Fractured Selves and Fragmented Realities:
Trauma, Repression and Modes of Healing in
Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*

Abstract

In South Africa, there has long been a difficulty in addressing trauma, particularly in a manner which accounts for both western and traditional forms of healing. This article examines Rachel Zadok's *Gem Squash Tokoloshe*, an engaging narrative which has not received a wealth of academic criticism, and explores the lasting effects of childhood trauma. Drawing on the findings of Melanie Klein's childhood studies as a means to interpret protagonist Faith's behaviour, which occasionally borders on the schizophrenic, I attempt to provide a viable paradigm for delineating traditional African healing within western clinical terminology. In understanding the role that traditional healers play in South Africa, I draw on Gavin Ivey and Tertia Myers's study, "The Psychology of Bewitchment". In their study, Ivey and Myers make extensive use of the Kleinian psychoanalytical model to interpret a more traditional African belief and integrate its manifestations within a western therapeutic understanding. Although the two models appear to be divergent, the integration of two different schools of thought that nevertheless reveal an epistemological congruity in treating ideas as things allows psychotherapists to manage a broad spectrum of patients.

Key words: trauma, narrative, traditional healing, repression

Fantasy and the dialectic of memory and forgetting

Gem Squash Tokoloshe (GST), says Rachel Zadok, is "a book about belief, and how a child's parents, her society and her schooling all mould her reality and the way she views her world" (quoted in Russouw 3). Seven-year-old Faith's major belief structure centres on the fairies that her mother, Bella, insists are real. "They lived on the peripheries of my vision," Faith tells the reader, "well hidden from my curious eyes, but I knew they were there. Mother was forever warning me about the dangers of bad fairies" (*GST* 7). Understanding the imaginative construction of these fairies, the role they play in both Bella and Faith's lives, and the results of this psychic experience on the developing child requires careful analytic work. Drawing on the theoretical work of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein proves illuminating in analysing the fantasy construct of the fairies and the manner in which mother and daughter use the fairies as a receptacle for traumatic experiences, while a general engagement with trauma theory aids in better understanding Faith's character as well as the novel's narrative structure. I conclude with speculation on the similarities between Klein's clinical approach to trauma, one which is based the western Cartesian split of body and mind as separate, and the holistic practices in traditional African medicine, which treats body and mind as a single entity.

The first half of the novel, set in 1985, is told in first-person past tense, while the second half follows after a fifteen year gap, and is told in first-person present tense. The implication of this is that the first part of the novel is told chronologically with minimal retrospective comment, while the latter half is rooted in the world of the now grown-up Faith as she attempts to process her childhood memories, still haunted by the events of one particular night, a night of which she has no memory. Growing up, the young Faith witnesses the disintegration of her parent's marriage. One morning, Faith finds that her father left during the night. Bella spirals into a state of depression, seemingly disappearing into the imaginary world of the fairies. Slowly, Faith's once happy life on the farm begins to disintegrate. Bella's instability as a mother has already been intimated earlier in the text when Faith comments that: "Some days a strangeness would take hold of her, and she would disappear into the orchard for hours, leaving me alone on the farm" (*GST* 8). Slowly, Bella becomes more and more distant from her daughter, forgetting to feed or care for herself and Faith. Bella's depression reaches the point where Faith comments: "It was like Mother had gone to bed the night Papa left and never properly woken up" (*GST* 61)

Already feeling alienated from her mother, Faith is shocked when, on her seventh birthday, Bella abandons her at the Roadhouse. Fortunately, Marius, who appears to have remarried and is dining with his new wife, stumbles upon his daughter for the first time in months. Marius takes Faith home, only to find Bella wielding a gun. Marius is furious when she fires a shot into the dark, nearly killing Faith. Their fight escalates to the point where Bella hits Marius with a spanner, and he retaliates by punching her in the face, and then leaves once more. Unknown to them, Faith is observing their altercation. Naturally, Faith finds this event deeply unsettling and, for a moment, believes that her mother may be dead: "Mother's broken face bobbed between the dots and I slid downwards. Everything went black. I struggled to breathe; it felt like there was a heavy weight on my chest" (*GST* 53).

