa, the community and its leaders have never confronted Shatale. They know what he is doing to us, all the young girls, but they still speak to him, they still wave back at him [...] But this is the curse of Teyageneng; in this community nobody respects anybody [...] There is nothing here any more that anyone from Teyageneng can be proud of. Why? Because the pillars of this community are the likes of Shatale and nothing can grow while they are in charge. (88-89)

At the end of the narrative, Mokgethi’s young brother Khutso mimics their next door neighbour, Sedibe, who often proclaims: “Apartheid has ended. Children can say and do whatever shit they want [...] Freedom is a big curse because all people are now equal, which means that children are equal to their parents. Freedom, what have you brought us?” (200-201). Although this is spoken in jest (on Khutso’s part), there is a ring of truth to the neighbour’s plaintive cry. Children have been robbed of their innocence (as discussed in the

previous section); however, even though they are said to be equal with adults, they are still very much at the mercy of the grown-ups in their lives.

In Memela's *Flowers of the Nation*, children rather than adults are upheld as the agents of change (note the link to the agency/powerlessness binary):

It was the children who had to do something. Action does help. After all, most of the adults were paralysed by fear and worship of the cult of the personality. They were awed by the Great Renaissance Leader.⁴⁰ But Zenzele and Mpumelelo were not concerned about someone who did not seem to care for them. It was their own future they were worried about. (1)

Thus, it is up to sixteen-year-old Zenzele and her ten-year-old sister to find help for their father who is dying of AIDS. The novella ends on a similar note where Zenzele rebels against her grandmother's attitude of accepting the things that you cannot change, declaring instead that she is not a "passive victim of life" and that "[a]ction does help" (90). Indeed, in the majority of post-apartheid childhood novels, children and youth rarely look to adults to bring about change, which echoes similar tendencies in apartheid coming-of-age narratives.

The child/parent relationship is particularly significant because the child's relationship with his or her parents is not only indicative of the state of affairs in the home, but also considerably influences the child's view of both himself or herself and the world around him or her. The emotions surrounding the child/parent relationship in post-apartheid texts range from mild embarrassment (*Coconut* 51-53) and utter disgust (*Skyline*), to intense hatred and anger (*Shiva's Dance*). Alcoholism is a common feature of several post-apartheid childhood narratives, where either a parent(s) or guardian(s) is heavily dependent upon alcohol (*Skyline*, *Planet Savage*, *Snake*, *Shiva's Dance*, *By Any Means*, *Nobody will Ever Kill Me*). The majority of child/parent relationships represented in post-apartheid childhood novels are fractured and fraught with the struggle for power. Akin to apartheid narratives, very rarely is a positive and close child/parent relationship depicted. Many of the child protagonists in these novels are raised by single mothers (*Skyline*, *Shiva's Dance*) or extended family (*Untitled*), or conversely, have to fend for themselves because their family has died (*Thirteen Cents*) or because they have been forced to leave home (*Rainmaker* and *Nobody will Ever Kill Me*). For the most part, fathers are either portrayed as largely absent or non-existent, which is

⁴⁰ The 'Great Renaissance Leader' is a reference to Thabo Mbeki, who was the President of South Africa from 1999 until 2008.

reminiscent of apartheid childhood narratives. In *Untitled*, Mokgethi's father has been absent since her mother died when she was four (her maternal side of the family have not allowed him to see his children) and they only meet again when she is seventeen; in *By Any Means*, Kyle's father is abusive and leaves him after his mother commits suicide; in *Snake*, Stella's father is a drunkard who leaves the family for a short period of time after his wife begins to openly have an affair; in *Shiva's Dance*, Gerry's unknown father is a rapist; in *Flowers of the Nation*, Zenzele's father is dying of AIDS; in *Planet Savage*, Leungo's father is an alcoholic and thief who largely neglects his son; in *Rainmaker*, the father that Ky has never known is a gangster who Ky wounds in a shootout; and in *Skyline*, the Girl's father abandons the family. Rather than a broad examination of the depiction of fatherhood in all of the texts listed above, I discuss two contrasting portrayals of fatherhood in *Skyline* and *Planet Savage* in the section below.

Skyline begins with the Girl telling of her father's abandonment of her, her mentally challenged sister Mossie, and their mother:

This is how our father leaves home. He does it simply and without any explanation. He just does not come home one Friday night. I realise he's gone for good because there is an emptiness in the air which was not there before. Now there will be no more fighting and the arguments which tear through the flat will become still. (1)

Ha-Eun Kim notes that the father's departure is the "culmination of the brokenness and unhomeliness that characterised their home life even while [he] was still there" and marks the point where the Girl becomes completely bereft of any guidance from adults (72). Thus, from the very start of the novel, the Girl asserts her difference – she is neither a child nor an "ordinary teenager" as she assumes the role of caring for herself and her younger sister (Kim 73). She moves between blaming herself (74) and her alcoholic mother for driving her father away (2, 148). When her father refuses to return home, she severs all emotional ties with him, stating that he is "nothing" to her and she is no longer his daughter (74). When Mossie cries for him, the Girl responds furiously, telling her that 'Daddy' is a "dead word" (2-3). Thus, the Girl "consciously rejects the adult figures in her society as guides" and from the early pages of the novel, the "city itself becomes her substitute mother [and] the "adult guide'" (Kim 73). In addition to the city, Bernard, a Mozambican refugee, becomes an important figure in her life, essentially becoming her surrogate father until his death at the end of the novel (note the

circular motion of the novel as it begins and ends with the loss of a father) (Kim 78). Before his death, Bernard strongly encourages the Girl's desire to write as a way of making sense of the world around her, thus providing the reader with a small sense of hope for the Girl's future.

Bernard's prominent presence in the Girl's life reveals her need for adult guidance, despite her defiant rejection of adult authority (Kim 77). This deep desire and need for a father is also echoed in Pinnock's *Rainmaker* (50), Moele's *Untitled* (17, 33), and Bregin's *Shiva's Dance*. In *Shiva's Dance*, Gerry befriends an elderly Buddhist monk named Adigar, who becomes a fatherly voice of reason, wisdom, and chastisement: "He was the father she had always wanted, the wise and loving someone who knew her as no one else did, who could see inside her, understand the pain she was in and make it all better" (61). In a similar way to *Skyline's* Bernard, Adigar gives Gerry hope and a means of navigating the complexities of her life before his death at the end of the novel. These examples show how important the father figure is in the lives of the youth and how keenly the absence of such a figure is felt.

In Mzobe's *Young Blood*, Siphso describes his relationship with his father in positive terms: "I related with my father on a comfortable, balanced level. Casual, but with respect. He treated me as if I used my brain. For that alone I would always defend him" (55). However, most of his friends have grown up without a father, and thus, he is especially grateful for his relationship with his father, who not only passes on his knowledge of fixing cars, but also teaches him important life lessons (64). Similarly, Gabonewe's *Planet Savage* contains a more positive representation of the child/parent relationship. However, this relationship is still not without its flaws and internal conflict. Leungo thinks his father is the "coolest dad in the world" (142) and he loves his mother "more than anything on this earth" (153), but he wishes they would be more involved in his life (15). In truth, Leungo's parents sorely neglect him and largely leave him to fend for himself. Leungo justifies his father's disinterest in his schooling by explaining that he is not well educated and therefore finds Leungo's schoolwork daunting; however, his mother cannot be given the same excuse since she is in fact educated (15-16). Leungo says that they are better than most couples that he knows because they take their jobs seriously, but he wishes they would "renovate their lifestyles" and "go a little easy on drinking, and on having people haunt our home" (13, 34). He describes his issue with his parents thus: "I don't like to say this but it's true: all my folks

care about is splashing a lot of dough on their own entertainment. I wish they'd actually go out of their way every now and then to remember that they've got a child that needs a bit of personal attention" (26). Therefore, even this more positive portrayal of parenthood leaves much to be desired, as although Leungo is loved, he is often neglected. In short, when compared to apartheid childhood narratives, fatherhood in post-apartheid childhood texts is also generally portrayed in a negative light. However, whilst biological fathers are often represented as absent, weak, or abusive, post-apartheid texts will more often include a kindly surrogate father figure who provides guidance for the young protagonist.

In post-apartheid childhood and youth novels, motherhood is portrayed as a more problematic 'site of struggle' than in apartheid childhood novels, as will be argued in the below discussion of *Skyline* and *Shiva's Dance*. The Girl's view and treatment of her abusive and alcoholic mother in *Skyline* is remarkably reminiscent of young John's feelings towards his father in Coetzee's *Boyhood*. The Girl's mother is "such a wreck I can't stand looking at her" (2) and she never touches or hugs her daughters, she simply "goes to work, brings in groceries, lets us know her life is ruined because of us" (102). The Girl wishes that her mother would die or not come home because then she could continue taking care of Mossie, who her mother has nothing to do with, and life would be "much better, calmer, more orderly" (4, 73, 102). She resists her mother by spending very little time at home and thus withdraws from her both physically and emotionally: "I never help her. I don't know why I never help, I just never do. Am I supposed to? Is there a partnership here? A sharing of nice things? Anyway, she never asks me for help or for company" (16). The Girl is often forced to take care of her mother in the middle of the night when she cannot get back to her bedroom because she is so 'drugged up' on pills. The sight of her mother in these instances fills her with revulsion: "She's disgusting, that's what she is. And she stinks of brandy and cigarettes [...] Why can't I have a normal life like everyone else? [...] I'm ashamed of all this" (17-18). One night, her mother comes into the Girl's room and begins beating her, which causes the Girl to declare that she hates her mother (37). The Girl's callous and loathsome feelings towards her mother come to a climax when she starts a fight with a girl at school, but in her mind, she says she is "hitting our mother over and over and over for wrecking my whole life [...] and for] making our father leave us" (148). This unhealthy mother/daughter relationship has an adverse effect upon the Girl, who unequivocally blames her mother for causing the fragmentation of their home life.

