The menace of rape and reconstruction of identities in selected works of Coetzee, Mda and Tlhabi

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

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I hold a PhD in Language and Literature with English and am qualified to edit academic work of such nature for cohesion and coherence.

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(PhD, MA, BA Honours, B.Ed., D.Ed. – English)

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I, Onaopemipo Abigail Fayose, declare that except for the references indicated in this text, this study represents my original work. I guarantee that no similar work has been submitted by anyone at any other university or institution of higher learning.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to the Omniscient God, who saw me through the completion of this programme. He is the pillar on which my existence and survival is hinged. I dedicate this work to my parents, for their unrelenting support.

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Abstract

Writers in South Africa have actively written on topics on the rape and identity issues within the South African social and psychic spaces. However, studies on these contested matters have tended to overlook how apartheid has metamorphosed its form in post-apartheid times. This study investigates the allegorical and satirical representation in literature of the menace of rape and reconstruction of identities, and the treatment of women as subalterns within the South African social and political spaces. The study demonstrates how rape is a menace that causes lasting trauma and how it has eaten deep into the social fabric, thereby normalising violence. Violence is a tool to sustain oppression, in this context it was heightened during apartheid, and how it has continued even in post-apartheid times. Identity is then reassessed through the lens of the characters to determine how it has been constructed and reconstructed from apartheid into the post-apartheid era. By exploring the various themes in the selected literary texts, this study gauges the representations of rape and identity in fictional and biographical works to the struggle for emergence, voicing and agency. In exploring Mboti's position on apartheid studies, the study engages Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Spivak's subaltern theory to understand the corporeally manifest issues on rape and identity in the selected narratives for this study. There is an obvious concern with how identities are crafted, negotiated, and performed in the texts selected for this study on South African literature. Identity in this study is linked to race, colour, gender, position, and power. The SIT helps explain the country's racial, gender and political divides and the inherent disadvantages and consequences of such normativity. The study concludes that despite the changing landscape in South Africa, the narratives demonstrate that there is no sufficient agency for girls and women due to the highly masculinised and patriarchal nature of the post-apartheid society. However, there are a few exceptions to the rule, like Popi, who against all odds, finds her voice and becomes a new embodiment for emancipation and change in post-apartheid South Africa as depicted in *The Madonna of Excelsior*. Silence is a powerful tool authorised by patriarchal social norms and used in entrenching the female gender as subalterns. Women are continually raped, marginalised and denied a voice. This research recommends that there needs to be a balance in gender, race, and power relations to reduce the continued impact of racism, rape, violence, and power abuse in identity formation in South Africa.

Keywords: Rape, identity, allegory, apartheid, post-apartheid, South African literature, *Waiting for the Barbarians, Disgrace, The Madonna of Excelsior, Khwezi*

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Chapter One: The menace of rape and reconstruction of identities

1.1 Contextualisation

This dissertation investigates the representation of rape and identity politics in *Waiting for the Barbarians, Disgrace, The Madonna of Excelsior* and *Khwezi*. The study focuses on the literary and biographical representations of rape and the representations of race and identity as articulated in the selected texts since these are corporeally manifest and disturbingly frequent experiences in South African social and psychic spaces. Rape and identity in apartheid and post-apartheid South African literature have garnered significant attention in recent times, just as the country's social, cultural, political and economic domains are metamorphosing into something as sinister as the experiences under apartheid. In the context of this study, menace refers to the danger and threats generated by rape that spawns new pulsations for the need for identity reconstruction. Also, reconstruction in the context of this study means a re-enactment of a past event or occurrence. It is in this light that Reef (2005:2) argues that inscribing rape into contemporary South African literature is an ethically complex action that is enmeshed in the ethics of representation in general and the ethics of representing violence in particular. She submits that when authors such as Coetzee, Mda, and Tlhabi purposively selected for this study represent rape in South African literature allegorically, realistically, or metaphorically their intentions are often read as ethically dubious because readers and critics inevitably make judgments affected by their extra-textual cultural contexts and experiences. Rape is, by definition, unethical. But even writing about rape, inscribing it into the literature – is significantly an ethically complex and loaded undertaking.

South Africa battles the insidious dangers of rape in various settings across the country and linking race with the angst of reconstructing identities is an imperative research agenda. Documented evidence suggests that South Africa has one of the highest incidences of rape in the entire world, and the authors in this study use the representation of rape to do more than realistically contextualise their novels; rape is a convenient and effective metaphor for colonialism and its concomitant strategy of dispossession, subjugation, and abuse (Reef, 2005). To inscribe rape into contemporary South African literary and discursive texts is doubtlessly to step into an ethical minefield. The peculiarity of identities in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa attached to the country's history calls for a more nuanced interrogation and analysis of the nexus of social and political institutions in the post-apartheid period.

Chapman (2009) answers the question of what South African literature is today, post-apartheid or post-post-apartheid. His research focuses on South African literature during apartheid, what he crucially calls transition literature and the early post-apartheid literature. In his study, the connection between rape and identity in this period is palpably established. During apartheid, race played out in colour and class struggles for both voicing and visibility. The effect of colonisation and apartheid is long-lasting and could be felt even in early post-apartheid South African society. After the apartheid government ended, South Africa has since been described as a "rainbow nation," a term first used to represent South Africa by Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Nevitt (2015) explains that the colours of the rainbow capture the differences in South Africa's race, ethnicity, creed, language and landscapes. South Africa is a country of vast contrasts due to the diversity of its ethnicities, the political persuasions of various people and cultures, the great income inequalities, the wounds generated by apartheid, and the attempts at healing these scars in the transition to the post-apartheid era. Despite significant progress in suturing the historical racial, and economic disparities, South Africa still faces more pressing challenges related to identities, rape, representation/s, and voicing (Pecenka & Kundhlande (2013); Hove & Ndlela, (2020). This study, therefore, examines the interstitial narrative spaces where the fictional and biographical come together to illuminate what this study perceives as the new allegorical tropes in the representation of rape and violence.

According to Oyserman, Elmore & Smith (2012:69), identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define one. Identities can be focused on the past - what used to be true of one; the present - what is true of one now; or the future - the person one wishes to become, the person one feels obliged to try to become, or the person one fears one may become. Vignoles, Schwartz & Luyckx (2011) explain that identity is fundamentally fluid rather than a fixed concept, each time morphing into complex selves in space and time, as the explication of the texts in this study amplifies.

Identity is broadly divided into two major areas: personal and social. Tajfel (1978:63) defines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from knowledge of one's membership of a social group (or groups), together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." Self, gender, and racial identity are crucial to this study because of the craft and project of the selected texts. These three conceptualisations of identity in both elastic and profoundly layered styles call for an analysis that strives to locate

the turbulences generated through the literary and biographical worlds. All concepts thrive on defining and negotiating identity (Bueno, 2014). In recent South African literary and biographical works, questions of rape and identities are constantly raised and discussed in different disciplines, such as psychology, sociology, and literature. In the texts selected for this study on South African literature, there is an evident concern with how identities are crafted, negotiated, and performed. This study examines how versions of selves and others are scripted to vary yet simultaneously show deep entanglements and connections to the social and political fabric, specifically the malaise of rape and the contested conflictual identities that emerge in the interregnum. As discussed earlier, South African society was divided into two significant strata during apartheid: black and white. In between, lay the Coloured, almost black but not quite; almost white, but not quite; neither nor. These two ascribed and monolithic dichotomies greatly influenced South Africa and the notion of identity. The "them and us" dichotomy (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) in apartheid South Africa divided the nation into socially and politically constructed racial strata. Traits and qualities, social interactions, roles, and social group affiliations contribute to one's identity. In the architecture of apartheid (Hove & Ndlela, 2020), these dichotomies defined how one negotiated and navigated belonging to the socio-political, cultural, and political rifts in South Africa.

In the rape incidents this study focuses upon, there is evidence that identity is fractured at the moment of intrusion. Rape is a manifestation and a demonstration of unequal and gendered power. Moving the analysis away from conceptualisations of rape as an act of sexual desire or compulsion allows this study to advance sociological and feminist understandings of the role that social structure and power relations play. In particular, the role of patriarchy has been brought to bear on the menace of rape (Pretorius, 2002; Whisnant, 2013). Feminist scholars, in particular, have contributed to this reframing by insisting on the social construction of both gender and sexuality, leading to a refiguring of rape as a problem of socially constructed gender norms and power. Easteal (2011) defines rape as the penetration of the mouth, vagina or anus by a foreign body used by the attacker without the consent of the victim. She further explains that rape occurs to males and females regardless of their objections, but it is more prevalent among the female gender. The victim is rendered inert, non-compliant, and without their explicit permission for carnal intrusion. Rape induces dread of the attack, and its consequences engender altered states of belonging. The illustration of these is explicit in the selected narratives; in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the abuse and rape of the barbarian girl. In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, the rape of Niki. In *Disgrace*, the gruesome rape of Lucy, and in *Khwezi,*

the rape of Fezekile by Jacob Gedleyihlekisa Zuma, who later became the president of South Africa. These instances of rape show the intrusiveness of rape and how it alters the state of belonging of the characters.