During this time, a neighbour hires Nomsa to help Bella with the housework on the farm, and Nomsa soon becomes a maternal figure to Faith. One night, Nomsa is murdered, but the details appear to be completely absent from Faith's consciousness. This traumatic event is not only shown to be central to Faith's loss of worldly attachment, but also mirrored, structurally, by Zadok's text. Faith blacks out, briefly apprehends that something has happened to Nomsa, and then the gap in chronological continuity is indicated by the narrative leaping forward fifteen years, creating a gap in the epistemological continuity. When the second part of the novel picks up, Faith has been living with family friends, Molly and Mia. The reader has to piece together that Bella was incarcerated for Nomsa's murder and has recently died.

This peculiar gap in temporality can be more fully understood with reference to Anne Whitehead's discussion of the intersection of trauma and fiction. Whitehead suggests that "[n]ovelists have frequently found that the impact of trauma can only adequately be represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterised by repetition and indirection" (3). This resonates with Cathy Caruth's assertion that trauma "is a break in the mind's experience of time" (61). What characterises trauma, she suggests, is the manner of its belatedness, how it is only truly

experienced after the fact. In respect of Faith, this is evident in the inaccessibility of those traumatic memories. Faith is "plagued by violent nightmares, nightmares that left [her] feeling terrified yet unable to remember anything about them" (*GST* 181). Despite Nomsa's death being one of the defining moments of her life, Faith finds that she is unable to recall anything at all about that event.

Framing the two parts of the novel are a prologue, "The Soul Stealer", and an epilogue, "The Baby Snatcher". These two extracts are written in a broken language, supposedly spoken by Dead Rex, whom Faith calls "the worst of them" (*GST* 10), referring to the fairies. The three pages of prologue essentially reveal the traumatic event which remains missing from Faith's conscious memory, while the epilogue stands to inform the reader of Faith's role in Nomsa's death.

The prologue establishes that an evil presence is woken by "a hunger in his guts" (*GST* 1). The presence then actively shapes events, by calling out for Faith, whom he calls "mosetsana", because "she be still pure, blank canvas, torment not yet painted on her soul" (*GST* 2), and leading her to the scene of a horrific event. Dead Rex revels in the reaction, as he "feel mosetsana panic, feel mosetsana pain, feel fear, feel confusion. Her soul scream what her body hold frozen" (*ibid*). The culmination of the prologue is Dead Rex, in a bid to cause further pain, telling the young girl: "He be hurting her … Hurt him back" (*ibid*). In the epilogue, we are told that, after leading Faith to Nomsa's room, Dead Rex is able to "Taste the burnt sulphur of gunpowder on her hand. Taste the fear in her heart and the scream of her soul when she realize that it be not easy to shoot straight. Guns have life all of their own" (*GST* 328).

What the reader finally learns is that, on the night of Nomsa's death, she was raped by Bella's prospective suitor, Oom Piet, before being shot by Faith, who we imagine must have been aiming for Piet. Bella, realising that her daughter pulled the trigger, allows herself to be arrested for the murder.

Traumatic rupture of the self

In his clinical studies, Bessel van der Kolk explored the implication that separation anxiety can have on a young child. Psychological trauma, he suggests, originates from the subject's fear that there is neither order nor a form of continuity in his or her life (31). Van der Kolk further elucidates this by saying that trauma occurs primarily when an individual feels that he or she is unable to process memories or experiences, which leaves him or her feeling that their actions are meaningless (*ibid*). This is seen in the manner that Faith slowly begins to lose her sense of continuity. One loss after another finally results in Faith losing not only her childhood, but also her ability to feel safe or secure. The adult Faith is plagued by nightmares of these repressed memories, and asserts that her inability to remember what happened that night is more frightening than the truth. Her inability to remember her past has deeply compromised her ability to conceive of a future. Immobilised by trauma, Faith frequently asserts that she is a spectator to her own life, making it impossible to embody her own existence or selfhood.

Mieke Bal defines selfhood as "relational, based in language and culture, and dependent on others for its constitution and sustenance" (Editor's note xii). The self, then, is contingent on relationships with others. What begins as a biological function, attachment to a maternal or paternal figure, becomes crucial to how children navigate their experiences in the world, and establish not only a sense of self, but also a sense of how their community is structured. Faith's sense of self is constantly reconstituted in relation to her parents or caregivers. According to Van der Kolk, losing a sense of parental security can be incredibly psychologically damaging, and should a parent become a source of danger, this will have a lasting effect on a child (32).