A second example of a novel where the mother/child relationship is represented as a ‘site of struggle’ is in the relationship between the self-destructive fifteen-year-old Gerry and her ‘controlling’ mother, Moira, in *Shiva’s Dance*. At one point, they are described as being like “destructive creepers, sucking the sap from each other,” a description that aptly summarises their relationship (142). The conflict between mother and daughter begins when Moira reveals in a drunken moment (that she herself cannot recall), that Gerry was born as a result of rape, and that she tried to get rid of her as a baby (104-105, 124-126). Feeling unloved and unwanted, Gerry keeps this knowledge a secret and it eats away at her resulting in many defiant and rebellious acts. These include a ‘hanging game’ where she hangs herself then release the knot at the last minute; getting several body piercings; bunking choir practice; flashing her breasts to a group of boys (which results in an inappropriate photo circulating around the school); sneaking out at night; and losing her virginity. Thus, mother and daughter are locked in “an old game” of “spiteful tit for tat” (38), a vicious power cycle where Gerry does her utmost to provoke and anger her mother and her mother reacts with mild verbal and physical abuse (17-18, 96-98, 116), and increasing attempts to control her (by placing a tracking device on her mobile phone, for example) (19). Moira tries to stop her daughter from making the same mistakes that she had made as a young adult, but Gerry strongly resists this:

Sorry I ruined your life [...] And sorry I’m not the Gerry you want me to be. But you can’t force me into your mould, ma. I’m nearly sixteen and I’m too old for you to control. If I go off the rails, then that’s my indaba. It’s my life and I have to live it, not you. (117)

Here the youth is represented as strongly resisting the control that the adult figure is attempting to exert. Gerry feels that her freedom is being infringed upon and that her mother is ‘strangling’ her, which means she cannot lead a normal teenage life (32). She therefore firmly proclaims herself as separate from her mother, laying claim to her independence and agency. Eventually, “the dreadful beast,” the “poisonous thing” that lies between them “like a sewage lake they couldn’t cross” (117) is brought out into the open and for the first time, they speak honestly about the circumstances surrounding Gerry’s conception and birth (131-132, 145-147). Moira decides to send Gerry to boarding school because she is unable to bear her “hostility” any longer and does not know “how to be a mother” to Gerry at present (144-145, 147) and Gerry reacts by attempting to commit suicide. Moira walks in on Gerry, who is

about to hang herself, and as a result has a cataleptic fit and is later treated for PTSD and substance abuse (148-151, 154). This watershed moment is significant because Moira and Gerry are no longer bound by their destructive secrets and they can now begin a process of reconciliation, which ultimately leads to Gerry's own healing (154, 161).

In conclusion, the child/adult binary in post-apartheid childhood narratives is portrayed as just as much a 'site of struggle' as it was in apartheid childhood novels, but with significant differences. Rather than a resistance towards the notion of adulthood, there is a greater resistance towards the adults themselves, which results in an adolescence fraught with inner turmoil and outer conflict that has a major impact on the whole of the child or youth's life. The child is represented as eagerly anticipating the moment when they will 'outgrow' childhood and be free of its limitations, which are often due to the control exerted upon them by adults. This is seen in many texts under examination in this chapter (for example, *Shiva's Dance*, *Planet Savage*, *By Any Means*, *Skyline*, *Thirteen Cents*, and *Snake*). Thus, I posit that the culture of disrespectfulness and the rebellion of children against adults that was fostered during the apartheid era (as examined in the parallel section in the previous chapter) continues to be present in post-apartheid texts.

3.2.3 Gangsters and Street Children: The Limits of Agency and the Vulnerability of Powerlessness

In Chapter Two, I discuss how children and youth in apartheid texts exert agency and power by stepping from the domestic into the realm of the political. However, in the post-apartheid context, however, the youth can no longer look to the government, which the previous generation had fought to establish, to release them from the cycle of poverty, and so they seek alternative, often illicit, means of building and improving their lives. Thus, in several post-apartheid texts, children and youth exert agency and power by stepping from the civil into the realm of the criminal or the deviant. In this way, child and youth protagonists move from the insider status of being respectfully within the law and under adult authority to the outsider status of operating outside of the law and adult authority, thus becoming 'uncivil' – a double play on their non-citizenship and felonious 'uncivilisedness'. These children and youth are represented as being 'out of place' (Connolly and Ennew) due to their physical actions and circumstances, and as a result, they are relegated to the outer realms of society where they are forced to take on adult roles and responsibilities. The children and youth represented in these

narratives attempt to actively embrace the coming-of-age process from a “different angle” (as the protagonist from Mzobe’s novel *Young Blood* puts it (107)), an angle that promises them agency, power, or status, and yet, this promise of power proves false and comes at a cost for the young protagonists.

This section examines representations of childhood and youth in post-apartheid ‘juvenile delinquency narratives’ (narratives that are centred on the lives of young gangsters, street children, and juvenile prison inmates⁴¹) through the lenses of the agency/powerlessness, insider/outsider, and (to a lesser extent) civil/criminal binaries. The texts under examination here also bring into question many of the binaries discussed elsewhere in this study, such as victim/perpetrator, innocent/guilty, child/adult, and identity/difference. In the discussion that follows, I present a general overview of gangsters and street children before turning to an examination of the portrayal of gangsterism in *Young Blood* by Sifiso Mzobe (with additional examples from *Rainmaker* by Don Pinnock and *By Any Means* by Kurt Ellis) and street children in *Thirteen Cents* by K. Sello Duiker. The main locus of concern is how these children and youth exert agency and negotiate a sense of self and citizenship in a space where they are negated, marginalised, and excluded. The prevalence of criminality and violence in these narratives is also discussed.

Gangsters and street children exist outside of the “conventional process of socialization” as well as the “customary sources of guidance and moral inculcation” (Schärf, Powell, and Thomas 263, 265). Thus, because they “do not readily fit within Western cultural fantasies of children as innocent and vulnerable,” they are generally perceived by adults as “demonic, discontented and disorderly and are often feared and punished as a consequence” (De Boeck and Honwana 3). Street children in particular live on the periphery of society and even though they are often powerless victims themselves, they are still perceived by society as “deviant and unworthy of approval” (Schärf, Powell, and Thomas 280), as well as irresponsible and lawless (Le Roux and Smith 915). Thus, children living on the streets are “subjected to physical assault, sexual abuse, harassment from the public, intimidation by gang members and criminals, and arrest by the police” (Le Roux and Smith 915; Richter). Indeed, Lucy Graham asserts that street children are “more likely than any other group of children to be raped or otherwise sexually abused” (189).

⁴¹ It should be noted that young black or coloured males dominate these narratives. This point in itself could be the subject of a prolonged discussion; however, the need for brevity here prevents any further observations.

There are a myriad of reasons as to why children and youth become involved in gangs or end up living on the streets, including unremitting conflict or violence at home, difficulties at school (Schärf, Powell, and Thomas 267-269; see also Parkes 403; Glaser 2), unemployment, poverty, loss of self-esteem (Pillay 285), social turbulence, displacement (Veale, Taylor, and Linehan 131), peer pressure, and specifically in the case of gangsterism, the desire for validation in “disempowered settings” through ‘hypermasculine’ activity demonstrating “toughness, success and control” (Luyt and Foster 1, 3; Parkes 403). In addition, under apartheid, many black children became homeless due to “policies that devastated the home environment of the black underclass”; however, the number of street children has only increased in the post-apartheid context (Graham 176).

Although both the gangster and the street child step outside of societal norms and conventions, there are clear differences between the ways in which they do so and the consequences that occur as a result. Gangsters seek wealth, status, and power, and they therefore rarely overlap with street children, who are more bent on survival and immediate consumption (Schärf, Powell, and Thomas 265-266). Indeed, street children are essentially stripped of their rights as citizens, since they lack access to basic services such as housing, education, and healthcare (Panter-Brick 155). In addition, street children often find themselves under the control and domination of gangsters (this is clearly shown in the way that the gang leader, Gerald, brutally exerts power over the street child, Azure, in *Thirteen Cents*). Another difference to point out is how “gang members seek a group identity based on complete loyalty and a high degree of control,” which can lead to “intense rivalries and conflicts between gangs,” whereas street children “manage to retain a degree of individualism, clubbing together in loose groups only for mutual support, not domination” (Schärf, Powell, and Thomas 266).

David Attwell and Barbara Harlow observe that the “militant youth culture of the 1980s [...] has left an uncomfortable legacy of seemingly apolitical crime and vigilantism” (3), and thus it is not surprising that violence has “become a symptom of psychological alienation by youth who build a code of honor (sic) and seek social purpose around warfare with competing gangs” (Barbarin and Richter 66). It is also important to note how the children and youth in the narratives discussed below oscillate between positions of victim and perpetrator. For example, young gangsters (as well as street children, although to a lesser degree) teeter on a precarious precipice where they are on the one hand perpetrators of

violence and crime (including drug use, robbery, murder, rape, bribery, prostitution, etc.) and on the other hand, they are also victims of violence, abuse, rape, exploitation, psychological and emotional blackmail, and indoctrination. However, for the most part, the chosen means by which the figure of the young gangster attempts to exert power (by violence and criminality) is also the means by which he is excluded. I now turn to an examination of the figure of the young gangster in what follows below.

Young Blood by Sifiso Mzobe is a post-apartheid coming-of-age narrative that provides a compelling representation of the young protagonist's movement into and out of gangsterism. The overall storyline of *Young Blood* is mirrored in many ways by *Rainmaker* by Don Pinnock and *By Any Means* by Kurt Ellis, two post-apartheid coming-of-age narratives that also focus on gangsterism. Due to space constraints, I cannot refer to these two texts in detail; however, they are occasionally mentioned in order to provide supporting or contrasting examples. In what follows, I broadly examine (rather than detailedly analyse) the youth's initiation into gang life, the point of crisis that occurs (which hence functions as a turning point), and the reform and/or reintegration of the young protagonist into society, as portrayed in post-apartheid coming-of-age novels.

Mzobe's *Young Blood* depicts the coming-of-age of seventeen-year-old Siphon Khumalo, a black adolescent living in the township of Umlazi. At the start of the novel, Siphon drops out of high school, where he is failing miserably, and initially spends his time helping his father (a car mechanic) fix cars. However, he is soon disgruntled with the hard work that he puts in and the small amounts of money he makes. Thus, it is not long before he is seduced by the fast-paced, lawless, lavish lifestyle of gangsterism through the influence of his childhood friend, Musa – a young gangster, shoplifter, car thief, murderer, and drug dealer who has already served time in prison. Musa convinces Siphon to join the car stealing 'business' run by Sibani, the feared and ruthless leader of the car-stealing 26 gang (52, 72-74). After being involved in a few car robberies and making enough money to buy his first car, Siphon revels in the circles of power that he now moves in, which afford him opportunities that he never would have dreamed of before:

My life had moved at a higher tempo since Musa's return from Joburg, and I needed to take a breather, a few minutes to make sure it was still me, to maybe pinch myself and ensure that it was not all a dream. I had dropped out of school, but was yet to decide what to do with my life. I fixed cars with Dad in our back yard, but it was a hand-to-mouth existence. Musa's plans promised money in

large amounts; they also brought endless possibilities to my mind. It was my chance to build something. My chance to *break the cycle of nothingness*. To step into better things. When Musa put me in on the car scheme, I started to daydream of a future with children and a wife and a simple, straightforward business like owning taxis. (101, emphasis added)

For Sipho, gangsterism seems to be his chance to break the “cycle of nothingness” that he is trapped in, and the only way to gain power and exert agency. Sipho knows that he is bidding farewell to the innocence and carefreeness of his childhood, and that his choice to embrace his coming-of-age from a “different angle” means that he is exchanging freedom for money and power (107-108).