Clark (2014) summarises that rape and the victim's reaction to the trauma are at the root of the subsequent identity crisis. Clark's study emphasises the strong impact that cultural shame plays in making rape an identity crime. Victims are frequently accused of rape in war and peace situations. Simply put, the victim becomes the accused; often, there is no vindication or closure for the victim/s, and the accused is freed. Identity and rape become complex processes that get entangled in how one performs their identity in the sense popularised by Judith Butler (2006). Gqola (2015) explains that rape is never tolerable, frivolous, and insignificant. It is not just about sex. The punishment for survivors who come forward is so severe that inventing rape as a type of self-immolation makes no sense because, in a patriarchal culture, the majority response to a human being "breaking the silence" is denial. As a result, many victims of rape prefer to keep quiet due to shame and the stigma, fracturing their identities in the process. In Coetzee's *Disgrace*, Lucy's rape destabilises both selfhood and nationhood. When she refuses to abort her hybrid conception, we are equally petrified by what initially reads like a narcissistic disavowal (Hove, 2022). Her capitulation to Petrus in the land deal is a potentially explosive and a political statement that recalibrates black-and-white relations in the rainbow nation.

Over the years, rape has remained a significant challenge in South Africa's social space, as catalogued in the selected texts in this study. It is, therefore, imperative to locate this study within the nexus of contestations on representations of rape and identities that are recommended by Buiten & Naidoo (2016:2). These scholars argue that in the landscape of research and scholarship, rape has been omnipresent as a backdrop to the questions of gender and women's status in South Africa. Resurfacing over the years in a range of South African scholarship on gender, it is perhaps timely to step back and consider how these discussions evolve to gauge not only our understanding of rape in South Africa but also patterns in framing this understanding through the literary and biographical texts.

Vetten (2014) explains that South Africa's high prevalence of rape and other sexual assaults has stoked alarm and anger, prompting changes in legislation, parliamentary discussions, #MeToo marches, and #NotInMyName campaigns. It has also initiated a slew of policy changes aimed at reducing the number of individuals who fall victim to rape crimes and the consequent reconstruction/s of identities. Rape in apartheid South Africa has morphed into an

intense prevalence that re-inscribes the woundedness of post-apartheid South Africa, more seriously projected in the biographical text *Khwezi*; in which a sitting president who should be representing the people is accused of raping a hapless citizen and a political relative that he is expected to protect. In insisting that the people/voters/women should participate in *Awuleth' Umshin' Wam*', the sitting president lays a boisterous claim to the phallus as an allegory of subjugation as much as he claims that the woman's body is available for his frolicking and self-gratification. This study argues, therefore, that the national president who physically molests his daughter can also be read as subverting the script of expectations as a national protector. The biographical here takes on a more nuanced allegorical trope that speaks to *Waiting for the Barbarians,* where the president, pervert and assailant, becomes symbolic of a new national barbarian.

This study privileges the reading of *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Khwez*i as critical texts in understanding the menace of rape and race. As Neimneh, Al-Shalabi & Muhaidat (2012) amply demonstrate, Colonel Joll and the magistrate act as "interrogators" in relation to the barbarian girl in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980). They seek information and secret stories about the suspected barbarian uprising and the torture practices of the Empire using different methods in their pursuits. The colonel and the magistrate (powerful imprimaturs of colonising power) are two readers of the same text: the barbarian girl's body. Joll is a violent, "harsh" reader of a passive text, while the magistrate is a "seductive" reader of the same passive yet subtle text. Joll uses torture to wring a confession from the barbarian girl. In contrast, the magistrate performs a seductive ritual of cleansing and rubbing her body to *reconstruct* the story of her torture and expiate his sense of guilt for his complicity with the Empire. The relationship between the magistrate and Joll on the one hand and the barbarian girl on the other can be read as an allegory of reading and interpretation, which, in turn, draws attention to the novel's artifice as a fictional work. We learn from such an allegory that readers approach texts differently and that one text signifies different ideas to readers. Ultimately, the triangular relationship between the barbarian girl, the magistrate, and Joll is among many other clues in the narrative that make Coetzee's novel a "plural" allegory of reading and interpretation. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* reflects the differences between the binaries ‘them and us’, the empire, and barbarians under an imperial gaze and government. The barbarians' voices are silenced, but after the political transition in *Disgrace*, it seems the difference is further broached in new and menacing dimensions. A close comparative examination of the texts selected for this study shows the fluidity of identities. Mda’s *The Madonna of Excelsior* depicts

the fluidity in gender relations over time. Popi, despite the opposition, becomes a policymaker, reflecting the changes over time. Women's voices carry the weight of their subordination and the bitterness of memorialising marginality.

Stott (2009) and Graham (2003) explain that Coetzee's *Disgrace* is a rape narrative; more specifically, it is a story in which the rape victim, Lucy Lurie, is a disarming representation of white fragility under a sinister attack from the new black regime post the political transition. She expects neither compassion nor justice for what has happened to her, portraying herself as neither a victim nor a vengeful person. Instead, she acts as a witness, adopting an attitude akin to Simone Weil's – rejecting the notion of rights and refusing to seek explanations. This represents how some victims like Lucy in *Disgrace* and Niki in the *Madonna of Excelsior* react to rape and, in the process, their sense of identity is significantly scuttled. Coetzee and Mda explicitly portray the complex raped spaces and lives of diverse South Africans during apartheid, relating them to the complexities of social and political identities. These writers take the task of representing the complexities inherent in the fabric of the social and political world. These experiences and lives and entanglements are mirrored in apartheid and post-apartheid South African literary works such as *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980)*, Disgrace* (1999), *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), and *Khwezi* (2017).

Fiction works are often considered ineluctably tied to the real world and its contingencies. Through the imagined world and words, fiction reflects and refracts the social, cultural, and political realities of the society in which it is produced and circulated. Imagining a story does not imply that one's imagination is directed away from the real world. Rather, fiction is an imaginative activity that entails creating a sophisticated picture of the events depicted in the fabula (Friend, 2017). The following texts are purposively selected for scrutiny of the representation of rape and reconstruction of identities: *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) and *Disgrace* (1998) by J.M. Coetzee, *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) by Zakes Mda and *Khwezi* by Redi Tlhabi (2017).

1.2 Theoretical framework

This study engages three theoretical standpoints: the social identity theory, Spivak's subaltern feminist position and Mboti's apartheid studies approach. The structure of social identities, the motives for identification, the fluidity between various social identities, and the consequences of identity on individuals, groups, organisations, and larger social collectives are opened for

investigation through the social identity theory (Vignoles, 2018). The ways in which people's self-concepts are founded on their participation in social groupings is referred to as social identity (Tajfel & Turner 2004). Since identity is a seminal discourse in this study, the social identity theory posited by Henry Tajfel and John Turner among other scholars is used to evaluate the various identity concepts projected and disseminated in the selected texts. Rape is a contested issue tied in within this matrix of identities.

According to Spivak (1994), subaltern women face more oppression than subaltern males. They lack sufficient representation and, as a result, cannot express themselves or convey their stories. Subaltern women are made invisible in society; their everyday difficulties are marginalised in narratives of identity and becoming. In the three texts selected in this study, these women's stories of rape and marginality and the precarity of identities are told from and focalised through male narrative voices, except for the quasi-autobiography of Khwezi. Spivak believes we must realise our role in silencing these subaltern women to listen more attentively and empathetically to their experiences.

Mboti (2018) emphasises the need for a broader study of apartheid, explaining that there has been a vigorous cross-continental debate since the 1973 Apartheid Convention and the 1998 Rome Statute over whether apartheid has reached customary status as a universal human rights violation (Bultz, 2013; Eden, 2014; Lingaas, 2019). Mboti (2021) presents Apartheid Studies as a threshold model based on the notion that apartheid never completely reaches a clear cut-off point since it metamorphoses and hides in plain sight. Apartheid Studies, therefore, is a forensic study in that it strives to aid the courts in detecting apartheid's weave and weft, despite its ability to blend and hide in plain sight. Apartheid Studies could help us comprehend how and why modern apartheid hides in plain sight under constitutional and democratically acceptable forms. This trajectory towards apartheid studies is critical to examine apartheid in the South African context and how it came to be textualised in the literary and biographical artefacts selected for this study. In an interesting application of apartheid studies to the texts analysed and evaluated in this study, I seek to establish a close fit of the tenets explicated by Mboti (2021) to assess their utility in understanding the tropes of rape, seduction and atrocities inscribed in the selected texts. It is important to state that the three theoretical standpoints provide refreshing insights into the dynamics of identities. These intersections are explored to assess the literal and allegorical tropes in the representation of rape and violence.