This understanding of the child's selfhood as relational is fundamental to Melanie Klein's theories of infant ego development. Explicating Klein, Julia Segal explains that the child views his or her "mother and the other people around him through 'fantasies' which [are] constructed from external reality modified by his own feelings and existing beliefs and knowledge" (28), and maintains that "children relate to the whole world through their unconscious fantasies. Nothing is seen simply as it is: some kind of unconscious fantasy is attached to every perception: structuring, colouring and adding significance to it" (29). The actual behaviour of the parents then reinforces or disrupts these fantasies. Van der Kolk's argument is supported, then, by Klein's view that a parent's behaviour will have long-term effects on their child.

Within the novel, these long-term effects are visible in Zadok's protagonist, who is deeply disturbed by the events of her childhood. Clearly, witnessing spousal violence, experiencing abandonment by her father, and then watching her mother's psychological breakdown, result in Faith seeing her parents as dangerous, something which deeply fractures her ability to relate to other people as well as to herself. She says: "What I knew of bad things in life, I knew from [my mother]. All the stories she'd ever told me about the bad things … she now seemed capable of herself" (*GST* 98).

<u>The fairy-sick mother and the child of the fairies</u>

With no knowledge of her father's whereabouts, and Bella having retreated into her bedroom, an opening is created for Faith to establish a relationship with a new caregiver. In such situations, where the primary caregiver is rendered invalid by illness or other factors, a child's need for psychological security increases exponentially (Van der Kolk 32). For Faith, being separated from her mother leads to feelings of severe isolation and discontinuity. It is at this point that Nomsa enters the narrative. With these rapid changes and disappearances in her life, it is Nomsa who, in Faith's eyes, becomes "the only solid thing in the world" (*GST* 109). Fearing her mother's "illness", Faith turns to Nomsa as the only person able to provide the stability and safety that childhood should include, the type of nurturing which Bella has been increasingly unable to provide.

On their first meeting, Nomsa already shakes one of the foundations upon which Faith has based her reality: the fairies. Faith is shocked when Nomsa laughs at Bella's malevolent creations. Instead, Nomsa

offers a trade: “I also know of someone special who brings rain. If you tell me about your fairy I will tell you about my queen” (*GST* 74). Nomsa, therefore, provides Faith with an alternative belief structure and way viewing the world. Not only is she capable of providing the nurturing that Faith is lacking, but her cultural myths also appear less menacing. Moreover, the myths Nomsa is willing to impart are not based on secrecy and deception like Bella’s fairies. Rather, Nomsa offers to tell Faith stories about whomever it is that brings the rain, implying a figure who is imbued with the values of renewal, growth and nurturance. Bella, naturally, feels threatened by Nomsa’s appearance, telling Faith: “That woman doesn’t belong here … She’ll make the fairies leave … I don’t want us to be alone, Faith” (*GST* 75-6). As Faith grows more attached to Nomsa, Bella retreats into herself. Eventually, Faith declares: “I decided that I would no longer love Mother. I would never again care what happened to her” (*GST* 103).

At this stage in the narrative, however, Faith’s understanding of the world does not allow for anyone else’s trauma to be explained. She will only begin to comprehend what life was like for her mother when she returns to the farm, fifteen years later. Only as an adult, and in a bid to understand what happened to her as a child, will Faith be able to relate to her mother and what she must have gone through. Caruth’s comment on the shared nature of trauma seems apt here:

> not as the story of the individual in relation to the events of his own past, but as the story of the way in which one’s trauma is tied up with the trauma of another, the way in which one’s trauma may lead, therefore, to the encounter with another, through the very possibility and surprise of listening to another’s wound. (8)

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Although the causes of Bella’s psychological breakdown are not fully explored in the first half of the novel, her belief in the fairies can be read as an initial attempt to voice her inner turmoil. In an article entitled “Young People’s Mental Health: The Spiritual Power of Fairy Stories, Myths and Legends”, Steven Walker argues that, within western mythology, fairies typically have healing abilities and act as medium of communication between humans and the natural world (83). Walker posits that “mental health practitioners can utilise such powerful narratives therapeutically and in a culturally respectful and spiritually innovative way” (81). While his article focuses on the uses of fairy tales in therapy with adolescents, it is not entirely implausible that Bella’s paintings and stories are an attempt to exorcise her own personal demons and to re-establish some sort of control over her life. One may argue, then, that Bella’s use of the fairy world is her

means of establishing her own narrative of a life fraught with difficulty. Faith, however, becomes convinced that Dead Rex has stolen her mother's soul, and she begins to refer to Bella as "the fairy-sick Mother" (*GST* 127). Steven Krugman argues that in such situations, a vulnerable child protects itself "by splitting the image of the abusive parent into 'good' and 'bad' parts" (134).