Don Pinnock’s *Rainmaker* provides a slightly different example, as young Ky Rahl joins the Blood Brothers gang in order for the protection that it brings (29-30), whilst nonetheless acknowledging that they “wanted to get rich by stealing and pointing guns,” and that “money and respect and power all go together” (108). Similarly, seventeen-year-old Captain (Anthony), the second of two main protagonists in Kurt Ellis’s novel *By Any Means*, gains respect and power from a young age because “he never hesitated to do what others wouldn’t,” which included violence and robbery (86). Captain’s ruthless reputation continues to grow and he soon becomes the leader of a youth gang called the Godfathers who move drugs for a drug dealer called Lazarus (16-17). For Captain, physical violence is part of what it means to live in the coloured community of Sydenham: “Violence answers violence. An eye for an eye was the first and only amendment in the Coloured Constitution. *You tease me, I tease you back, but worse. You strike me, I strike you back, but harder. You pull a knife on me, I will pull a gun on you*” (23, emphasis in original). If you do not live by these ‘rules’, then, like Captain’s younger cousin Jimmy, you become a victim of merciless bullying.

The initiation of the young protagonist into the gangster lifestyle and his subsequent corruption is always portrayed as a choice in the three texts under examination, even if it is seen as necessary choice. Before becoming a member of a gang, the youth is portrayed as powerless due to a lack of job opportunities, security, and protection. They are thus lured into a place of perceived power where they initially find opportunities to make money quickly and gain independence, security, and protection. Gangs also provide a sense of brotherhood, but ironically, once the young protagonist joins a gang, they often encounter social ostracism and become estranged and alienated from family members and the wider community who regard their activities with resentment and suspicion (the reactions of Sipho’s parents and girlfriend

in *Young Blood* are good examples) (Barbarin and Richter 203). Thus, the movement from an outsider to an insider with the gangs (where a different kind of claim of citizenship is made) means moving to the position of an outsider in society as a whole.

For each protagonist in these novels, there is a point of crisis that occurs, which becomes a turning point eventually leading to the reform and reintegration of the youth into society, as will be discussed below. The youth is depicted as exerting an extreme form of power, and in each case, that power is abruptly stripped from him. This points to the vulnerability and fragility of the ‘out of place’ (Connolly and Ennew) youth who exerts agency and power in a prohibited way. In *Young Blood*, Siphon is pulled over by four police officers for speeding (200-203). It is then not only discovered that the car he is driving was recently stolen in a hijacking and attempted murder, but the mandrax and ecstasy pills that he was planning to sell are also found (205). Siphon manages to bribe the police officers and is left without a cent from his stint as a gangster, which causes him to feel utterly devastated: “I shed tears for my life at the hands of four strangers. I cried for the angle from which I had embraced manhood. To always be happy and have things no matter what the cost” (210). To make matters worse, Siphon returns home to discover that Musa was fatally wounded in a gun battle with the Cold Hearts gang, thus bringing Siphon’s involvement with gangs to a complete halt. The points of crisis for Ky in *Rainmaker* and Captain in *By Any Means* also occur as a result of gang-related violence (in the case of Captain, both his cousins (Kyle and Jimmy) and several fellow gang members are killed). These crises lead to the protagonist’s reform, but it is a turning point that is forced upon the young adolescent, not something that he chooses, an instance common to all three narratives under examination here.

The final stage is the reform and reintegration of the young protagonist back into society. After having paid a price for the (false) power that they wielded as gangsters, they either turn to education (*Young Blood* and *By Any Means*) or indigenous tradition (*Rainmaker*) as their redemption. For example, Siphon decides to enrol in a college to study motor mechanics, much to the delight of his parents (226), and he also goes back to fixing cars with his father (226-227). As Megan Jones states, “[t]he cars remain but they are static, quiet machines rather than the explosive instruments of power and pageantry in his street riding with Musa” (“Conspicuous” 222). Siphon focuses on acquiring an education as the means to building a better life for himself, thus completely leaving behind his life of crime and gangsterism: “My mind never again drifted in class. They teach about things of interest to

me, I told myself. But, in retrospect, I know that I concentrated in class because of everything I saw in the year that I turned seventeen” (228). J.L. Powers observes, “[I]ike the country itself, Siphos past is behind him. But he cannot forget what changed him, and he will take it with him as he goes forward, forging a better, brighter future for himself – and for South Africa” (33). Thus, the novel arrives at the didactic conclusion that “the physical and psychological costs of crime are not worth paying” and that power comes at a price (Jones, “Conspicuous” 211-212).

In what follows, I now turn to an examination of the figure of the street child as represented in K. Sello Duiker’s coming-of-age novel, *Thirteen Cents*. Azure, the protagonist of *Thirteen Cents*, is a twelve-year-old orphan living in a world of gangsterism, prostitution, and drugs as he ekes out a meagre existence on the streets of post-apartheid Cape Town. The narrative begins with Azure asserting his identity and independence: “My name is Azure. *Ah-zoo-ray*. That’s how you say it [...] I have blue eyes and a dark skin [...] I live alone. The streets of Sea Point are my home. But I’m almost a man, I’m nearly thirteen years old [...] I can take care of myself” (1-2, emphasis in original). Thus, from the outset of the novel, Azure attempts to exert agency by asserting his identity and emphasising his ability to look after himself without the support of an adult. However, as will be discussed throughout this section, in reality, Azure is very much at the mercy of the adults in his life. The novel reinforces the notion that street children constitute the most ostracised form of childhood, since the child is essentially discarded and regarded as a non-entity. For example, Azure is exploited, victimised, and abused (physically, verbally, sexually, and emotionally) by the adults he encounters, to the point where he is dehumanised and is viewed as a commodity to be consumed. He is represented as a powerless outsider who literally dwells on the fringes of society, with little or no access to basic human rights such as food, housing, education, and healthcare. Azure is therefore in effect a non-citizen and is twice an orphan in the sense that he is literally fatherless and motherless, as well as figuratively stateless (Henderson 60).

Duiker’s representation of the street child Azure defies and challenges stereotypical perceptions and portrayals. Azure is contrasted with his friend Bafana, another street child, who Azure scolds for being dirty, doing hard drugs, and hanging out with gangsters (6-7). Azure, on the other hand, bathes every day, steers clear of hard drugs (although he smokes marijuana), and does not engage in criminal activities that are usually associated with street children (such as stealing, for example) (3). After Gerald’s gang physically assault Azure, the

boy is taken to a nearby hospital where doctors and nurses attend to his wounds. The doctor expresses his opinion of street children, thereby perpetuating and reiterating society's stereotypical perceptions of these children:

Trouble with these kids is that you don't know what to do with them [...] And they won't go to school or a home. They spend their lives sniffing glue and smoking buttons [...] Ran away from home. They all do, you know. Wild kids. And now he's caught stealing a bar of chocolate or something pathetic like that. He deserves what he got. [...] Problem with these kids is that they want everything now. They won't wait for anything. Have you seen how they harass you in town begging you for money after they nearly make you crash into the car you are supposed to park behind? I don't trust them. And I never give them money. What for? So that they can buy drugs. (42-43)

He is assumed to be a delinquent runaway and is thought of as a nuisance and a problem. Thus, he is not only physically 'out of place' (Connolly and Ennew), but he is also depicted as having no place in society. According to Helen Abramson, "Azure's desperate existence, far from being a threat *to* society, is presented as a product *of* society" and thus Duiker's text "exposes society's ignorance of the immense difficulties standing in the way of survival, and of happiness, for children such as Azure" (34, emphasis in original). Adults and the social system have ultimately failed these children, leaving them to a fate that is marked by misery.

Azure understands that he needs to "act like a grown-up" (3) and "be a man" (24) in order to survive on the dangerous streets of Cape Town: "I must understand what it means to be a grown-up if I'm going to survive. That's what they all keep telling me. Grow up. Fast. Very fast. Lightning speed" (66). Even though Azure has only just turned thirteen, his innocence has long been lost and he has witnessed and experienced appalling things that no child (or adult for that matter) should ever have to see or suffer (65):

I know I'm thirteen but I'm not a boy. On the street boys my age support their families. They give their mothers money so that they can buy drugs and feed them nothing. They break into cars and steal small change from dashboards so that they can buy needles to inject themselves with poison. They mug old ladies and buy buttons. And when they are fucked out of their faces they cry about it till snot drips like water. A boy? I'm not a boy. I've seen a woman being raped by policemen at night near the station. I've seen a white man let a boy Bafana's age get into his car. I've seen a couple drive over a street child and they still kept going. I've seen a woman give birth in Sea Point at the beach and throw it in the

sea. A boy? Fuck off. They must leave me alone. I have seen enough rubbish to fill the sea. (142)

As Abramson notes, he has had to “leap into adulthood, abandon his schooling and find ways to earn some kind of a living” (38). Here we see an example of what Edgar Pieterse and Frank Meintjies refer to as a “compressed” coming-of-age process (5). The short-livedness of Azure’s childhood has a negative psychological impact on him and as the narrative progresses, he becomes increasingly isolated and mentally unstable. The vulnerability of his situation is highlighted in passages such as the following: “I know what fear is. I know what it means to be scared, to be always on the lookout [...] I know fear. And I hate it. I live with it everyday. The streets, they are not safe. They are roads to hell, made of tar. Black tar” (66). Thus, *Thirteen Cents* challenges notions of child dependency, vulnerability, and innocence.