1.3 Texts studied and justification

Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) is an allegory. It tells the story of imperialism, and the violence that comes with it. Subaltern identities' social and psychic fabric become focalised, and their voices stifled. In this study, the novel is interpreted to delve into South Africa's experiences during apartheid. Though not explicitly stated, the allegorical modality of representation allows us access to imperial and apartheid experiences in South Africa, just like any other nation under imperial power. The story is set in an unnamed, authoritarian colonial state known as the Empire, which governs an isolated colonial colony. The fortress is manned by colonial officials, including the protagonist and the narrator, a jurist on the verge of retirement. The indigenous people are referred to as "barbarians" in the area. The novel interrogates violence, torture, rape, and subjugation of the natives. These issues are fertile ground for the exploration of scripting self and others within the matrix of phallocentric power and accessing the fetish of the female body, oftentimes represented as the land of the colonial imaginary.

Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999*)*, written in the post-apartheid era, depicts the transition phase in South Africa, the experiences of both black and white people. The story is about a University Professor, David Lurie, and the seduction of his student and subsequent rape. It is this compulsive coercion, subjugation and rape of the female body that leads to his resignation as a university Professor, yet another explicit scripting of the exploitation of women in South Africa. The highlight of the text is the rape of his own daughter, Lucy; the violence of the gang rape dramatises the horror of a crisis of consciousness, where Lucy's conscience is ultimately a crisis of past and future as she struggles to renew/re-know herself. The situation is quite different from the relationship between the Empire and the Barbarians. Coetzee articulates his opinion on the complexity and tensions of apartheid and transitional post-apartheid South Africa.

Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) focuses on two pivotal times in South African history: the Excelsior miscegenation case in 1971 and the high political tensions that preceded apartheid. Mda examines the events through the viewpoint of a mixed-race family, one of them, Niki, is a member of the "Excelsior 19." The Excelsior 19 were a group of persons who were used as political pawns for violating South Africa's Immorality Act, which prevented black and white citizens from having intercourse. Mda demonstrates how the Excelsior case's conclusion supported apartheid legislation that gave the state segregatory authority for years. It manifests

the social reality's fixed and stereotyped representations, specifically the orgies of rape, depersonalisation, and trauma that generate palpable anxieties.

Biography, as an account of a person's life written by another, belongs to the non-fictive literary genre. The stories and experiences in biographies are real and stamped with the selective experiences born out of the society. *Khwezi* is the story of a raped girl, as told by another. It is significant in this study because it depicts real life experiences. In fiction, the characters are not actual people, but the stories are also shaped to mimic experiences from real life situations. Knowing this, this study examines both fiction and non-fiction to interrogate and appreciate the experiences related to identity and rape. This study strives to establish the dilemma of representing the torturer and the tortured, that ineluctable but pivotal connection between sexuality and textuality.

Redi Tlhabi's *Khwezi* (2017) is a biography that tells the story of a woman who accused the former South African president Zuma of rape. Zuma was acquitted and Khwezi never got justice, instead, she was vilified by Zuma's supporters and was forced to flee the country. This story is a true occurrence that depicts rape, the reaction of the victim, and how society trivialises rape as a self-inflicted act where the victim invited it upon herself. It shows disparities between the judicial, democratic expectations and the contorted politicisation of the corporeal raped body of Khwezi. Although *Khwezi* is a non-fictional text, it gives an account of rape and identity in post-apartheid South Africa, making it a proximate text suitable for extrapolating real and lived experiences so that literary representations can also be more fully appreciated not as a simulacrum of reality but suggesting the intimacy with the fictive world.

The selected narratives examined in this study represent the problem of identities and the proclivity of rape that continue to characterise present-day South Africa. Rape, racial disparities, women's oppression, and marginalisation and precarity of various constituents are trending themes and focalisations in the texts selected for this study in both apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. The study is significant because it draws a connection between the past and the present. It interrogates some of the assumptions that have governed the study of South African literary and biographical works. The goal is to provide a more nuanced understanding of the South African menace of rape and reconstruction of identity, considering the full range of political, cultural, and discursive implications immanent in the selected narratives. This is still a significant area of research in South Africa, following specifically the advice proffered by Paulo Freire (1970:101) on the efficacy of problem-posing research:

'…it is as transforming and creative beings that humans, in the permanent [and dynamic] relation with reality, produce not only material goods – tangible objects – but also social institutions, ideas and concepts.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Identity is of utmost significance in South Africa due to her peculiar history. The question of identity, rape, women's subjugation, violence, racial disparities, and marginalities is a discourse that permeates South African literary works from apartheid and in recent times. During apartheid, these issues were seminal topics addressed in literary works and they continue to attract even more extensive attention in the current dispensation. This study seeks to examine the menace of rape and the complexities of identities during apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa through an examination of Coetzee, Mda, and Tlhabi's textualisation of the challenges identified. Rape in South Africa is among the highest in the world, and the significance of context has surfaced repeatedly in South African scholarship on rape. Most commonly, rape is understood as a symptom of deep and pervasive gender inequality, historical, social, and economic legacies of apartheid as well as post-apartheid state discourses that have normalised rape. In addition, the role of masculinities has received significant attention linked to social and economic history and contemporary political narratives (Armstrong, 1994; Buiten & Naidoo, 2016). The critical question addressed in this study is formulated as follows: by exploring the role of the main characters and themes surrounding rape and identity, how are rape and identity perceived in the selected literary texts? And in what ways are the continuities in the menace of rape and representation of identity viewed through the scope of the selected texts? To respond to this overarching question, the following research questions are addressed in this study:

1.5 Research questions

The study seeks to examine the menace of rape and the reconstruction of identity, focusing on the panoply of identities that emerge in the apartheid and post-apartheid imaginary as depicted in the four selected texts. To achieve this, it is guided by the following questions:

1. How is identity constructed in the selected literary texts?

2. In what ways is the phenomenon and experience of rape linked to identity, considering its magnitude as experienced by the major characters in the selected texts?

3. How are the constructions of identities connected to and inscribed in the power dynamics of South African social formation in the selected texts?

1.5.1 Research objectives

The objectives of this study are designed to:

- Determine how identity is constructed in the selected texts.
- Explore the ways the phenomenon and experience of rape is linked to identity, considering its magnitude as experienced by the major characters in the selected texts.
- Clarify and reassess the ways the construction of identities is connected and inscribed in the power dynamics of South African social formation in the selected texts.

1.6 Thesis Statement

This dissertation situates Coetzee, Mda and Tlhabi's narrative textualisations of rape and identity within the context of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. In their diverse styles and ideological orientations, these writers contribute to understanding the vexed and vexing embodiments of voicing and agency through setting and characterisation. In nuanced inscriptions, these writers emplace rape as rupture, complicating the characters' and readers' participation in South Africa as a space that marginalises women. Women's entanglement with precarity justifies this study's quest to understand identity as a social construct that determines the patterns of interaction among individuals and groups. Spivak's subaltern speaks on the relationship between the Self and the Other, the empire and the subaltern, and the texts analysed here (Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians,* Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior*) allow an evaluation of the possibilities and limitations enacted in spaces of marginality, specifically the power dynamics between empire and the barbarians. In this thesis, this selection of literary texts from the South African archive on rape and identity is read as replaying apartheid politics, and, with the benefit of reflexivity, opening new tropes on rape as a symptom of deep and pervasive gender inequality. The selected texts delve into the historical, social, and economic legacies of apartheid and post-apartheid state discourses that have normalised rape and reconstructed identities. In the texts chosen for this study, rape permeates the story, the girl in *Waiting for the Barbarian*, Lucy in *Disgrace*, Niki in the *Madonna of Excelsior* and Fezekile in *Khwezi*. In addition, even though the role of masculinities has received significant attention linked to social and economic histories and contemporary political narratives, in re-engaging

with these stories, we are allowed to re-assess and interrogate rape and identity through the lens of subalternity, apartheid studies and social identity constructs.

1.7 Research design and methods

Denzin and Lincoln (2017) in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* suggest that a qualitative research method is compatible with textual analysis. This study is based on an aesthetic assessment steeped in hermeneutics. This method enables a close critical comparison and analysis of the selected texts. A comparative study of selected narratives is set against critical theories that help to tease out the meanings in the chosen texts, specifically the vexed and contentious menace of rape and the reconstruction of identities. Finlay (2014) recommends that in engaging phenomenological analysis, there is a need to discuss the aspect of a phenomenological attitude before the explication process starts and refers to 'dwelling', 'explicating', and 'languaging.' Following this recommendation, dwelling is about ways of engaging the text so that possible meanings are discovered. Explicating is further processing of the texts and doing analyses where definitions are so woven in that there is a rich description of the whole phenomenon. Languaging is where the study is transformed into an engaging language. In addition, related literature is reviewed as a point of departure to inform the analysis emerging from the research questions. Finally, in examining the selected texts, the study seeks to discuss how these narratives constitute emancipation acts from conditions of violence and oppression and how thematic issues are articulated and interrogated in the apartheid and post-apartheid eras.