This process of splitting is typical of Klein's paranoid-schizoid position, during which the infant learns to distinguish between love and cruelty. Segal explains:

> Splitting is an action undertaken in phantasy which can be used to separate things which belong together. A father or a mother, for example, can be seen in two distinct ways: as, on the one hand, a weak, kind loving person and, on the other, as powerful, undermining and dangerous, each view 'cut out' from a more whole one. The two perceptions may never be recognised as relating to the same person. (34)

Within the novel, this phenomenon is clearly evident when Faith begins to see her mother as two distinct beings, the "fairy-sick mother" and the mother with the capacity to love. There is, however, a danger when splitting occurs. Segal explains: "When one set of perceptions and fantasies is kept apart from another, the child (or adult) splits not only the object but also him or herself" (34). At times, splitting is quite visible in Faith, both in her vacillating feelings toward her mother, and later through her identification with the fairies. The fairies, however, complicate the relationship between Bella and Faith. At one point, Bella says to her daughter: "I see them, Faith, the other world, the real one. It's perfect there, no one will bother us … I belong there, Faith, you belong there, with me, with us" (*GST* 100). At the height of her psychological breakdown, the fairies become entirely real to Bella, with their world seeming more real than her current existence. This is further compounded by Bella suggesting that Marius has not really abandoned his family, but is actually waiting for Bella and Faith to leave the farm, and join him in the fairy world. Faith, on the other hand, finds this idea terrifying and believes her mother is transforming:

> The way her eyes sank into their sockets yet glowed a brighter blue than they'd ever been. The way she walked, the strange shuffle like she never lifted her feet suddenly erupting into what seemed like flight … Mother was becoming one of them, crossing over into the realm of the fairies. Hadn't she said they were coming to get us? (*GST* 98-9)

Initially, Bella's paintings of the fairies may have been her own lifelong attempt to cast out her own psychological problems and give herself a sense of agency. However, as Walker notes, fairies "can also, when used as metaphor, frighten children and potentially cause psychological harm" (83). This can be seen in Bella's increasing inability to function, leading Faith to believe that fairies are "closing in on the house, surrounding us until there was no escape" (*GST* 79). The more unstable Bella becomes, the more Faith fears her mother and, as a consequence, the fairies become even more menacing.

When Faith begins to believe that the fairies are making Bella ill, she unconsciously splits negative experiences and projects them onto the fairies, bringing her own fears to life. Commenting on Klein's work, Segal provides insight on such projections:

> Klein thought that the importance of parents' actual behaviour lay in the way it was taken by the child as confirmation or disproof of existing phantasies. Parents added new elements to the children's phantasy worlds but generally these tended to reduce the terrifying aspect of the child's phantasies: however well or badly the parents behaved, reality was less monstrous than the child's phantasies. (29)

This argument would suggest that Faith uses the fairies to establish a fantasy in which they are responsible for Bella's illness. The reasoning for this is most likely two-fold. Firstly, the fantasy allows Faith to avoid the role that the abusive marriage has played in Bella's depression, and secondly, Faith is able to blame a third party for the neglect she experiences at the hands of her mother. Thirdly, the nightmarish quality of Faith's fantasies is more monstrous than reality, allowing Faith moments of respite in which she sees Bella as her mother once more.

Bella's descent into madness terrifies Faith for two reasons. Firstly, with her father's physical absence and her mother's psychical absence, Faith's ability to discern an identity based on parental figures is entirely dismantled, and she loses what self-knowledge and ability she has to navigate the world. Secondly, Faith fears becoming like her mother. While the accidental shooting of Nomsa is the central traumatic event of the novel, the inability to recognise Bella as the woman Faith once knew as her mother is itself traumatic. Even after Bella is incarcerated, Faith still believes in the fairies and starts telling Molly the stories about the fairies, embellishing the stories that Bella once told her. It is apparent here that the fairies are not only Bella's creation. In fact, similar to the transmission of trauma, it would appear that tales of the fairies can also be passed on. Simply put, Faith's wholehearted beliefs become her reality.