Azure is (for the most part) represented as existing outside of conventional adult authority. Shaun Viljoen observes that he “continually resists incorporation” into a social order that is revealed to be exploitative and destructive, and his coming-of-age “positions him as a critical commentator moving into and out of the dominant matrix of hierarchies and power” (ix). Azure exerts agency in a limited way by vehemently disassociating himself from adults and it is this disenchantment and assertion of independence that partly earn him the status of an outcast and the ‘other’. Rachel Bray asserts:

What has been shown is that the conflicting notions of street children as victims, delinquents and heroic survivors, coupled with the notion that the streets are ‘dangerous’ public spaces that are unsuitable for children who should grow up in the ‘safety’ of the home, creates such a confused picture in people’s minds that they resort to an assumption that the existence of ‘street children’ can only be problematic for children and for society. Street children are threatening because they thrive outside authority, in ways that contravene our understanding of ‘what children should or can do’. (39)

However, for Azure, it is not that he has willingly placed himself outside of adult authority (at least initially), as is usually assumed of street children. Traditional figures of authority have in fact abandoned him: his father and mother were killed three years ago (2), his relatives are uninterested in helping him (90), and the other adults who should be figures of protection instead attempt to dominate him, and exploit him for money and sex. Joyce, who is the only adult in the narrative who treats him kindly by giving him food, betrays Azure in the end by stealing the money that he had entrusted to her to safeguard for him, and he thus loses

all the money that he had been saving (12-13, 72-77). His recurring mantra throughout the narrative is that “[g]rown-ups are fucked up” (37, 92, 144) and “full of shit” (106, 140, 143). He thinks of them as “crazy” (141), “strange” (7), and “hard to figure out” (91). He rages against adults, stating that “[t]hey think they are God” (141) and thus “[t]hey always want to control everything” (21). However, as much as Azure struggles against the power of adults, he cannot completely live outside of their realm. He does not make enough money from parking and washing cars, and so he prostitutes himself to mostly white men (8-9, 29-30, 80-95). Viljoen observes that “[a]s the title of the novel suggests, the destructive forces in Azure’s worlds continually work to reduce him to near nothing, to a meager (sic) thirteen cents, to an object whose value is merely monetary” (x).

After an unfortunate slip of the tongue (19), Azure incurs the wrath of a gangster warlord called Gerald, and as a result, he is mercilessly beaten (resulting in many injuries), held prisoner, starved, and sexually assaulted (38-57). Gerald gives Azure a new name (‘Blue’) and tells him that he now “owns” him (56-57). Thus, in Duiker’s text, “[a]dults and their values have become the new oppressor, replacing the “whitey” who played that role in protest literature by black writers under apartheid” (Viljoen x). Azure escapes to the mountain, builds a fire, dances around it, and then uses the ashes to draw shapes on his body all the while imagining the destruction of those who oppress him, Gerald in particular (158). Helene Strauss observes that “[t]he phrase “I’m getting stronger” (55) runs through the text like a refrain and gathers resonance as Azure grows rebellious and starts claiming agency in the process of bodily self-inscription, if only in his dreams” (“Living the Pain” 32). Like Ky in *Rainmaker*, Azure accesses an alternative form of power through shamanistic rituals (Kim 91) and the destruction of Gerald (both imaginary and real (134, 159)) “marks Azure’s triumph at resisting incorporation into Gerald’s world and its debased values” (Viljoen xii). Thus, although Azure’s circumstances have changed very little, he gains a newfound sense of agency and reclaims his voice from those who sought to silence and marginalise him.

To conclude, the representation of young gangsters and street children in the post-apartheid South African texts analysed above interrogate the agency/powerlessness and insider/outsider binaries, revealing the dangers the child is faced with when stepping outside of conventional roles and spaces. Narratives such as *Young Blood*, *By Any Means*, *Rainmaker*, and *Thirteen Cents* shatter notions of a ‘new’ South Africa, since these narratives present a perspective of the contemporary post-apartheid context that abounds with

criminality, violence, rape, poverty, destitution, and marginalisation (Fulela 47). *Thirteen Cents* in particular “illustrates the powerlessness faced by many young people in a society that has neglected them and failed to recognize them as individuals” (Kim 94), thus demonstrating that “the most vulnerable members of society continue to be abused and exploited with impunity” in the ‘new’ South Africa (Graham 175). These texts also reveal that South African society continues to be stratified by race (for example, the only interactions that Azure has with white people are usually when he is prostituting himself), a reminder that “more than 300 years of colonialism, slavery, segregation and apartheid social engineering will not be undone through a few years of democracy” (Field, Meyer, and Swanson vii), a point that will be further examined in the section below.

3.2.4 The Construction of Identity and Difference

In my reading of identity, I subscribe to Stuart Hall’s view of identity construction as dynamic and fluid: “instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (222). I argue that the novels under examination here demonstrate this fluidity of identity since the protagonists grapple with forming an identity of their own, which often involves casting aside previous cultural identities. As with apartheid childhood narratives, many post-apartheid childhood novels represent children and youth as being different to and alienated from the people around them (these include Pinnock’s *Skyline*, Bregin’s *Shiva’s Dance*, Matlwa’s *Coconut*, Moele’s *Untitled*, Pinnock’s *Rainmaker*, Ellis’s *By Any Means*, Malan’s *The Story of Lucky Simelane*, and Duiker’s *Thirteen Cents*), thus resulting in a conflict of identity. This ‘site of struggle’ takes the form of an internal conflict within the individual child, but is usually influenced by external factors. I approach this binary by examining instances of difference, as this is often where questions of identity arise for the various child protagonists. In the corresponding section in the previous chapter, I identified three ‘types of difference’ found in apartheid childhood texts: 1) personal difference, 2) cultural and political difference, and 3) racial difference. However, in the post-apartheid era, the ‘types of difference’ that come to the fore include: 1) social difference and 2) racial difference. For lack of a better term, I call the first kind of difference the representation of ‘social difference’, which is when the protagonist is alienated from his or

her peers, usually because of a specific reason that is externally rather than internally motivated. In contrast to apartheid childhood narratives, the line between cultural and political difference, and racial difference in post-apartheid texts is increasingly blurred. Thus, political and cultural differences come to the fore mostly through the lens of racial difference and cultural identity. It therefore follows that race remains the primary locus of the youth's identity crisis (for example, *Coconut*, *The Story of Lucky Simelane*, *Rainmaker*, *By Any Means*, *Thirteen Cents*, etc.), which shall be the main focus of this section.

The first cause of the child or youth protagonist's sense of difference is located in what I term 'social difference', where the protagonist is represented as being socially 'othered' by his or her peers, usually in a school setting. In *Untitled*, Mokgethi becomes a social outcast because of the hateful and untrue rumours that her ex-friend Lebo maliciously propagates around the school and community (79-80). Lebo is angry with Mokgethi for confronting her about her relationship with the school principal, and thus makes various claims including that Mokgethi is sleeping with the teachers at school (79-81). Mokgethi eventually cannot endure it anymore and begins to physically fight with Lebo, which only makes her position worse, as she is now a "social outcast": "My friends were not my friends any more (sic) and when they did talk to me it was as if they were committing some kind of a crime" (81). In addition, her so-called friends mock her because she is still a virgin and is more interested in school than in boys (161-162, 166, 175).

Mokgethi is portrayed as a mature teenager with a healthy self-esteem, which enables her to endure the ridicule of her schoolfellows (35, 36, 38, 113). However, after she is raped, her whole world caves in and she turns to the act of writing in order to "understand the coming Mokgethi" and to "find a way for her to live comfortably with herself" (6). In a similar way, the Girl from *Skyline*, who only has one friend at school (39), turns to writing at the end of the novel in order to make sense of her world after Bernard's death: "Bernard! I can weave from my words histories and songs of love, rhyming sculptures and pictures of every sort! [...] They are no longer vagrant and wandering words. They are tales, Bernard, tellings which the wind will always carry for you!" (170). A final example of the significance of the act of writing can be seen in *By Any Means*, where Kyle, the first of two main protagonists, turns to writing as a means of escape: "He wrote stories with characters leading lives like he wished he could lead. Stories with happy families. Stories of financial freedom, and of seeing the world outside South Africa" (40). Thus, many youth protagonists find a

means of free expression in the act of writing, which enables them to reclaim their identity to a certain extent.

In Bregin's novel, *Shiva's Dance*, Gerry is the object of derisive rumours at school, which leads to her becoming a social outcast (much like Mokgethi in *Untitled*). An indecent photo of her is circulated around the school and as a result, a "deliberate moat of ostracism" is "directed around her" (92-94). She pretends not to care, but admits that she has never felt "more friendless in her life" (94, 27). Unlike Mokgethi, Gerry suffers from low self-esteem, which is partly because her identity is wrapped up in the fact that she is the daughter of a rapist. When Josh, a boy in her class, confronts her about her noticeable lack of self-respect, he tells her that she does not have to endure being treated badly by anyone because she is "a catch" and has "everything – amazing looks, a voice that stops the bus" (121). However, Gerry reacts with fury, causing Josh to retreat from her in dismay: "There was a noose around her throat, too tight to breathe [...] she seemed to have the knack of alienating everybody who was on her side" (122). Adigar is the one who speaks directly into her identity crisis, telling Gerry that she is valuable and significant, despite the circumstances surrounding her birth and conception:

‘Your father did a terrible deed, Gerry, and that you cannot change. But out of it came something unimaginably beautiful...unique...and special. And that something is you.’ His words were burning into her like needles and she was shaking her head wildly from side to side, unable to bear what was coming from his mouth. ‘I’m not, I’m not,’ she wept. ‘I’m a curse! And no one will ever be able to love me! How can they, when they know the truth about what my father did.’ (126-127)

Adigar then embraces her saying that everything is going to be okay, which is "all she had ever wanted" (128). This is a cathartic moment for Gerry; however, her issues of self-worth and identity are too deep to be resolved in one instance. After falling out with her mother, who decides to send her away to boarding school, Gerry decides to commit suicide: "Tonight she would finally get her wish. Everyone would. Once and for all, the world would be rid of troublesome Gerry. The unlovable thorn in everybody's side" (149). In her misery, Gerry attempts to end her life, a desperate act that can ultimately be read as a cry for help. For Gerry, her conflict of identity and her feelings of difference very nearly result in tragic circumstances.