1.8 Structure of the study

Chapter 1: Introduction: The Menace of Rape and Reconstruction of Identities

The chapter introduces the study. Then, it maps the topics discussed, the statement of the problem, aims, and objectives, and ultimately the theoretical framework. Focusing on the texts under consideration begins by exploring the key terms, identity, rape, and how these evolved in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa in the selected texts. Next, the chapter considers how fiction inscribes identity as a whole, specifically female identity, raising important constructs and interpretations around race, identity, representations of culture, ethnicity, and gender.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

One prominent picture painted in all texts selected for this study is issues surrounding identity and rape. This chapter examines previous studies on the topics addressed in the study that deal with identity, racial subjugation and oppression, rape, violence, and marginality of women in apartheid and post-apartheid in South African literary spaces as described in the texts chosen and the presentation of the authors. In the selected texts, rape and issues surrounding identity and subjugation constitute a dominant trope, bringing into a sharp focus how this social malaise is treated in the narratives. Regardless of how political discourse changes or justice progresses, the people of South Africa know that their previous experiences of oppression and violence will always be a part of their identity.

Chapter 3: Social disparities, silence, and emergence of voice in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior.*

In this chapter, close readings of Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* constitute a kernel in interrogating racial subjugation, identities, and emerging voices. Apartheid in South Africa had an unforgettable and lasting effect on black people, especially women. The texts in this chapter depict the history of violence and subjugation of black people and women and the ongoing implications and effects. Identity, in this case, is not biologically but sociologically defined. This chapter examines the power dynamics that influence the outcomes of the lived and agonising realities of victims of power play, especially women in transitional and post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter 4: Rape and precarity of women in Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Tlhabi's *Khwezi*

Informed by the concept of subalternity, this chapter addresses the fictive and the biographical representations of precarity. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission exposed South Africa as a country plagued by violence that reflected and exacerbated its racial, class, and gender divisions. Women and children, especially politically and economically were disempowered and thus marginalised by patriarchy, suffered violence within and without the home, devoid of meaningful recourse to restitution. Although the country's post-apartheid constitution purported to guarantee gender equality and protection for all and access to a vote and a voice that would end victimhood, the situation has not improved for most women after apartheid (Reef 2005). Societal attitudes toward women and girls also contribute to a higher incidence of violence against them. Rape as a result of patriarchy is also addressed. Violence against women and generally in society raises serious concerns, and as a result, safety is questioned, as exemplified in Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Tlhabi's *Khwezi*

Chapter 5: Identity and rape: Reimagining post-apartheid

The last chapter summarises the preceding chapters' amplification of South African contemporary experiences with identity, racism, and rape as reflected in the literature studied. Identity is a contentious topic, and the scourge of rape looms large in South African experiences, culture, and literature, particularly from the perspective of women's precarity. Although the texts address women's oppression, identity, and social disparities, it is clear that rape is a societal malaise that calls for a more sophisticated questioning to repurpose crises in identity in the rainbow country.

Chapter Two: Review of related literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter purposively interrogates work previously done on identity and gender issues and how these amplify the disparities and menace within the South African space. Disparities are seen in race, power and gender imbalances as depicted in the works of Coetzee, Mda and Tlhabi and the relevant theoretical standpoints used in examining the literary texts. The arguments are framed from subalternity, social identity, and apartheid studies. The question of identity in South Africa became vexed and complicated as a result of apartheid and colonialism, thereby making apartheid studies a focal point for this study. As a result, addressing the concept of identity is important to understanding the study as a whole. Willoughby (2017) explains that identity is about who we are and our sense of self; this may be a fusion of several internal and external factors at first. Gender, class, race, ethnicity, and multi-layered history are all things that make part of one's identity. In the selected texts for this study, issues and the ways in which identities are inscribed and connected to the power dynamics are very clear in the social formation. This is because of the apartheid experiences that loudly permeate the narratives. Coetzee's *Disgrace, Waiting for the Barbarians* and Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* are texts that loudly mimic South Africa's experiences during apartheid and the early transition phase. *Khwezi,* on the other hand, depicts identity in the power play that occurs in the rape of a citizen by the then vice president, who eventually became the president of South Africa on the 27th of April, 2009. The one who was supposed to be protected by the so-called government was violated on several fronts. In understanding the various issues discussed in the selected texts, a look into what apartheid entails and its relation to identity are needed.

Apartheid in Afrikaans means "apartness." In the South African experience, it simply means racial and economic segregation. It was a policy used by the minority whites to subdue the majority of blacks and people of colour. The dichotomy "us and them" became very pronounced during this period. This dichotomy shows a sense of division within a group of people; this clearly is what apartheid stands for. Muiu (2008) explains that White Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa during the first half of the twentieth century was based on the conscious creation of a shared and coherent Afrikaner cultural and ethnic identity in reaction to British colonialism. The emergence of an indigenous black African counter-nationalism in the second half of the twentieth century was based on recovering and recuperating previously

marginalised norms and values (Jacobs, 2016). South Africa's history was militarised and undemocratic. The Afrikaner Nationalist Party's apartheid policy divided the country along racial lines from 1948 until 1994. There are significant parallels between this time of white minority administration and Brazil's military rule. The militarisation of white society was necessary to maintain apartheid and promote minority control. The presence of military vehicles near black townships acted as a constant reminder of Africans' heavily policed state, restricting both their movement and freedom of speech (Penfold, 2017); this played out over and over in Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* and in Coetzee's allegorical novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*. The situation in South Africa was a case of racism against black Africans, an instance where any manifestation of black identity was seen as a threat to the minority whites.

South Africa is a country with diverse identities. Africa is a continent of variety due to the complicated history of distinct ethnic groups and nation states, differences and similarities in their experiences, and cultural and religious overlaps. Individually and collectively, the people who make up African nations have a rich history. They were similarly deconstructed and oppressed by colonial structures that tainted their identity and destroyed their self-worth. This marks the starting point for any discussion of identity in the context of South Africa. According to Brar & Singh (2011), the search for African identity is one of the core themes in the majority of great works of African literature, and so it has a vital place in the writers' attempt to clarify the African identity and pressing forces on the subconscious. Adam & Van de Vijver (2017:115) posit ‘the discourse on identity and culture is vital in Africa due to its historical past. The experience of colonialism and, specifically 'apartheid' in South Africa have long shaped the culture and identities of different groups within the country’. This study therefore selected specific narratives to trace how identities are reconstructed within the South African social space.

Moonsamy (2015) explains that many cultural and literary theorists have emphasised how post-apartheid nationalism relies on the continuous reinterpretation of history, resulting in an archive that has continually aligned itself with the future at the expense of the past. However, the study shows that contemporary literary representations of historical occurrences represent a perceived weakness in this regard. Although times are fast changing in South Africa's literary space, most writers still heavily rely on history, albeit with certain modifications. Despite the continuous change in post-apartheid South Africa, issues arising in fictional and non-fictional texts can still be traced back to apartheid. This is because issues on rape and identity are deeply

rooted in the South African social fabric and can be traced to periods before apartheid. However, violence was further heightened during apartheid when it was constitutionalised.

2.2 The notion of identity

Mead (1967:184) maintains that self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth but arises in the process of social experiences and activity. The idea is that identities are formed and shaped by the input of others within a social setting. Tajfel (1978) postulates that social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group membership(s). According to Bornman (2003:24) identity is a social construction through which people acquire meaning and a sense of belonging. Gender, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, history, class, and location are all platforms that are appropriated for identification. Personal, sub-national, national, and supra-national identities are all possible. This implies that identity is not limited to a single code but may extend beyond the established spheres of influence possessed by different persons and countries. The question of identity in present day South Africa, is still a burning one. Despite the so-called breakdown of racial segregation, the "rainbow nation" is not entirely free of racial codes and categories.

De Kock (1992) explains that post-apartheid writings involve actively pinpointing the wrongs done by villains, on one hand. On the other hand, narratives are used to heal and forge new identities. Righting the wrong through writing, either fictional or non-fictional, helps to ensure that history is not forgotten, while looking forward to healing and newly negotiated identities. With her history of apartheid and colonialism, South Africa tries to grapple with the challenge of encouraging oneness, shared understanding and belonging among its citizens. The problem of identity in South Africa is a lot more complex than that of many other countries where cultures and beliefs are more homogeneous across the globe. It is about the divisions which characterise the interaction of various groups and identities, the peculiarity of identities and social differences (Louw & Foster, 1992). The country is built on a foundation of divisions: race, ethnicity and socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality, religion, language, location, area, and a host of other social disparities. As discussed in the next section, the country is still navigating through the changes that came as a result of its apartheid history, in which racial, ethnic, and social divisions shaped people on both a personal, political, and social level.