> Reading Faith's relationship with the fairies through a Kleinian lens, one could argue that Faith has established a mode of projective identification with the fairies. Michael Feldman explains "projective identification" as a process whereby the infant projects (primarily) harmful contents onto his object (for example, into his mother) … In so far as the mother then comes to contain the bad parts of the self, she is not only felt to be bad, as a separate individual, but is *identified* with the bad, unwanted parts of the self. (75)

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While the mother is usually the target of this process, in this case Faith has extended the projective identification to include the fairies. Having posited the fairies as evil, Faith is deeply disturbed when her mother tells her: "you're a child of the fairies … I think the day I conceived, the fairies came and put you inside me. I used to wonder about that; your father wasn't even there, I think" (*GST* 129). Confusing her daughter's sense of belonging is enough to evoke a physical reaction, which is why Faith's response is again somatic: "I ran outside and threw up" (*ibid*). Hearing this from Bella also deeply disturbs Faith's sense of self. Removing Marius entirely as a paternal figure fragments Faith's identity, as if effectively re-writing her history.

Not willing to believe her mother about the manner of her conception, Faith begins to examine her face in a compact mirror and to compare it to Bella's painting of Dead Rex. She comments that "there was something about the way he looked at me, something in the expression, that seemed to me to be the same eye looking out from the compact" (*GST* 132-3). This initial physical similarity begins to rupture Faith's sense of self, and she searches the painting for more comparisons:

> There was a knob that stuck out on my wrist – everyone had it, I knew, but mine had always protruded more than other people's … I held my hand up and looked at his hand … *There, in the painting, were the same long fingers, the same knuckles, the same knobbly wristbone. Even the tiny freckle between the knuckle on my little finger and my ring finger was mimicked on his hand, on the hand of the most terrible fairy.* I backed away slowly, not willing to believe what my eyes were telling me. *My whole life was a lie. I wasn't even a person like other people were.* I was something else, a Halfling, a changeling. I knew from the fairy stories Mother read to me that people hated Halflings, left them in the woods to die. That was probably why Papa had left, because he knew and he hated me. (*GST* 133. My emphasis)

Although Bella has created these paintings, and based a certain likeness of them on her daughter, it is Faith's own process of splitting and projective identification that leads to the epistemological confusion. Despite having previously projected unwanted evils onto the fairies, Faith begins to struggle with separating the image she sees in the mirror from the painting of Dead Rex. Her fears of her father leaving are reinforced by the conviction that she must be a "Halfling", or something vile and unnatural, some kind of ruptured, half thing. It would then appear logical that Faith's first experiences of splitting arise from feeling un-homed in her body, and that this is a result of her wish to purge the undesirable from herself.

The primary danger of splitting lies in the fact that, through the process of splitting off and then projecting the part of one's self that the subject finds unbearable, the subject ultimately diminishes his or her own abilities and creates an object which is unbearable (Caper 139). In due course, the object becomes a receptacle for the purgation of these unbearable elements, but this is to the detriment of the individual's future, as this ultimately leads to a severe state of repression and an inability to face the world. Slowly, it becomes apparent that the fairies could represent those parts of herself that Faith finds unbearable. The fairies

begin to house the qualities that Faith most mistrusts in herself, and she soon finds them an easy targetof blame. When she thinks she may be accused of eavesdropping, Faith says: "I could blame one of the fairies" (*GST* 64), and later, after hurling a compact mirror at the painting of Dead Rex and having it ricochet and hit her on the head, she comments: "I blamed him anyway, feeling sure he had somehow been responsible for making the compact bounce" (*GST* 136).

The ease with which Faith places blame upon the fairies changes the manner in which we read the prologue. Only towards the end of the novel does Faith begin to remember the night of Nomsa's death. The prologue, however, is told from Dead Rex's perspective. Dead Rex, we are told, rouses Faith and leads her to Nomsa's room, commanding her: "He be hurting her … Hurt him back" (*GST* 3). The implication of this is somewhat distressing

Dead Rex, in a bid to cause more pain, has brought Faith to the site of Nomsa's rape, and he is the one who wills her to fire the gun. Faith's belief in the fairies is worrying here, because she is not the one to blame if Dead Rex tricked her into shooting Nomsa. Disassociating her actions from herself and projecting them onto Dead Rex appears to grant her an easy form of absolution in an unconscious attempt to escape trauma and guilt.