The second and final subcategory of the identity/difference binary is that of racial difference. This is closely related to issues of cultural identity, as shall be seen in the following examination of *Coconut*. Cultural identity, as Hall argues, is a “matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’” and it “belongs to the future as much as to the past” (225). Moreover, it involves a positioning of the subject within the narratives of the past, which thus signifies that the past cannot be disregarded (Hall 225). Although Hall is specifically referring to colonialism, his views are also relevant to the South African context of apartheid:

The ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subjected (sic) in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation. Not only, in Said’s ‘Orientalist’ sense, were [black people] constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They [also] had the power to make [black people] see and experience [*themselves*] as ‘Other’. (225, emphasis in original)

Thus, black and coloured literary characters such as Ofilwe (*Coconut*), Kyle and Captain (*By Any Means*), Lucky (*The Story of Lucky Simelane*), and Ky (*Rainmaker*) perceive themselves and are treated as other due to the legacy of the oppressive racial categories instated by the apartheid regime. However, it is telling that there are no post-apartheid childhood texts that grapple with and expose the destructible invisibility of white privilege from the perspective of a white child.

As with apartheid childhood narratives, the locus of racial difference in the majority of cases is both internally and externally located because it is through others that the protagonists become aware of their racial difference. Novels such as *Coconut* by Kopano Matlwa, *Rainmaker* by Don Pinnock, *The Story of Lucky Simelane* by Robin Malan, *Thirteen Cents* by K. Sello Duiker, and *Snake* by Tracey Farren feature protagonists who are troubled by their racial difference to varying degrees. Due to space constraints, I examine only a few of these narratives in this section. Robin Malan’s novella, *The Story of Lucky Simelane*, is inspired by the story of Happy Sindane (a white boy who is brought up by black people), and provides a more convoluted representation of racial difference, which I shall discuss briefly here. Lucky grows up as a white boy in a black community and family, and when he is old enough to notice his racial difference, he becomes deeply confused and troubled:

“I was in the wrong body. God had made a mistake. When he made me, instead of saying, ‘Lucky is black, so I must put him in a black body,’ he just wasn’t thinking properly [...] and so he put me in a white body. And that’s why I have a white skin and yellow hair and brown eyes. But he put me in a black place, with black people, so it must mean that I am black inside. I speak isiNdebele. I can’t speak English or Afrikaans [...] I’m scared of the white people. And that’s because I am black” (43).

He is mocked because of his light features and his mother dyes his hair black in effort to make him blend in more with the other children (41, 48). However, he longs to go to a place where he would fit in, where he would have white parents and be accepted as their son because he looks like them (48). He becomes increasingly troubled by his difference, and he thus goes to a police station and the search to find his true identity and family begins. When this search fails, Lucky turns to alcohol and it is implied that things do not bode well for his future: “Fancy not knowing who you are. It’s a terrible thing” (67).

Kopano Matlwa’s novel *Coconut* (2007) focuses on issues of race, class, gender, and identity/difference in a newly multiracial South African society, and is thus an important novel that warrants discussion. The attention that *Coconut* has garnered from scholarly spheres reveals its significant place in the post-apartheid literary canon. The term ‘coconut’, which is used as the title of the novel, is a derogatory reference to an “African person, or [a] person of African descent, who, although black outside, is deemed by detractors to be white inside: that is, to have adopted certain traits which apparently deny an ‘authentic’ Africanness” (Chapman 166). Thus, from the very outset, the novel “interrogates the various ways in which cultural tensions created by the historical legacies of apartheid, conjoined with American global power, produce a cultural hegemony that privileges “whiteness” over “blackness”” (Spencer, “Young, Black” 68; see also Goodman 109). Spencer goes on to elaborate that the protagonists are ultimately “caught between two problematic identities, namely an essentialized “Africanness” on the one hand, and an aspirational “whiteness” on the other” as they negotiate the tension between “life in the black township and the cosmopolitan promises of the city, [and] the traditional prioritizing of family and community and the allure of self-invention” (“Young, Black” 69). As a result, the narrative is primarily concerned with “racialized identity formation” (Forsyth 168), which often involves issues of language, the aesthetics of beauty, and cultural traditions, as the narrators attempt to

“construct an identity out of the contradictory demands and conflicting desires in a post-apartheid society” (Spencer, “Young, Black” 69).

Matlwa’s novel chronicles a single day (interspersed with non-chronological flashbacks) in the life of its two female protagonists, Ofilwe (Fifi) Tlou and her alter-ego Fikile (Fiks) Twala, who each narrate the two separate sections of the novel. Since Fikile is eighteen years old and is classified as an adult, she falls outside the scope of this thesis, and thus this section is focused on the character of Ofilwe. Ofilwe is a wealthy, middle-class black girl who lives in the suburbs and goes to a private school. She inhabits a (white) world where she feels alienated and excluded, so in an attempt to appear “‘normal’, where normal means ‘white,’” she embraces Western values and mannerisms, and adopts a white English accent (Rodgers 27). As a result, she is labelled an “*Aunty Jemima*” and a “*sell-out*” by her brother, Tshepo (60, emphasis in original), but is interestingly never actually called a ‘coconut’ at any point in the novel. This is ostensibly a label that she applies to herself, revealing her experience of a double identity, as she finds herself in an “in-between space,” where she is either “too black to be white” or “too white to be black” (Spencer, “Young, Black” 66). Tlhalo Sam Raditlhalo contends that the youth of South Africa are suffering from “white-ache” (a term coined by Ngugi wa Thiong’o), a “debilitating sickness” in which they “do not wish to ‘pass for white’ but to ‘be white’” (21-22), which is precisely the kind of “parasitic disease” that the protagonists of *Coconut* find themselves battling against (*Coconut*, 93).

Ofilwe’s awakening from her complacent adherence to “aspirational whiteness” is facilitated by her brother, Tshepo, who makes her aware of her idolisation of white people (92-93). He calls attention to the fact that Ofilwe has become so assimilated into white culture that she has lost her cultural roots and consequently, her true identity (19, 42, 92-93). Tshepo’s emerging political/black consciousness plays a key instructive role in Ofilwe’s life in the absence of guidance from their parents, who have also succumbed to “aspirational whiteness” (Forsyth 197-198). He tells her not to fool herself into thinking that her white classmates are her friends, because true friends “do not scoff at your beliefs” but “accept you for who you really are” (43, emphasis in original). Tshepo maintains that Ofilwe is merely the “backstage crew in the drama of their lives” and that she should “open [her] eyes” to the racial and cultural prejudices expressed by her so-called friends (43, emphasis in original). He issues the following warning to his younger sister:

You will find, Ofilwe, that the people you strive so hard to be like will one day reject you because as much as you may pretend, you are not one of their own. Then you will turn back, but there too you will find no acceptance, for those you once rejected will no longer recognise the thing you have become. So far, too far to return. So much, too much you have changed. Stuck between two worlds, shunned by both. (93, emphasis in original)

It is indeed not long before Ofilwe finds herself trapped between two worlds, and so she embarks on a journey of reclaiming her cultural identity, as shall be examined further on in this section.

As Ofilwe reluctantly begins to acknowledge the truth in Tshepo's words, she starts reflecting on previous instances where her white friends have attempted to efface her difference in order to make her 'less black'. The superiority and contempt of her white classmates render her as 'other' and 'different', thus causing a conflict of identity. For example, a black boy at her school rejects her romantic gestures saying that he only dates white girls (24); a white boy refuses to kiss her during a game of spin-the-bottle at a sleepover exclaiming, "[n]o ways! Her lips are too dark!" (45), words that continue to echo in her mind for some time to come; and finally, her white best friend, Belinda, attempts to correct Ofilwe's pronunciation: "*Say 'uh-vin' Fifi [...] not 'oh-vin' [...] You have to learn how to speak properly*" (49, emphasis in original), thus emphasising Ofilwe's difference and so-called deficiency. Ofilwe feels that she can no longer overlook these flagrant instances of racial prejudice and begins to alienate herself from her white friends at school:

I feel sorry for Belinda. I feel sorry for me [...] I think at heart she is a good person. But I am a good person too. She meant well. But we were different. And somewhere between grades three and ten that became a bad thing. It hurts hurting your friends. But she hurt me [...] You fall ill from explaining why Mama does not shave. You run out of excuses why Daddy refuses to go fishing with the rest of the dads, and why Koko won't help out at the tuckshop like everybody else's grandmother does. (48)

For Ofilwe, Belinda's unwitting assumption of the superior role of 'teacher' when she gives Ofilwe lessons in pronunciation is one of the most hurtful instances of racial prejudice that she experiences. Belinda relegates her to the position of the 'other', disparaging the very thing that Ofilwe has always prided herself on, as throughout her childhood, Ofilwe is continually praised and shown favouritism by her family because of her fluency in English and her ability to assimilate into a white middle class society:

“It is because I am smart and speak perfect English. That is why people treat me differently. I knew from a very young age that Sepedi would not take me far. Not a chance! [...] I did not care if I could not catch it. I spoke the TV language; the one Daddy spoke at work, the one Mama never could get right, the one that spoke of sweet success [...] Even the old people know I am special. At family reunions they do not allow me to dish up for myself [...] They smile at me and say. (sic) “You, our child, must save all your strength for your books.” Do you see, I always tell my cousins, that they must not despair, as soon as my schooling is over, I will come back and teach them English and then they will be special too?” (54, emphasis in original).

At this point, it is Ofilwe who takes on the superior role of ‘teacher’ and sees her cousins, who “think a brick is a toy,” as beneath her because they are not “special” like she is (54). She inadvertently perpetuates Belinda’s prejudiced treatment of her in the way that she relates to her cousins. The two examples that I have listed above demonstrate the way in which Ofilwe is trapped between two worlds, belonging in neither the ‘white’ nor the ‘black’ world.