In South Africa, people are categorised frequently into four racial groups: African/Black, white, coloured, and Indian. The coloured came to be as a result of complicit and illegal relations between white men and black women, either forcefully or freely. In apartheid South

Africa this was forbidden and seen as an abomination, an immoral act. Consequently, there were stipulated penalties and punishments for those who transgressed the Immorality Act which is discussed extensively later in the study. The affiliations between formerly enslaved people, Khoisan, and European colonists resulted in the coloured. Indians are a small but powerful ethnic group. Individuals of Indian ancestry came in to the Cape as enslaved people, and when indentured labour was necessary to tend the Natal sugar-cane fields in the 1860s, a large inflow of individuals of Indian ancestry occurred. Hino *et al.* (2018) record that Indians have remained a strikingly homogeneous and internally cohesive group with a strong feeling of cultural heritage. Because race has long been the most significant kind of social identification in South Africa, it takes primacy in our discussion of identity. The question on identity is a result of South Africa's long history of social differentiation and the literature on this topic is quite extensive. During apartheid, every South African was issued an identity certificate categorising each person in racial terms. The Population Registration Act (1950) made this construction of identities possible. The natives were later altered to Bantu and the coloured were subdivided into seven groups, including the Indians and Chinese. All these further ensured that the whites remained in the top tier and had access to better education, employment, and quality care than the other race classifications (Hino *et al.*, 2018).

The 2017 Report of the South African Reconciliation Barometer Survey shows that language, a proxy for ethnicity, and race, are by far the most significant identities among South Africans (Potgieter, 2017). During apartheid, Afrikaans was the language of instruction, therefore making it superior to other languages and Afrikaners had complete dominance on the economy. This had a lot to do with identity and the segregation that came with being black during apartheid. In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Afrikaans was the main language of instruction until a change came through democracy. Adam de Vries asserts "Afrikaners will never bite the dust…" (Mda 2002:148), a statement that reinforces the power that the Afrikaners had during apartheid. Language and ethnicity divided the people and was a major way to determine the social identity of each race. This in turn influenced economic and social class, power, and social interactions. According to SARBS (2017), language is the crucial cause of division in the country for just 4% of the population, whereas race is the primary factor for 24% of the population. The explanation above gives a clear picture of the attachment between language and identity in the South African context. Each ethnic group's language is closely affiliated with their sense of identity. As a result, the two cannot be separated. Taking a closer look at the statistics mentioned above, most South Africans consider race and

language as their primary identity, with race taking the upper hand. Apartheid came to an end in 1994, and it signalled the transition to democracy and a new beginning for the country. It spurred hopes for a new South African communal identity that would surpass the racial and social past under apartheid. As a result, the notion of "a rainbow nation" or a "nation united in diversity" was conceived. But for the study, it is vital to review the literature on apartheid and what it entails.

2.3 Apartheid Studies

Apartheid studies create a model that presents apartheid crimes, algorithms, and peculiarities, a definite cut-off point of crisis that apartheid never fully reaches since it evolves and hides in plain sight (Mboti, 2022:221). Apartheid studies is a juristic discipline because it enables legal bodies such as the apex and constitutional courts to identify crimes perpetuated during apartheid and even apartheid crimes that have continually shaped the lives of citizens in the current dispensation. Apartheid studies examine the scenes, point out their oddities and continuities, expose their threads, and expose their singular unconstitutionality. Apartheid studies help understand how and why modern apartheid concealed in plain sight is reimagined; modalities that were not in the open are updated to align with the democratic order and capitalist practice while avoiding the legal gaze. The study focuses on bringing apartheid to justice because somehow, South Africa is still reeling from the effects of its apartheid past. Considering it as a form of revisitation, the forensic study helps resurrect or recreate hidden or long-gone scenes. It is then used to account for the inexplicable sins of apartheid, as the then indescribable is no longer unutterable. According to Mboti (2022:226) ‘apartheid does not end through a change of government, or the coming of democracy… Democracy is thus not a solution to apartheid, it is a subsequent, more virtuous, phase of apartheid.’ By comparing the themes in the apartheid and post-apartheid texts, the study examines how apartheid has changed in the post-apartheid times. It is no longer discrimination based on colour, but gender and political affiliations. During apartheid, discrimination was solely based on colour and race, but with its metamorphoses in post-apartheid era, it is mostly politicised and based on gender. The treatment of women and the subaltern and the silencing of the voice of women, speak volumes to the entrenching of violence and patriarchal values in South Africa’s social and political space. The violence perpetrated on ‘the Barbarian girl’, Niki, Lucy and Fezekile, speaks loudly on the practice of apartheid which is concealed in plain sight. For all these victims, justice is never served, which is indicative of many others in real life South Africa.

2.4 The Concept of Subalternity

The term subaltern simply means a person of lower status. And for this study, it is a term that helps in unravelling the position and situation of women, blacks, and coloureds generally in apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Moreover, it is a term that consolidates how power is used as a means of oppression even in post-apartheid South Africa. These concepts have been previously interrogated by various scholars, among them Gramsci (1971) and Fanon (1963); but in this study, Spivak's standpoint on subalternity takes prominence. It is a concept and experience that is deployed to address issues surrounding rape, identities, and race in the selected literary texts. In this sense, the subaltern refers to populations that are socially, politically, and geographically marginalised by and through the hegemonic power structure of the colony and colonial countries in critical theory and postcolonialism. Peasants, labourers, and other persons denied access to hegemonic authority are examples of subaltern classes. The term and experience of the "subaltern" comes from Gramsci's work on cultural hegemony, which highlighted those that are barred from a society's established mechanisms for political representation, and so denied the methods by which individuals have a voice in their community.

Gramsci had the ‘Southern Question’ in mind when he initially conceived the subaltern as a way of addressing a peripheral and agricultural economic reality that, at the time, was not easily integrated into the industrialised capitalist development of Northern Italy, and thus into classical Marxist frameworks. He derived his concept of the subaltern from the locals and peasants in Southern Italy. A close examination of their culture which Gramsci revered and was devoted to, brought about the concept. Gramsci, however, remains confident that the peasant culture must be transcended in the end (Crehan, 2002:28). In a bid to awaken the subaltern to critical consciousness and revolutionary struggle, Gramsci pays close attention to the sphere of culture, particularly folklore, tradition, and language, rather than discarding it outrightly. Gramsci’s investigations into subaltern culture are motivated by a desire to learn more about the realities of subaltern existence and the processes that keep people there. In other words, Gramsci is interested in learning more about what hegemony is and how it may be challenged. The creation of popular-national politics based on the formation of existing normative implications of Gramsci’s concept of subaltern praxis involves identifying the subalterns first and then converting them from a position of subjugation to that of hegemony through the development of critical consciousness (Green, 2011). Spivak’s crucial involvement

with the duty of lending a voice, as well as Saba Mahmood's work on the conceptual fraternity of agency and resistance, inform the discussion on subalternity and agency. The core point is that a shift is being experienced in the conception of agency, whose relevance is essential to a modern understanding of subalternity and the transition to the new subaltern (Spivak, 2012).

In the study of women as subalterns, the link between women and silence may be established. Spivak claims that the west, because of its intellectual and economic clout, advocates the oppressor. As a result, the other is silenced and treated as if they have no voice. This silence on the side of women encourages men to replicate the aggression of colonialists, who regard women as valuable only if they obey their commands and restrict themselves within patriarchal superstructures. Imperialism's restricted epistemic violence serves as an unsatisfactory metaphor for the universal violence that an episteme's potential entails" (Spivak, 1994). When males have authority, they become the decision-makers and authors of women's fate. As a result, they repeat imperialist behaviours. "In the framework of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, and the subaltern as female is even more profoundly in darkness suffering a double disadvantage..."(Spivak, 1994). Spivak's opinions were based on a thorough study of Indian culture, and Nehru, another important Indian figure, used the Indian society framework to show the link of economic structure and foreign occupation against helpless women. Spivak approaches the topic of whether the oppressed can speak, attempting to critique earlier Anglo-Saxon scholars who wrote the history of the colonised subject by claiming the right to tell their story. Nonetheless, beneath the media's collective pronouncements of pain and human rights breaches in Southern nations are individual stories that are then disseminated into collective narratives. Even though the theory of the subaltern is written about workers, not intellectual colonial subjects, it is essential for understanding how parts of history are silenced in an attempt to define a dominant European topic, as it was for the women who participated in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Subalternity is surmounted by a process of creation, a decision that attests to a re-grounding of one's life world. The hegemonisation of the subaltern turned subject might result from the re-grounding. However, it may also pave way for the formation of a new hegemonic subject. The creative act emerges from a point of contact between the sense of subalternity and an alternative horizon of possibilities, a connection that exposes a split subject moving toward a conceivable total horizon of existence. As a means of establishing a new hegemony and constructing a new topic, the subaltern transforms into an organic intellectual.