Repression, spirit possession and a return to the farm

Faith's repression, then, seems to shield her from memories that she cannot face. The fifteen years of her life that Faith spends in Johannesburg are mostly devoid of any form of meaningful existence, until she hears news of Bella's death, and the memories and nightmares come flooding back. Despite her repeated vows to despise her mother, Faith is still shocked to hear of her death, re-experiencing the loss of her mother as she did when she was a child. Faith comments that "the dreams are like ghosts, tantalizing images that slip away before I have time to fully grasp them … Perhaps Mother's causing them from the grave, unwilling to be forgotten and left to rot. The thoughts chill me" (*GST* 187).

Shortly after Bella's death, Faith encounters Elizabeth Mabutu, a self-proclaimed herbalist and healer, who offers to pray for her. Their meeting is a chance encounter on the street, but the older woman instantly makes Faith wary by telling her: "there is bad inside you … bad things have happened and need to come out" (*GST* 191). Unlike when she was a child, Faith regards this mystical encounter with cynicism and apprehension. While the fairies initially offered a world of magic and possibility, Mrs Mabutu's abilities are highly doubted by Faith. Despite what may be the scepticism of adulthood, the words that follow terrify Faith with their injunction to: "Go home" (*ibid*). The fact that her body responds first, signals the suggestion that Mrs Mabutu has reached something deeply repressed within Faith's unconscious.

It is, therefore, unsurprising that, shortly after this, Faith finds her "thoughts fragmented, sliding around [her] mind, intangible, momentary, briefly incandescent", and even believes that she hears Dead Rex calling out to her (*GST* 201). The implication is that Faith is beginning to recall some of the events sur-

rounding Nomsa's death, but cannot clearly place them. What appears possible is that, similar to the psychical process of splitting, Faith has managed to create a separation of physical spaces in an attempt to repress her memories. The split landscapes of farm and city stand as a metonym for the split in Faith's psyche, which requires reintegration. In fact, the entire novel is populated by physical separations that mirror Faith's unconscious feelings of disjuncture. As a child, there is a distance on the farm between the safety of the house and the danger of the orchard, representing the interior and exterior dangers in Faith's world, while the separation of Marius and Bella forces Faith to split her parents into good and bad qualities, much as she later finds herself doing with Bella and Nomsa. Even on a structural level, the novel is split in half by a large temporal gap.

Despite the vast divide in cultural identification, Mrs Mabutu is clearly able to connect with Faith's situation, and finally convinces her that the nightmares will not stop until she re-establishes connections with her ancestors. This, of course, is not something Faith is able to do until she returns to the farm. Arriving at the farm, Faith is amazed at the results: "even as my tired body groans with each uneven step, my soul sighs with relief" (*GST* 253). Within days, she begins to have more frequent dreams about the night of Nomsa's death, but Faith is still unable to separate dream from reality. It takes an encounter with Oom Piet to jog enough of Faith's memory to finally recall the events of that night. Piet is clearly concerned about Faith's reasons for returning, and he pushes her for details, eventually trying to see if she can recall any of the details surrounding the night of Nomsa's death. "You didn't hear something, wake up in the night?" he asks (*GST* 303). At first Faith only recalls witnessing him rape Nomsa, and is outraged that her mother protected him by taking the blame. But she realises the truth when Piet remarks: "She didn't protect me, girlie, she protected you" (*GST* 316). Faith comments that his words "reach into the core of me and rip me apart, things I don't want to believe but I can feel, in the soul of me, are true" (*ibid*).

Having recovered her memories of that night, Faith becomes even more ill than she was in Johannesburg. As the days blend into one another, Faith finds herself unable "to tell the difference between sleep and waking", and constantly hears voices whispering "Killer" (*GST* 319). The fairies re-emerge to haunt Faith, although none frequents her as often as Dead Rex, who attempts to consume Faith and draw her into the fairy world – possibly allowing Faith to understand how Bella experienced her depression. When she was a child, Dead Rex terrified Faith, but now his presence threatens to destroy her entirely, as her body literally begins to waste away. Eventually a sangoma is called, and his prognosis mirrors that of Mrs Mabutu: "There is a thing inside her, a thing that has been there for many years, maybe since she was a small girl. It grows. She will not let it go; for some reason she wants to hold it inside her, even though it will destroy her. If we are to help her, we need to get it out" (*GST* 321-2).