Spencer argues that, “[l]ike the coconut that symbolizes her predicament, which is revealingly hollow in the centre, [Ofilwe] finds she has no core to ground her” (“Young, Black” 74). As she gets older, Ofilwe discovers that she knows very little about her own culture and deeply regrets her inability to speak Sepedi (57-59). In an effort to recover her cultural identity, as well as to disprove Tshepo’s description of her as a “sell-out,” Ofilwe embarks on a “detox” wherein she withdraws from the suburban community and isolates herself from her white friends (48, 60). She also resolves to begin learning Sepedi one word at a time (59-60) and starts to value the physical aspects of her body that she had previously disliked due to her adoption of white standards of beauty (61). This is her attempt to “redefine herself” by constructing a “viable and sustaining identity out of her circumstances” (Spencer, “Young, Black” 75). In a world where ‘white’ is perceived as good and beautiful, and ‘black’ as subpar and inadequate, Ofilwe slowly attempts to remedy the effect that this kind of thinking has had on her:

We do not belong [...] most, Lord, are shackled around their minds [...] We are afraid, Lord, that if we think non-analytical, imprecise, unsystematic, disorderly thoughts, they will shackle us further, until our hearts are unable to beat under the heavy chains. So we dare not use our minds. We dare not eat with our naked fingertips, walk in generous groups, speak merrily in booming voices and laugh mqombothi laughs. They will scold us if we dare, not with their lips, Lord,

because the laws prevent them from doing so, but with their eyes. They will shout, "Stop acting black!" "Stop acting black!" is what they will shout. And we will pause, perplexed, unsure of what that means, for are we not black, Father? No, not in the malls, Lord. We may not be black in restaurants, in suburbs and in schools. Oh, how it nauseates them if we even fantasise about being black, truly black. The old rules remain and the old sentiments are unchanged. We know, Lord, because those disapproving eyes scold us still; that crisp air of hatred and disgust crawls into our wide-open nostrils still. (30-32, emphasis in original)

In this passage, Ofilwe points out how white people are 'happy' to tolerate black people moving into 'their' schools and suburbs, provided that they "stop acting black" and start 'acting white' (31). Thus, in accordance with my central thesis, Ofilwe finds that the "*old rules remain and the old sentiments are unchanged*" (32, emphasis in original), as she "[struggles] with the loss of empowering self concepts at a historical moment that promises the opposite" (Forsyth 193). This proves Allison Mackey's claim that "[d]isappointment is the prominent tone of post-national coming-of-age narratives" (11), a concept that shall be further discussed in the conclusion below. Although post-apartheid South Africa is upheld as a politically free 'Rainbow Nation', "white cultural values continue to dominate" and masses of young black people are being "socialized into whiteness" mainly through the media (Spencer, "Young, Black" 72, 75).

In *Coconut*, Matlwa refuses to present class as replacing race as an indication of privilege (Forsyth 196), as some scholars maintain is the case in the post-apartheid context (Bray et al. 23). Racism and racial difference remain 'sites of struggle' for the characters in *Coconut*, and by the end of Ofilwe's section of the novel, she is just as trapped in the 'in-between' world she inhabits as she was when the narrative began, which can be labelled (in *Bildungsroman* terms) as an example of failed *Bildung* (93). The identity/difference 'site of struggle' represented in *Coconut* is perhaps even more problematic than the representation of this binary in apartheid childhood and youth novels: even though these black youths have reached the middle class status denied to them during apartheid, they do so at the expense of their identity, as they are thrust into a world of difference and prejudice. The promise of a 'new' South Africa remains unfulfilled, and for Ofilwe, "freedom is not the culmination of painful struggle but a static descriptor of their still painful 'now,'" leaving her looking to the past in order to find a path forward (Forsyth 254).

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that childhood and youth continue to be represented as ‘sites of struggle’ in the post-apartheid context, even though the ‘new’ South Africa began with the promise of change, where past wrongs would begin to be rectified, especially for the children of the nation.⁴² These struggles include the victimisation and marginalisation of children, the power struggle between child and adult, crises of identity, the loss of childhood innocence, and the destructive effects of agency and power. Thus, childhood as a ‘site of struggle’ encompasses a multiplicity of childhoods, regardless of the social status, class, or race of the child and youth protagonist. Many narratives are “inescapably bound to the time of before” even though they are set in the years after 1994 and do not explicitly refer to apartheid (De Kock, “Freedom” 57). The past therefore continues to rear its head and dictate the circumstances and experiences of many literary children. In order to “make childhood itself the locus of concern” (James, Jenks, and Prout 22), I have examined representations of childhood and youth through the lenses of four binary concepts: victim/perpetrator, child/adult, agency/powerlessness, and identity/difference. This has allowed for the emergence of a broad and wide-ranging analysis of the child figure, where children and youth are variously depicted as innocent or corrupt, victims or perpetrators (or indeed both), different and other, or as resisting adulthood.

The analyses in this chapter have revealed that many children and youth in post-apartheid coming-of-age narratives “still have that apartheid mentality,” as Captain states in *By Any Means*, “[w]here we feel like rejects. Like we’re not good enough. Like we are other. That needs to fucking end” (100). As depicted in texts such as *Coconut*, *By Any Means*, and *Untitled* vestiges of the old apartheid structures and ways of thinking still remain. The ‘born free generation’ have been given the mandate to “be the generation that sorts everything out” (*By Any Means* 11) and yet, the older generation has failed to pave the way for them. Instead, adults are either depicted as oppressive, domineering, and abusive, or weak, neglectful, and apathetic. However, as discussed throughout this study, in spite of all this, many post-apartheid childhood narratives conclude with the child or youth making a positive decision either to better themselves, their communities, or society as a whole (*By Any Means*, *Young Blood*, *Flowers of the Nation*, *Untitled*, *Shiva’s Dance*, and *Rainmaker*).

⁴² For a concrete example of this, see Nelson Mandela’s address at the launch of the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund on the 8th of May 1995.

By way of concluding this chapter, I would like to briefly return to the notion of disappointment as a defining feature of post-apartheid texts. As previously mentioned, this is in accordance with Mackey's claim that "[d]isappointment is the prominent tone of post-national coming-of-age narratives," a claim which can easily be extended to include post-apartheid texts (11). The false promise of 'freedom' and a 'Rainbow Nation', political disillusionment, personal betrayal, and the failure of those in authority over children to protect and nurture them are some of the instances of disappointment that are found in the post-apartheid coming-of-age narratives under examination here. Helene Strauss argues that "spectacles of promise and disappointment [...] have marked the country's transitional and post-transitional periods" ("Spectacles" 471). These "sites of cultural contestation" embody the shift from the promise and euphoric dream of a socially liberated nation towards an "emotional culture in which expressions of disappointment seem to have become the order of the day" (Strauss, "Spectacles" 474). Public displays of disappointment can be seen in the outbreak of xenophobic violence and the increasing number of labour strikes and social protests against issues ranging from poor service delivery to the state of national education (Strauss, "Spectacles" 478). Strauss defines disappointment thus:

In the South African context, disappointment – a term that refers literally to a feeling of dissatisfaction that results from the failure of having one's expectations met, but that I also read as signaling (sic) broader experiences of discontent and disquiet – still largely functions at the level of individualized feeling [...] and not yet fully available to large-scale definition and expression. ("Spectacles" 480)

Disappointment can also function as a "resistant political emotion that disrupts the fantasies upheld by the spectacle of the unfulfilled promise" (Strauss, "Spectacles" 491). Sara Ahmed refers to disappointment numerous times throughout her book *The Promise of Happiness* and argues that "[d]isappointment can be experienced as a gap between an ideal and an experience that demands action" (41). This is precisely the kind of disappointment that permeates the childhood narratives under examination in this chapter.

In short, there are two main kinds of disappointment expressed in post-apartheid childhood texts: political disappointment and disappointment in adults (for example, lack of parental care or adult misconduct or unreliability). Political disappointment in narratives such as Moele's *Untitled*, Memela's *Flowers of the Nation*, Matlwa's *Coconut*, and Ellis's *By Any Means* adheres to Ahmed's definition in that it often results in children and youth taking

some sort of action in the hope of a better future. In novels such as Pinnock's *Skyline*, Bregin's *Shiva's Dance*, Gabonewe's *Planet Savage*, Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*, and Farren's *Snake*, there are instances of severe disappointment in adults, as was discussed in the child/adult section. This can be harder for the young protagonist to navigate due to their natural dependency on adults, but texts such as *Thirteen Cents* and *Skyline* show how children attempt to exist and survive outside of the guidance and authority of adults. The pervasiveness of the trope of disappointment in post-apartheid coming-of-age narratives points to the ultimate dissolution of the utopian ideal of a South African 'Rainbow Nation'.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to present a wide-ranging survey of the representation of childhood and youth in apartheid and post-apartheid South African literature. Rather than simply focusing on producing definitions and classifications, the objective has been to map something of the South African (literary) ‘socio-cape’ that children and youth daily traverse. The theme of childhood and youth has been approached as “a shifting set of ideas” (Cunningham 1), an approach which acknowledges the fluidity and heterogeneity of notions of childhood. Notwithstanding, this thesis has focused on the points of commonality amongst representations of childhood and youth, rather than the unique and exceptional. I have argued that despite differences in race, culture, and economic class, South African childhood is represented as a ‘site of struggle’ and conflict – a depiction that is not limited to apartheid childhood narratives, since this portrayal continues to persist in post-apartheid childhood narratives. Indeed, in Chapters Two and Three, I mapped the transition from the apartheid to the post-apartheid era in South Africa, focussing especially on the changes the transition has wrought on literature. I argued that for the vast majority of children, their day-to-day circumstances have not changed with the dawning of the ‘new’ South Africa, and thus childhood continues to be depicted as a ‘site of struggle’ in post-apartheid childhood literature. Consequently, the examination of these ‘sites of struggle’ is important as they introduce a point of commonality, linking apartheid and post-apartheid coming-of-age narratives.

Due to the timeframe and disparateness of the texts that this thesis analyses, an overarching framework was used in order to juxtapose apartheid and post-apartheid coming-of-age narratives effectively. This framework consisted of a set of binary oppositions that govern the notion of childhood and youth, and wherein the main ‘sites of struggle’ faced by child protagonists can be located. The main binaries under examination in this thesis included the victim/perpetrator, innocent/guilty, child/adult, domestic/political, agency/powerlessness, and identity/difference binaries. Analysing texts from the viewpoint of binary oppositions ensured that childhood itself remained the centre of concern and allowed for a comprehensive analysis to emerge. In this concluding chapter, I present a brief overview of the thesis by

juxtaposing and consolidating the binaries explored in apartheid and post-apartheid texts. I then turn to a discussion of the authors' deliberate use of the child figure, and provide recommendations and suggestions for future research. I conclude by emphasising the value of the research presented in this thesis.