Spivak (2012) explains that subaltern is not simply "a fancy phrase for the oppressed, for other, for someone who is not receiving a piece of the pie." The difference, she claims, is in how oppressed people seem to express their concerns and want inside dominant discourses, but anything that inhibition or no access to cultural imperialism is subaltern, a place of diversity (De Kock, 1992). A place of distinction or difference denotes subalternity, but that is not always the case. The notion of material and psychological fragility, which is neither totally passive nor fully active, but working in a halfway zone, a component trait of humanity both affected and acting, is commonly referred to as subalternity (White 2010). Subalternity evokes the feeling of a close animality, a separate way of being that exists on the outside of human reason yet is essential to its structure. In the Spivakian conception, if the subaltern speaks, it demands deconstruction since it is "an Echo" (Spivak, 2012). 'Echo' is an unfinished attempt to offer a venue for gendered subalterns to deconstruct representation and non-representation. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the barbarian characters who are the 'other' barely attempt to speak. For the unnamed girl, her echo is in her stiff reactions when the Magistrate tries to touch her. She does not speak, but her reaction is an echo and indirect voice stating her disapproval. In *The Madonna of Excelsior,* Niki's reaction to Johannes Smit's rape is an echo too. She screams and reacts to his attempts. But she is overpowered and forced to keep silent. In all the texts, there are echoes that never fully materialise because of the patriarchal nature of the society. Fezekile's attempt at speaking is met with opposition. She speaks out on Zuma's rape and falls prey to the black society. Therefore, in the texts, the subaltern female characters find ways to express their disapproval, either through a deafening silence, or by bodily disapproval, or by voicing out the injustices like in Fezekile's case. Even Fezekile's voicing is likened to an echo, when the rape occurred she was too stunned to reach, her disapproval is read in her reactions, and when she eventually speaks, it is an echo because she is eventually overpowered by the state and her society. However, there are not enough agencies to plead their cause. In *The Madonna of Excelsior,* despite the political transition, Sekatle continues the language of the apartheid government; the same with Petrus, a black patriarchal figure, who grounds himself in the new dispensation as a patriarchal figure, and whose action is read as such aiding and abeting the rape of Lucy. This reverberates with Bhabha (1994:86) who explains that mimicry is repetition with a difference, an exaggeration of culture, manners, and ideas. Despite the change, the ills perpetuated against women still continue in the post-apartheid era, as seen in *Disgrace and Khwezi.*

Spivak's theory revolves around *the significance of the story as a strategy for subsuming subaltern agency*. Coetzee paints a picture of the barbarians, especially the unnamed girl as

poor, unintelligent, black which automatically categorises her as a subaltern within the colonial description. As a female, she is seen as a sexual object by the magistrate, who further violates her after Colonel Joll physically abuses her. Coetzee's representation of the barbarian girl's social environment is structured by silence and invisibility. Portraying the barbarians as unintelligent, heightens their marginalisation in the narrative. For Fezekile, Tlhabi establishes her place as a subaltern against Zuma by writing her experiences. Fezekile is from a humble background, therefore, she does not have access to the economic and political privileges, like Zuma does. Her gender subsumes her as a subaltern in a patriarchal society like South Africa, as such she is misrepresented and vilified. In *Can the Subaltern speak?* Spivak (1988:103) cites the case of a political activist who attempts suicide in an effort to articulate her personal predicament; she is an emblem of the subaltern whose communication is thwarted by the patriarchal and colonial codes in which her acts are inexorably encrypted. Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri belonged to one of the numerous organizations engaged in the violent struggle for Indian independence. To prevent her death from being attributed to illicit passion, she hanged herself in 1926 at the start of her period. Her death, however, is described as a case of forbidden love. Therefore, the subaltern is unable to communicate, according to Spivak, since her acts are not only etched into the prevailing codes of British imperialism and Indian patriarchy but are also understood in terms of those norms. The illustration of the subaltern woman in Spivak's essay explains the complexities of the spaces of location for subaltern females in the selected texts for the study as previously explained.

The misplaced figuration of the "third world woman," caught between tradition and modernity, patriarchy and imperialism, subject constitution and object production, dissolves, not into a pure void, but into a violent shuttling. The subaltern subject has always been repressed by the power of patriarchy, dominance, and nationalism, which appears to both embody (in terms of politics) and portray (in terms of artistic representations) the subaltern subject. In contrast, fiction is a strategic location to interact with narrative voices, especially the numerous ways in which narrative voice produces subalternity. The story in the literature is also publicly involved in the practice of narrative. Because the "real" subaltern (if such a category can be constructed) is unable to articulate or represent herself through writing, every attempt to write subaltern subjectivity is always an envisioned projection. The subaltern agency can be found in the cracks between narrative voices, supposedly representing the underprivileged through the story. In other words, the activity of the subaltern can be discovered in the loopholes, silences, and disruptions of the elite narrative of subalternity.

The study employs textual analysis as a method of data analysis to understand and interpret the selected texts in light of Spivak's theory. It focuses on women as subalterns who have been denied voicing and agency in selected South African texts. According to Spivak (1989), an external elite monopolises intellectual and political discourse in India, subsequently further monopolising an internal elite after independence. The subaltern's voice is conspicuously lacking. Despite their broad, diverse, and impassioned voices, they are regarded as undeserving of inclusion in elite-dominated discourse. But beyond India, the discourse surrounding the concept of subalternity also applies to South Africa in terms of apartheid. Women were subjected to double stigmatisation and oppression, which includes sexual exploitation and rape, effectively stifling their voices. Unlike the subaltern who cannot/does not speak in Spivak's work, this study examines the ways in which women in the selected texts fight back and earn a voice. Beyond fighting to have a voice, the story of how they evolved is equally important. The apartheid government denied women, and blacks in particular, their autonomy and humanity by relegating them to the margins. The subaltern has never remained quiet, despite the world and national elite's unwillingness to hearken to her voice. She opposes and speaks out during colonisation, the war for independence, and later postcolonial regimes. Rather than treating jailed women as a study subject, my goal is to learn about their lived experiences and listen to their perspectives. Through their silence, they speak loudly. This entails comprehending how women cope with and oppose systems of violence in their various circumstances.

2.5 Apartheid in South Africa

Apartheid officially began in May 1948, when the National Party (NP), which consisted of the white race, won the general election in South Africa. Apartheid means "apartness" in Afrikaans, the Dutch-derived language of the National Party's Afrikaner leaders. Dubow (2014:18) explains that in addition to denoting spheres of physical and social demarcation, apartheid carries with it a sense of moral or spiritual imperative (pure breed). Since its inception as a British domain in 1910, when it was controlled by a coalition of British and Afrikaner males, the National Party has advocated segregationist laws. Apartheid promoted Afrikaner and other ethnic groups' progress in South Africa, regarding them as different individuals with distinct racial origins. In 1948, just a few black males and no black women were eligible to vote. As a result, the election was determined by whites, who constituted around a quarter of South Africa's population at the time; they comprised both men and women, as white women had had the right to vote since 1930, as part of a state plan to reduce

the power of the limited number of black men who were allowed to vote. It is important to note that despite the role of women at the grassroots of both Afrikaner and black movements, the leaders of the NP and its rivals in 1948 were all men, which was very crucial to the making of the policies promulgated for the apartheid regime. In the National party's campaign in 1948, the number of black men unwilling to submit to the authority of the whites, and the inability of the ruling party to make them surrender, loomed large. While the National Party received considerable support from whites in the rural areas, it added to white anxieties when black males in cities were victorious.

In South Africa, apartheid legislation's foundational elements focused on love and sex, revealing how sex control was crucial to the development and preservation of racial difference. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 prevented and penalised marriage between "Europeans" (white South Africans, including Afrikaners, British, and other European immigrants) and "non-Europeans" (African, Coloured, and Indian South Africans) (Seo, 2010). The Immorality Amendment Act of 1950 followed, outlawing sex between whites and all blacks (Furlong, 1994). This expanded the 1927 Immorality Legislation, which previously limited sex outside of marriage between Europeans and Africans: the phrase "native" in the original act was substituted with the more inclusive ‘non-European’ here. Officials' belief that "European civilisation" in southern Africa was under threat was shown by these spreading of harsher limitations on intimacy, and the first place to nip it in the bud was in the family setting. Until 1985, interracial sex and marriage was forbidden. *The Madonna of Excelsior* recounts the story of what happened in Excelsior and the consequences of such actions. Niki and other women who gave birth to coloured babies as a result of their interaction with white men were duly punished and disgraced in town. The white men were also humiliated, but on a different pedigree, they were granted bail and were able to afford it. Among other issues, it tells the story of the Immorality Act (dramatised in Athol Fugard’s play with the eponymous title) and the consequences that came with violating it. Controlling intimacy necessitated the classification of individuals. The categories ‘European’ and ‘non-European’ were culturally defined in the Immorality Amendment Act: European' denotes a person who is not originally of African descent or who by public acceptance and reputation is referred to as European and vice versa. The Population Registration Act of 1950 established a national register soon after, allowing each South African to be classified more precisely by race and ethnicity. The country's solid segregation along racial and ethnic lines was created by the following Group Areas Act, with distinct "groups" limited to certain districts and

neighbourhoods; black married women's ethnicity followed that of their husbands. As mixed neighbourhoods like Johannesburg's, Sophiatown and Cape Town's District Six were proclaimed "white districts," black families were uprooted from their homes and communities. During apartheid, about 3.5 million blacks were forced to migrate from their original environments. Families were also separated when the child's race could not be ascertained. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the text indicates the forceful removal of natives from their lands and replacement by the Empire, which can be likened to South Africa's colonialisation and white settlers. These settlers continued the internal colonisation through the apartheid government from 1948 to 1994. Also, in *The Madonna of Excelsior,* Niki and other blacks lived in shacks, while the whites lived in corrugated homes. The difference in the living standards is quite palpable. The job opportunities blacks have in the narrative are below the expected work standard, working in mines, far away from their homes and exposed to harmful illnesses (McKenna, 2010).