Faith makes extensive use of splitting and projective identification in her relationship with the fairies, which gives Dead Rex the agency to consume her now. These psychological phenomena are responsible for diminishing an individual's capacity to function as a fully actualised subject, suggesting that Faith's relationship with the fairies plays a large part in what plagues her now. Ivey and Myers suggest that

"frustrating interactions with caregivers, coloured too by the infant's projection of aggressive instinctual impulses onto them, result in the internalisation of 'bad' objects" (79). These bad objects are then split off and evacuated through fantasy, such as Faith's construction of the fairy world, in an attempt to preserve good internal objects. However, as Ivey and Myers note:

> In some cases, our internal world is felt to be, intermittently or constantly, a war-like space in which our good internal objects are perpetually threatened by invading bad objects and parts of self identified with these objects. In this situation, primitive defences based on the splitting off and projective evacuation of bad objects impoverish the internal world and lead to the perception of the external world as malevolent and persecutory. (*ibid*)

After their initial encounter, Mrs Mabutu arrives at the house that Faith shares with Molly and Mia with the simple explanation: "The child sought me out" (*GST* 229). She continues:

> Her spirit is restless, she has buried it for too long in darkness. There are many restless spirits around you, child … Some are ancestors, but there are others. Some very bad. Your mother collected these spirits around her, they brought sickness to your house … Your ancestors have spoken through me to try to help you … I, though, cannot afford to ignore the ancestors, so I tell you this one final thing. Go home. It is only at your home that you will free your spirit. (*GST* 230)

Mrs Mabutu makes it clear to Faith that Bella courted malevolent spirits, and that these have brought sickness upon her. Her last words to Faith reiterate this: "If you don't return home to free your spirit, you will get sick. You already are" (*GST* 231). In African traditions, suggests Suzanne Maiello, "[i]llness is not split into either physical or mental suffering. Body and mind are a unit … Consequently, the approach of traditional healers to illness is holistic and includes the biological, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions" (248). While a more western clinical approach concerns itself with the split world view that emanates from Cartesian thinking, an approach which treats body and mind as separate entities, traditional African healing is concerned with a holistic world view, treating body and mind as one, as well as maintaining connections with ancestral figures. Locating the human at the interface of different aspects of being, this view makes psychological reintegration possible in ways that are very different from the typical conception of clinical healing, which tends to the cognitive-behaviourist on the one hand and pharmacology on the other. In understanding the role that traditional healers play in South Africa, I draw on Gavin Ivey and Tertia Myers's study "The Psychology of Bewitchment". They define bewitchment as:

> a culturally sanctioned supernatural belief system used defensively by individuals to protect themselves against acknowledging and experiencing a range of painful and anxiety-provoking feelings, typically involving hostility, envy, and loss. Bewitchment arises when individuals split off and project problematic self aspects elicited by adverse or stressful experiences. (75)

In their study, Ivey and Myers make extensive use of the Kleinian psychoanalytical model to interpret a more traditional African belief and integrate its manifestations within a western therapeutic understanding. Although the two models appear to be divergent, the integration of two different schools of thought that nevertheless reveal an epistemological congruity in treating ideas as things allows psychotherapists to manage a broad spectrum of patients. According to Mrs Mabutu, then, Faith is experiencing an illness

which, although spiritual in nature, is inseparable from her body. Maiello argues that "[b]reaking the relation with the ancestors brings about illness, just as massive splitting, projective identification and 'attacks on linking' lead to severe psychopathological symptoms" (255).

Given Faith's experience of such a "war-like space", it is not surprising that traditional healers view these symptoms as bewitchment or illness. Bewitchment is "characterised by a preoccupation with destructive events occurring inside one's body … Victims frequently report feeling that they are being attacked from within" (Ivey and Myers 80). These feelings of being attacked are clearly present in Faith. The fairies, who have not bothered Faith for years, make an unwelcome return. Faith experiences this as an attack from within, but the manifestations clearly affect her whole body, and she feels like the fairies are "clawing [her], trying to rip [her] into small pieces to be devoured and regurgitated" (*GST* 320-1).