In Chapter One, I introduced the notions of vulnerability, innocence, and potentiality, which are most often connected to the child figure in South African literature. The idea of the inherent innocence of the child was then further interrogated in subsequent discussions of the victim/perpetrator and innocent/guilty binaries in Chapters Two and Three, which respectively examined apartheid and post-apartheid depictions of childhood. In Chapter Two, I looked at the conflicting representations of childhood innocence presented in apartheid childhood texts. On the one hand, in texts such as *The Smell of Apples*, children and youth are portrayed as innocent and ignorant, which causes them to be liable to indoctrination and manipulation, and nearly always results in a loss of innocence. On the other hand, in narratives such as *Boyhood*, the child figure is depicted as knowingly guilty and is thus culpable and can be held accountable for his actions. In apartheid childhood narratives, the child is more often depicted as a victim (of sexual, physical, verbal, and emotional abuse) than as a perpetrator. However, in post-apartheid childhood and youth texts, while the child figure continues to be portrayed as a victim of rape, homelessness, violence, and emotional blackmail, there are many texts that depict children and youth as perpetrators of violence, crime, and even rape (many of which were discussed in the agency/powerlessness section). I argued that innocence takes on a different form in the post-apartheid childhood texts examined in Chapter Three, since they largely focus on the loss of innocence, sexual innocence in particular. I thus examined examples of the child's sexual awakening and the effects of sexual violence. Novels such as *Untitled* by Kgebetli Moele point the reader away from racial fixation, emphasising that the more pressing issue needing to be addressed is sexual violence against children, which thus denotes that the struggle has not ended and freedom is yet to be achieved. In short, the notion of the child/youth figure as innocent is problematised and systematically fragmented in both apartheid and post-apartheid childhood narratives.

In Chapter Two, I investigated the ways in which children and youth resist adulthood in apartheid childhood texts. In these narratives, children are excluded from the realm of adulthood and look upon it from the position of the outsider. The Soweto uprisings of the

1970s and 1980s brought about a shift in the balance of power between the child and the adult. This rupture continues unabated in the post-apartheid childhood narratives examined in Chapter Three, which abound with youth who rebel against those in authority (sometimes, but not always, for good reason). Rather than being politically motivated, the rebellion depicted in these texts arises as a result of the way in which adults have abused their power over children, which sometimes results in devastating consequences for the child. In Chapter Three, I stated that the majority of child/parent relationships are represented as fractured and fraught with power struggles in post-apartheid childhood narratives. A great portion of both apartheid and post-apartheid childhood texts present negative portrayals of fatherhood, where the father figure is either absent, abusive, or apathetic. Indeed, many of the children in these texts are being raised by single mothers or other female members of their extended family. Motherhood is also depicted as a 'site of struggle' in certain texts, where the protagonist either feels too close to his or her mother, or conversely, feels unloved by his or her mother. In both eras, children are portrayed as resisting the idea of adulthood; however, they do so in different ways. In apartheid childhood narratives, children and youth resist the idea of growing up and becoming the adults that they have rejected, whereas in post-apartheid narratives, children and youth eagerly anticipate growing up so that they can escape the control of the adults who oppress them.

In apartheid childhood narratives, the domestic/political binary is closely entangled with the agency/powerlessness binary. Many young protagonists are depicted as straddling the boundaries of the domestic (associated with passivity and powerlessness) and the political (associated with power and agency). The focus of the domestic/political section in Chapter Two was on literary representations of the Soweto uprisings of the 1970s and 1980s from both the black and white child's perspective. In the first instance, the black youth steps into the political (*Dancing in the Dust*), whereas in the second instance, the political spills over into the domestic space of the white youth (*Ruby Red*). Thus, I stated that the 'choice' between the domestic and the political is a 'false' choice, as even the decision to remain within the domestic space and withhold from engaging with politics is in itself a political decision. I also argued that in apartheid childhood narratives, white children are ironically represented as more politically immobilised than black children who are disenfranchised due to racial discrimination.

In Chapter Three, I examined the agency/powerlessness binary in post-apartheid juvenile delinquency narratives that depict the lived experiences of young gangsters and street children. These children move from the civil to the criminal or deviant, evoking the civil/criminal binary. They can no longer look to the government to save them from their dire circumstances, and so they take their future into their own hands, seeking alternative, often illegal, means of improving their lives. I argued that the move from the civil to the criminal involves stepping outside of adult authority and outside of the law, thus becoming ‘uncivil’ (both in the sense of the youth’s relinquishment of their status as law-abiding citizens, as well as their unruliness and waywardness). Gangsters and street children are thus portrayed as ‘out of place’ (Connolly and Ennew) due to their actions and circumstances. These children are marginalised, negated, and excluded, and thus live on the periphery of society. I highlighted the fact that young gangsters and street children oscillate between being victims of crime, violence, abuse, rape, exploitation, and indoctrination, and being perpetrators of violence and crime (including drug use, robbery, murder, rape, bribery, and prostitution). They embrace the power of independence, but this power betrays them and comes at a cost. These texts serve to shatter the notion of a ‘new’ South Africa that the protagonists (discussed in the section on the domestic/political) in Chapter Two were fighting to achieve. Thus, the youth in both apartheid and post-apartheid childhood narratives suffer the consequences for exerting power and agency by stepping into the political or engaging in criminal or deviant behaviour.

In Chapter Two, I examined how the identity/difference binary encompasses every kind and type of apartheid childhood setting, where the child’s sense of difference causes a conflict of identity that manifests both internally and externally. As a result, childhood is represented as a distinct form of ‘othering’. I discussed instances of personal difference (where the child feels that he or she is different to those in his or her peer group), cultural and political difference (where the child or youth is shunned and ostracised because of his or her culture or political stance), and racial difference (where the child is troubled and conflicted because of their racial identity, often because they are taunted by others). The post-apartheid literature that I examined in Chapter Three continues to represent children and youth as being different to and alienated from the people around them, thus resulting in conflicts of identity. I discussed the ‘social difference’ of the protagonist (where the child is ostracised by their peers for a specific, usually non-political, reason) and the racial difference of the protagonist (where the child or youth perceives himself or herself as other due to the legacy of the

oppressive racial categories instated by the apartheid regime). I postulated that race remains the primary locus of the youth's identity crisis (as represented in post-apartheid childhood narratives such as *Coconut*, *Rainmaker*, *Snake*, *Thirteen Cents*, and *By Any Means*). Thus, it became apparent that the identity/difference 'site of struggle' represented in post-apartheid texts such as *Coconut* is even more problematic than the representation of this binary in apartheid novels: even though black youths have reached the middle class status denied to them during apartheid, they do so at the expense of their cultural identity and thus the promise of a 'new' South Africa is void. It is therefore no surprise that post-apartheid texts are marked by disappointment, a theme that reverberates through all of the binaries discussed in Chapter Three.

The use of the child figure is ostensibly a deliberate decision made by authors (especially in the apartheid era where narratives of childhood are plentiful), and throughout this study, I have presented tentative reasons as to why this may be so, and thus I wish to consolidate those reasons here. In Chapters Two and Three, it emerged that the figure of the child or youth is used in three main ways. Firstly, authors use the child as a means of interrogating and critiquing the political climate or development of the nation. The child in this way functions as a symbol of the state of the nation (for example, to represent the "stunted growth" of the South African nation) (Okuyade, "Continuity" 7). In addition, the attempt to recover and rediscover childhood innocence (à la Ndebele) can be seen as part of a wider appeal for the rebuilding of the nation. As a result, the vulnerability of the child is used to garner sympathy and to call for transformation (Ndebele, "Recovering Childhood" 322). Secondly, white writers writing about apartheid turn to the figure of the child because of their inherent innocence, which implies that they are irreprehensible and free from racism. By using a child protagonist, the white author is therefore indirectly divested of any blame and is not held responsible as a benefactor or perpetrator of apartheid's policies. If the child or youth does display racist tendencies, he or she is given amnesty since he or she is seen as too young to be held accountable (Heyns, "Whole Country's" 50). Narratives such as J.M. Coetzee's *Boyhood* complicate the notion of the child as innocent, instead depicting the child as complicit and therefore culpable. Consequently, the decrease in the use of the child figure by white writers in texts set in the post-apartheid era is significant and thus affirms the suggestions above as to the reasons for the proliferation of childhood texts by white writers in particular. Finally, writers evoke childhood in order to find psychological relief and

rediscover their identity (Okolie 31). The past becomes a “safe place” for writers to “tell their stories,” speak the unspeakable, and reconstruct truth (Boniface Davies and Horrell 138). For both black and white writers, writing about childhood can be a cathartic means of respectively coming to terms with past oppression and guilt, or a nostalgic mourning for a lost childhood.

Many significant aspects of the representation of childhood in South African texts were mentioned throughout this thesis; however, due to time and space constraints, I was not able to discuss these at length. I would therefore like to present them as suggestions and recommendations for future research. The representation of the relationship between the white child and the black nanny or ‘maid’ (following South African parlance) is a potentially interesting area of research as it involves a reversal of power, where the white child exerts power over the black adult nanny (as a direct result of apartheid segregation).⁴³ Space and place are important concepts in many post-apartheid childhood narratives and is also thus an area of potential future research.⁴⁴ A significant amount of attention is devoted to describing the space and place in which the young protagonist moves, and the movement from city to township, township to rural village, and vice versa often denotes a significant development, both positive and negative, in the life of the protagonist. Novels in which space and place are important include Matlwa’s *Coconut*, Gabonewe’s *Planet Savage*, Memela’s *Flowers of the Nation*, Ferreira’s *Zulu Dog*, Duiker’s *Thirteen Cents*, and Mzobe’s *Young Blood*. Other areas of research could include the examination of childhood memory; the expression of adolescent sexuality; the representation of trauma, violence and abuse; recurring scenes of reading and acts of writing in childhood narratives; the portrayal of childhood games; and an examination of how childhood is represented in post-apartheid fantasy or ‘sci-fi’ novels.

The comparative and thematic analyses presented in this research constitute a move towards filling the gap that Rita Barnard highlights in her book *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place*: “[t]here are, to date, surprisingly few critical works (other than single-author studies and collections of essays) that consider South African literature in a broad thematic way, and there are fewer still without the modifiers “black” or

⁴³ See Horrell’s article “White Lies, White Truth: Confession and Childhood in White South African Women’s Narratives.”

⁴⁴ Good scholarly starting points include articles by Megan Jones (“Township Textualities”), Sarah Nuttall (“City Forms and Writing the ‘Now’ in South Africa”), Meg Samuelson (“The City Beyond the Border: The Urban Worlds of Duiker, Mpe and Vera”), and Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall (“Writing the World from an African Metropolis”).