The growth strategy in South Africa, which can be traced back to the seventeenth century, was based on land exploitation and forced assignments through pass laws, limitations on living areas, and heavy military presence. The apartheid regime ensured that unskilled workers were only paid a meagre wage and were mainly blacks while ensuring that the white workers were paid and given essential work categories. Through good education, academic qualifications, and government and social affiliations, whites ensured they maintained the overt advantages they had over blacks. They were not so bothered about the increasing racial discrimination. It meant they were covered. Such a system may provide significant profits in certain areas, such as mining, but it soon creates skill shortages that hinder development and boost capital-intensive manufacturing. As time went by, South Africa had a surge of unskilled Africans since there was no access to good education or opportunities like their white counterparts. As a result, there was a massive reduction in skilled labour in the 1970s. The oversupply of unskilled labour was exacerbated by the mechanisation of farming and a new influx of forced evictions from white-owned farms, which the state attempted to address not through essential services, internships, or distribution of job opportunities but by masking the crisis among the blacks (Aremu, 2011). In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, the men work in mines far away from their homes, and are exposed to deadly illnesses, one that leads to the death of Pule, Niki's husband. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the empire treats the 'barbarians' as outcasts and outlaws, claiming ownership of their lands and forcing them to retreat further into the mountains.

Simultaneously, by the 1970s, a segment of African workers had distinguished themselves from the majority, owing to increased skill levels and presence in critical economic sectors and social amenities such as housing rights, access to better education, and old-age pensions. Whites and later, the upper cadre of the African labour force were protected by the welfare system. The 1970s and 1980s brought about grand changes in the regime; many of the castigatory and repudiating areas of actual apartheid could be ignored without rendering useless the National Party's constitution or closing the gap between the non-working class that was solely black and a core working or non-working tier that was no longer exclusively white. Some of these changes occurred because of the constant backlash and attacks made by blacks who were in exile (Aremu, 2011). Several opposition parties and groups were constantly raising their voices and fighting back against the ills perpetrated by the apartheid government in South Africa. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the author suggests that the Barbarians were plotting an attack (although it was not proved or executed), hence the need for the mass attack on the innocent barbarians by the Empire. This is also depicted in the act of Niki's son who grows up to join the opposition party fighting against the apartheid government in South Africa. *Khwezi* gives an account of what happened in the camps of the opposition where she grew up in exile with her father. They constantly had to move because of the apartheid government; clearly Fezekile and her parents lived in refugee camps.

South Africa transitioned from an oppressive system of administration known as apartheid or separatist government, which afforded people, based on their skin colour, certain privileges as opposed to black or coloured persons. Eventually, the end of the apartheid government and the watershed moment finally came on May 10, 1994. Despite the international censoring and exclusion from international affairs and politics, South Africa is widely haunted by the ascription as one of the countries that practised racial segregation. This study engages the ills of the apartheid regime and how these continually play out in the post-apartheid government in the country through the selected narratives. As a result, it is crucial to review what has been said previously and in recent times on apartheid and post-apartheid in South Africa.

Lewis (2012) explains that apartheid was not just a system of racial inequality; it also mandated the division and segregation of blacks and whites in government, the labour market and residency. Therefore, it was pervasive in the context that it was firmly ingrained in the country's economic, social, educational, and political structures. The Nationalist all-white party introduced several legislations to enforce its harsh rules and strategies. The end of

apartheid in 1994 presented an opportunity for new beginnings and the start of democracy in South Africa. This new reality also came with large expectations for a more inclusive South African identity instead of what was obtained during racist apartheid. The concept of "a rainbow country" or a "nation united in diversity" was born, but the question remains if it inaugurated real and tangible changes. As the events unfold, the country is forced to face the harsh realities of the effects of apartheid on the post-apartheid cartography. Keeping these moments alive in the face of history has been quite a challenge. The historic trauma testimony that characterised the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) had an intention to take out the denial among people who glossed over the past and restore a feeling of justice for the survivors and victims (Koss, 2014). Giving an account as an ethical practice of historical trauma as a witness involves more than just working through the horrible past of victims and survivors' mental, psychic, and physical recovery. The process is entangled with ethical and political obligations, and understanding must be ensured if "viable democratic politics" is to be pursued (LaCapra, 2014).

Memory and a longing to return to the romanticised past and trauma's unpreventable intrusive history are at the centre of the nostalgic feeling. Individual memory of historical pasts is inextricably linked with cultural memory (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2005). This viewpoint has influenced memory research and modern drama discourse, allowing for the consideration of "community trauma" rather than an individualised focus on trauma. In a bid to understand how identities work, this study takes the viewpoint on trauma concerning the role memory plays in *Khwezi* and the traumatic narratives experienced by the characters in the selected texts and how engagement with the past might encourage empathy with victims and survivors of systemic oppression and the violations of fundamental rights. To put it another way, while the narratives represent events through the eyes of different actors, they are ultimately communal in character since the events depicted go beyond personal experience. In the texts analysed, the issues exhumed represent experiences shared by individuals and communities, those who benefitted from the apartheid and those who faced gross dehumanisation (McLaughlin, 2002). These stories offer a glimpse into the confluence where individual and societal memories meet.

Most establishments in South Africa currently subscribe to transformation policies, which include, among other things, changing racial configurations in relationships. These transformational goals have been inspired by the concept of peacebuilding and

propitiation that has become a kind of "signature" of South Africa's post-apartheid democratic transformation. However, there is little significant debate and explanation on what needs to be changed about "the past" and what "the past" means to various people from distinct eras of history, among the bulk of these entities, including the academic and the business sector. Rarely do historical discussions go beyond articulating race and race "concerns."

Social strata, race, and disparities in South Africa build on a long tradition of analytically challenging and empirically rich study in South Africa's political economy, questioning but not discarding work from the past (Cooper, 2007). Instead, he directs the endeavour in a critical direction: examining the processes through which inequity in welfare, education, and, most importantly, race continues to be replicated in twentieth- and twenty-first-century South Africa as depicted in the complexity of the multi-layered narratives studied in this thesis.

2.6 Patriarchy and the Subaltern Woman

Patriarchy refers to a system of gender subjugation that allows males to reign over women. Patriarchy is derived from the Greek word "Patria," which means father (Bhasin, 1993). The etymology of the word has accumulated nuances that suggest a reign. Patriarchy has therefore evolved to mean the "rule of the father" or domination of men. Beyond this etymological orientation, the complexities get distended. There is much disagreement on the possible explanations of patriarchy, and there is wide variation in the meanings ascribed to the term beyond its kernel meaning. In particular, patriarchy is sometimes used to refer to the rule or power of men over others. In apartheid South Africa, women experienced twice the oppression due to their gender. They were not only segregated and relegated, but they were abused physically and sexually by the men (Walby, 1989). In this study, rape is a recurrent motif that permeates the texts. Understanding the concept of patriarchy and subalternity helps clarify the roles of the characters in the selected texts for this study.

Patriarchy can be understood as a societal system that argues that men are inherently dominant, which makes them sometimes oppressive. Men are deemed above the female gender, suggesting women as weak; in this system, the male folks are given the right to subjugate and rule over the women in all spheres. In Africa, patriarchy has assigned minority roles given to women, limiting them in almost all areas of social, economic, and political participation. Anything short of the assigned role is considered a threat to the dominance of men (Coetzee, 2001). This male dominance sometimes extends to acts of physical and psychological terrorism and violence. In a male-dominated family, it intensifies the authority of the father in a system

that upholds men above women. Walby (1990) explains that patriarchy is a model of social systems and behaviours in which men rule, oppress, and exploit women, this act is more prevalent in some societies than others. Patriarchy is built on a rigid and unbalanced structure of power in which men have authority over women's productivity, reproduction, and sexuality (Walby, 1990). It corroborates unjust power relations between men and women by asserting masculine and feminine character stereotypes in society.