Over a period of three nights, the traditional healer stays in a hut with Faith, trying to draw the malevolent presence out of her body. During the first night, the healer spreads tar on Faith's stomach, which slowly sinks into her. The second night, Faith undergoes a transformation: her mind is compared to a pupating worm – the hard shell around her falls away and she feels reborn after the sangoma appears to plunge his hands into her abdomen and extract the bad object. This transformation is possible only after the evil within Faith has been removed. Within the discourse of traditional African healing, these bad spirits have been contained and banished from her body. While a Kleinian perspective of splitting would seem to perpetuate the process of separating elements of the psyche, it is only when Faith allows herself to be entirely consumed that she is reborn. As she surrenders herself to the protection of the traditional healer, he is able to contain fully that which bewitches her and extracts it from her body. Finally, after the bad object is removed from her body, Faith awakens on the third night to find the fairies absent: "They're gone, for the first time I can remember they are not there and I'm alone. I'm an empty shell, hollow and vacant, yet somehow I feel free" (*ibid*). In her own experience with traditional healers, Maiello reflects that "the sangoma's function seemed to be to re-establish channels of communication between the internal and the external world at deep unconscious levels" (246). For Faith, then, this encounter dispossesses her of the presences that pervaded her daily existence, reintegrating balance between her "good" and "bad" objects.

Ivey and Myers conclude that "the bewitched person is … operating from the paranoid-schizoid position, which makes it difficult to acknowledge and own one's hostile feelings, to evaluate interpersonal situations clearly, and to distinguish between reality and fantasy" (82). An individual in the paranoid-schizoid position, then, has difficulty negotiating the boundaries between the conscious and the projections of the unconscious, as well as an inability to manage interpersonal relationships with sufficient empathy. Ultimately, the help of the traditional healer suggests that Faith may be able to move away from the paranoid-schizoid position into the depressive position, wherein she would be able to concern herself with the well-being of others. This position, which concerns itself with the state of intersubjective relationships, is also fundamental to the traditional African world view, which decentres the subject, and is in stark opposition to the individualism of the western Cartesian subject.

Nevertheless, despite the potential that this encounter holds, it is not as fully realised as the earlier parts of the novel. While Faith's childhood and time in Johannesburg are covered in some detail, her recovery is perhaps a little too quick and convenient to be really convincing. The entire encounter with the healer is barely two pages long, which hardly seems sufficient to purge the harrowing events described in detail in the other sections. It may be a little too easy and too convenient that Faith never mentions her guilt over killing Nomsa, or acknowledges what Bella sacrificed for her. Oom Piet practically delights in Faith realising that she shot Nomsa, and there is never any sense that he will ever face rape charges. This could bring into question whether the novel really offers any true message of reconciliation.

Conclusion: Community and the other

Mieke Bal argues that interaction within a community is necessary for healing to occur: "the incapacitation of the subject – whose trauma or wound precludes memory as a healing integration – can be overcome only in an interaction with others" (x). Once purged of the fairies, Faith shows a vague awareness – for the first time – that community may be necessary for the development of selfhood, and that she has spent years pushing people away.

The first person she comes into contact with is the man who has healed her, and she realises that they "have spent an eternity together in this room and [she] know[s] he has seen the things that [she has] seen. [They] have a shared past, yet [she has] never seen him properly before" (*GST* 323). The healer is the closest person she has to a witness, and Faith understands that, in having cast the spirits out, the healer has established a spiritual connection with her, even if she does not have the opportunity to acknowledge his presence.

Furthermore, the man enables her to mourn her losses. "The tears flow easily," says Faith, "for Papa and Mother and Nomsa, for Oupa and Grandma English … for Molly, for the fairies, and finally for my small self that died with Nomsa" (*GST* 324). Part of what she held onto for fifteen years is the pain associated with all the people she feels that she has lost. Of course, she finally remembers that she still has Molly and Mia in her life, and she asks: "I wonder what ever possessed me to doubt them, to flee the safety of their friendship. Of my family" (*GST* 326). It is in reuniting with the two women that Faith is finally able to banish Dead Rex. In the epilogue, Dead Rex tells the reader that he sees the three women burning his painting and banishing him. Faith ends this novel on an optimistic note as she gathers the family she still has. The dialogical resolution of these endings suggests a movement towards communality in South African fiction that encourages the establishment of a developed form of intersubjectivity that can support individuals in their experiences of loss.

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