“white” inserted in the title” (4). This statement therefore points to the significance and importance of this research. I have attempted to avoid black/white binary divisions, and yet have not ignored the presence of race in both the apartheid and post-apartheid childhood texts under examination here. Indeed, as I have argued, race is a central concern in apartheid childhood and youth narratives, and continues to remain an important concern in post-apartheid literature, but it no longer functions as the central point of fixation. Thus, it follows that the “particularity of apartheid as a legal, social, and economic system *localised* apartheid-era [childhood narratives] in a way that is now being challenged, as more global predicaments and literary influences begin to transect the local scene” (Roux, emphasis in original). Thus, the representation of childhood and youth in post-apartheid texts constitutes an opening up and out as themes and concerns begin to resonate to a greater degree with global childhood narratives.

Ogaga Okuyade observes that writers often derive the thematic content of their narratives from society, and thus the text “becomes the shadow of the society that produces it” (“Weaving Memories” 139). He continues to state that, “literature remains the mirror of society” and that the “novelist is without doubt a representative of the people at large and his/her story is the story of the people” (Okuyade, “Weaving Memories” 139, 141). I thus concur with Ha-Eun Kim’s view that English literary studies is uniquely positioned to grapple and engage with “matters of social urgency” since stories give us “insight into human predicaments as these are captured and portrayed in narrative” (104). Although childhood and youth are not investigated from a sociological perspective in this study, the examination of the stories, narratives, and discourses surrounding childhood and youth in the literary context is equally important, in light of how people “understand the world and themselves through the stories that they tell” (Kim 104). Thus, the ongoing representation of childhood as a ‘site of struggle’ is significant as it is symptomatic of a range of national issues and crises (as discussed throughout this study), and ultimately points to the dissolution of the image of South Africa as a ‘Rainbow Nation’.

The appendix that follows this study has been set out in such a way so that scholars may build on the extensive research that went into compiling such a list. The appendix is one of the most valuable and significant aspects of this research, since it points to the pervasiveness of the trope of childhood and youth in South African narratives, thus highlighting the importance of further research. It is hoped that the work presented in this

study constitutes a valuable and useful contribution to a small body of research on literary representations of South African childhood that is continually growing and developing. At the very least, it constitutes a step towards addressing the gap in scholarship on the representation of childhood in apartheid and post-apartheid South African coming-of-age narratives. This thesis ultimately points to the significance of the child figure in its own right, rather than its relevance being tied to the view of the child as a ‘half an adult’, a ‘still-developing human’, or as the nostalgic or determining past of a ‘grown-up’. It has been argued that representations of childhood and youth warrant extensive examination – not through other subsidiary lenses, but through the analytical lens of childhood itself, which is what makes this research vital and significant.

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Appendix

A List of South African Narratives that Feature the Theme of Childhood⁴⁵

Published or (Childhood) Set Pre-Apartheid:

1. Abrahams, Peter. *Tell Freedom*. 1954. London: Faber and Faber, 1981.
2. Becker, Jillian. *The Keep*. 1967. Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2008.
3. Borraine, Alex. *A Life in Transition*. Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2008.
4. Case, Maxine. *Papwa: Golf's Lost Legend*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2015.
5. Cullinan, Patrick. *Matrix*. Plumstead: Snailpress, 2002.
6. Gordimer, Nadine. *The Lying Days*. 1953. London: Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2002.
7. Govender, Ronnie. *In the Manure: Memories and Reflections*. Claremont: David Philip, 2008.
8. Gray, Stephen. *War Child: A Novel*. Rivonia: Justified Press, 1991.
9. Haden, Rosamund. *The Tin Church*. Claremont: David Philip, 2004.
10. Handler, Rosemund J. *Tsamma Season*. Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2009.
11. Lakhan, Renesh. *The Puppeteers*. Claremont: David Philip, 2006.
12. Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela*. London: Abacus, 1995.
13. Maraney, Hilary. *I Married my Mother*. Cape Town: dinky-bloc, 2007.
14. Matthee, Dalene. *Fiela's Child*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987.
15. Matthee, Dalene. *Pieterella: Daughter of Eva*. Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2008.
16. Mphahlele, Es'kia. *Down Second Avenue*. 1959. Johannesburg: Picador Africa, 2006.
17. Mynhardt, Patrick. *Boy from Bethulie: An Autobiography*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2003.
18. Naudé, Tom. *Dance of the Rain*. Johannesburg: Heinemann, 2009.
19. Oppel, Martin. *I Loved that Place Tdjouboegas*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2004.
20. Pohl, Victor. *The Dawn and After*. London: Faber and Faber, 1964.
21. Poland, Marguerite. *Iron Love*. 1999. London: Penguin Books, 2000.

⁴⁵ A few short stories and plays are included in this list (these are texts that I happened upon during the course of my research), however, the scope of the thesis itself does not extend beyond the novel. Along with *Bildungsromane* and childhood novels, this list also includes narratives that: 1) feature childhood as a minor theme; 2) introduce a child or children as part of an ensemble cast of characters; 3) have a shorter section (usually at the beginning) that depicts the protagonist's childhood; 4) are centred on the lives of adults, as seen through the eyes of a child narrator; and 5) feature an adult protagonist who, throughout the course of the novel, reminisces about his or her childhood years. Finally, a number of autobiographical narratives and memoirs are included in this list. I have exercised critical judgement in the selection of autobiographical texts that I deem to be important and useful for the objectives of this thesis. It is worth noting that many of the chosen autobiographical narratives are novelistic in form and are written by well-established authors.

22. Schreiner, Olive. *The Story of an African Farm*. 1883. London: Collins Clear-type Press, 1924.
23. Slingsby, Peter. *The Joining*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1996.
24. Smith, Pauline. *Platkops Children*. 1935. Cape Town: Balkema, 1981.
25. Smith, Prudence. *The Morning Light: A South African Childhood Revalued*. Claremont: David Philip, 2000.
26. Stern, Rhona. *The Cactus Land*. London: Michael Joseph, 1964.
27. Steward, Alexander. *A Single Soul*. London: Laurie, 1956.
28. Van der Post, Laurens. *The Face Beside the Fire: A Novel*. London: Hogarth, 1953.
29. Van der Post, Laurens. *Yet Being Someone Other*. London: Hogarth, 1982.
30. Van Rooyen, Pierre. *Saturdays are Gold*. 2011. Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2012.
31. Whyte, James. *The Book of War*. Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2012.
32. Whyte, James. *Walk*. Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2013.
33. Xenopoulos, Rahla. *Bubbles*. Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2012.

Published and (Childhood) Set During Apartheid:

1. Abbott, David. *The Sons*. Johannesburg: AD. Donker, 1979.
2. Abrahams, Lionel. *The Celibacy of Felix Greenspan*. 1977. Craighall: AD. Donker, 1986.
3. Becker, Jillian. *The Virgins*. 1976. Cape Town: David Philip, 1986.
4. Behr, Mark. *The Smell of Apples*. 1993. London: Abacus, 2009.
5. Boehmer, Elleke. *Screens Against the Sky*. London: Bloomsbury, 1990.
6. Courtenay, Bryce. *The Power of One*. 1989. London: Penguin Books, 2006.
7. Fugard, Athol. *'Master Harold'...and the Boys*. 1982. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 2009.
8. Freed, Lynn. *Home Ground: A Novel*. 1986. Ashland: Story Line Press, 1999.
9. Fugard, Athol. *Tsotsi*. 1979. Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2009.
10. Galgut, Damon. *The Beautiful Screaming of Pigs*. 1991. London: Abacus, 1992.
11. Goosen, Jeanne. *We're Not All Like That*. 1990. Trans. André P. Brink. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2007.
12. Gordimer, Nadine. *A Sport of Nature*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987.
13. Head, Bessie. *The Cardinals, with Meditations and Stories*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1993.
14. Hirson, Denis. *The House Next Door to Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1986.
15. Hope, Christopher. *A Separate Development*. 1981. London: Atlantic Books, 2010.
16. Hope, Christopher. *White Boy Running*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1988.
17. Hope, Christopher. *The Love Songs of Nathan J. Swirsky*. 1993. London: Atlantic, 2010.
18. Krige, Uys. *The Dream and the Desert*. London: Collins, 1953.
19. Magona, Sindiwe. *To My Children's Children*. 1990. Claremont: David Philip, 2000.
20. Malan, Rian. *My Traitor's Heart*. London: Bodley Head, 1990.

21. Mathabane, Mark. *Kaffir Boy: The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*. 1986. New York: Plume, 1987.
22. Mogotsi, Isaac. *The Alexandra Tales*. 1986. Braamfontein: Ravan Press, 1994.
23. Mzamane, Mbulelo Vizikhungo. *The Children of Soweto*. Harlow: Longman, 1982.
24. Ndebele, Njabulo S. *Fools and Other Stories*. 1983. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1997.
25. Rive, Richard. *'Buckingham Palace', District 6*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1986.
26. Taylor, Dora. *Rage of Life*. Ed. Sheila Belshaw. Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2009.⁴⁶
27. Taylor, Dora. *Kathie*. Ed. Sheila Belshaw. Johannesburg: Penguin Books, 2008.⁴⁷
28. Tlali, Miriam. *Amandla!* 1980. Vanderbijlpark: Vaal University Press, 2005.
29. Van der Post, Laurens. *A Story like the Wind*. London: Hogarth, 1972.
30. Wicomb, Zoë. *You Can't Get Lost in Cape Town*. London: Virago, 1987.
31. Williams, Michael. *Crocodile Burning*. 1992. Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1998.
32. Williams, Neil Alwin. *Just a Little Stretch of Road*. Johannesburg: Ravan, 1979.

Published Post-Apartheid but (Childhood) Set During Apartheid:

1. Abrahams, Lionel. *The White Life of Felix Greenspan*. Milpark: M&G Books, 2002.
2. Ali, Shaïda Kazie. *Not a Fairytale*. Cape Town: Umuzi, 2010.
3. Awerbuck, Diane. *Gardening at Night*. London: Secker & Warburg, 2003.
4. Barris, Ken. *What Kind of Child*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2006.
5. Barris, Ken. *Life Underwater*. Cape Town: Kwela Books, 2012.
6. Behr, Mark. *Embrace*. London: Little, Brown and Company, 2000.
7. Blacklaws, Troy. *Karoo Boy*. 2004. Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005.
8. Blacklaws, Troy. *Blood Orange*. Cape Town: Double Storey Books, 2005.
9. Boehmer, Elleke. *The Shouting in the Dark*. Auckland Park: Jacana Media, 2015.
10. Botha, Dominique. *False River*. Cape Town: Umuzi, 2013.
11. Brain, Helen. *Here be Lions: A Memoir, Not Suitable for Children*. Cape Town: Oshun, 2006.
12. Brasfield, Lynette. *Nature Lessons*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003.
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