Nash (2020:43) defines 'patriarchy as a system of relationships, beliefs and values embedded in political, social and economic systems that structure gender inequality between men and women. It is a system of unequitable social relations woven into political, social, cultural, and economic institutions of a society, as well as private and public relations.' Institutions including social structures, religious institutions, and educational systems assist the patriarchal system by "conditioning men and women to accept and behave in conformity with the governing relations in their society" (Richey, 2007:27). Women are not viewed as individuals with the right to autonomy or the capacity to act in their own best interests under the patriarchal precepts. Sexual violence against women is based on the belief that women are sexual objects to be used by males for personal satiation. Through an examination of Zakes Mda's novel *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), this study analyses how women disrupt traditional assumptions of what a 'woman' is. Although the silencing of women is palpable in all the texts, for Popi in *The Madonna of Excelsior* she eventually finds her voice, by joining the emancipation fight, despite the stereotypes surrounding women in the texts, she moves past them, and becomes a voice. This comes with opposition, especially being a coloured lady, but it also shows the 'inclusivity' and change that comes with the end of apartheid. For Popi, even though she is included in politics, her participation comes with stiff opposition. She is seen as the product of a humiliating sexual experience. And as a coloured lady, she faces more than triple the opposition because she is female, coloured and a product of the Excelsior case. Despite this, she lends her voice to the cause of women and for the emancipation course. Just like the four ladies who disrupted the state of the nation speech ten years after the Zuma trial, these women reinscribed that the other would not be silent despite the stiff opposition enabled by patriarchal social norms. Women still make attempts to speak their truth and fight against the silence continuously. *The Madonna of Excelsior* describes real events in apartheid South Africa in the early 1970s, when nineteen black women and white farmers in a small agricultural town were jailed for violating the Immorality Act.

Patriarchy varies by religious and geographical affiliation within a caste or class. Likewise, in industrialised nations, women subjugation differs in developing countries. While the extent of oppression varies, some traits, such as domination over a woman's sexuality and reproductive capacity, are *sui generis* traits of patriarchy, regardless of race, class, identity, religion, or nation. Several ideologies, social practices, and institutions, such as family, religion, class, education, media, legislation, government, and society, have helped to entrench this control throughout history. The traditional viewpoint recognises patriarchy as physically fixed, and because men and women have different biological responses, women are allotted different social roles and tasks. Sigmund Freud said "anatomy is destiny (Freud, 1924:274)" for women and that their biology determines their psyche, and hence their skills and duties.

The statement above has been refuted by feminists, who disagree with this stance on assigning roles and responsibilities. Similarly, the old idea of the public-private split which placed the government in the public domain and personal and family ties in the private domain as non-political, supposed that sexual bias is natural rather than political. While the political realm was retained for males, the private spheres were designated for women as housewives and mothers who were not allowed to participate in politics at the time (Becker, 1999). Feminists have criticised and resisted these conceptions of male superiority because they lack historical and scientific proof. Feminists are convinced that while biological factors may lead to certain differences in roles, these should not be used to justify a male-dominated sexual hierarchy (Becker, 1999). The deconstruction of these beliefs allows us to recognise that patriarchy is a socially constructed phenomenon that has evolved due to socio-political dynamics in society.

Awitor (2022) explains that women are disproportionately underrepresented in socio-political and economic spheres in patriarchal societies. When placed on par with men, they are regarded second class and as a result, they live in the shadows of men. For example, women in South Africa actively participated in the fight for freedom as seen in *Khwezi*. Unfortunately, they are not recognised as much as their male counterparts. In retrospect, some were incarcerated and raped by the same men who were supposedly fighting for freedom as exemplified in *Khwezi*. Chefs, servants, wives, and domestic help are presented as commodities, items that serve men's demands while being utilised as sex toys, as is the case of the young girl in *Waiting for the Barbarians,* the women in *The Madonna of Excelsior,* Fezekile in *Khwezi* and Soraya and Melanie Isaacs in *Disgrace*. As long as they are considered societal outcasts, they are subjected to different versions of abuse, violence and precarity. Women's plights and sufferings are

frequently disregarded and ignored in a society enmeshed in a matrix of retrogressive social, cultural, and religious beliefs. The issues of women's oppression and subjugation are a common practice in many places across the globe. Women are not only considered second-class citizens by males, they are also subjected to discrimination, humiliation, exploitation, oppression, repression and violence. Women face discrimination and unequal treatment in terms of their fundamental rights to food, health care, education, employment, and control over productive resources, decision-making, and livelihood; not because of biological or sexual differences, which are natural, but because of gender differences, which are social constructs. Sex is accepted as a truth; one is born either male or female. Gender is a social construct that gives significance to the reality and performance of sex. On the other hand, it may be argued that sex differences become relevant only once distinct meanings are socially assigned to the sexes (Geetha, 2002).

The result of a patriarchal society built on male dominance is gender-based violence. Women are oppressed and relegated to a subordinate status in society as subalterns. Men and boys are regarded as the family leaders and breadwinners, the *paters* of the world, but women and girls are primarily responsible for home tasks and childbearing. This gender-based discrimination and marginalisation violates women's fundamental rights and denies them social status. The level of violence that is unleashed on women is not confined to the domestic spaces alone; it permeates all segments of society. Violence and subjugation relating to gender issues are often institutionalised and encouraged by religious and cultural practices that reinforce stereotypes. Because women and girls have limited power in a male-dominated culture, decisions affecting them are often taken without their consent, an example is seen in Cronje relationship with Niki in *The Madonna of Excelsior,* the magistrate's relationship with the Barbarian girl in *Waiting for the Barbarians,* Lurie's relationship with Melanie in *Disgrace* and Zuma's violation of Fezekile in *Khwezi*.

2.7 Related Review on Selected texts

Sayar (2017) explains that the symbols in Coetzee's *Waiting for The Barbarians* are examined from a postcolonial approach in his study. There are various publications in literature on the process of colonisation and the consequences of this process for both the coloniser and the colonised. In the same way, *Waiting for The Barbarians*, published in 1980, is a significant novel in the field of postcolonial studies. It contains important facts and points about the impact of colonisation on colonised civilisations and territories. Coetzee's symbols such as the

Barbarian girl's scar, Colonel Joll's sunglasses, and Barbarism among others critically portray the central themes of colonisation and exploitation. Nevertheless, the sequence of events and the symbols' parallelism with that sequence are what distinguishes his study in this regard. Also, Al-Saidi and Ahmed (2014) explain that *Waiting for the Barbarians* is an "allegorical picture of the sarcastic interaction between conceptions of civilisation and barbarism and a depiction of the ironic gap between the empire's ideas and reality." Allegory plays a vital function in the novel since it emphasises the subject of Otherness and allows for a better interpretation and reading of the novel. The Empire's strength derives from its capacity to identify, label, categorise, and define the world according to its preferences. In addition, the Empire separates names from their inherent meaning, undermining the foundation of its power - the absoluteness of its definitions. The Empire conquers itself by losing control of wor(l)ds and their meanings. That is what happened at the novel's conclusion. When the Empire fails to grasp the colonised and sustain the relationship, and its titles are not employed, it is defeated. There are diverse interpretations of the novel, and an allegorical reading is one productive engagement with this text.

Rickel (2013) explains that Coetzee's writings critique this universal call for a post-humanist articulation of civil unrest rather than developing and including subaltern voices to complement or widen a restricted humanist universal. *Disgrace* exemplifies the necessity for a post-humanist approach to justice. *Disgrace* is a story set in the early transition, just after apartheid in South Africa. It interrogates and disrupts the power dynamics of storytelling and debates about the political obligations that literature should serve. In reality, the most significant controversy in Coetzee's literature is his presentation of whites and blacks in his narrative. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace* he situates the Magistrate and David's character as pitiable beings, therefore making the readers sympathise with them, while casually portraying the experiences of the female subalterns, especially the barbarian girl and Melanie as instantiations of victimage. He presents the white man as the knower and teller of the story. Hove (2022) argues that Coetzee makes Lucy extremely vulnerable as a female and as a lesbian. By locating Lucy in that liminal Salem, he compounds her marginality in a highly masculinised heteronormative post-apartheid South Africa. Being a lesbian in such an environment places Lucy on the margins and at risk, both racially and with her gender affiliations. She automatically becomes prey and a target for the rapists. Indeed, *Disgrace* attempts to story post-apartheid SA with very little reminiscence over apartheid. It is a bleak narrative on the

transition. In this way, the sense of nostos (nostalgia) permeates the text to refract the possibilities/affordances under apartheid (Hove, 2022).

Rickel (2013) further explains that *Disgrace* takes a position against using Lucy as a plot device in a post-apartheid fiction that is politically fraught. Lucy's hesitation in speaking about the rape she suffered at the hands of two of the three assailants who broke into her house enrages her father, David. He laments that the rapists' tale is circulating instead of Lucy's, and he is concerned that the news is spreading around the district like a stain. It is their tale to disseminate, not hers: they are the ones who own it. They taught her what a woman was for by putting her in her place. David is enraged that Lucy is discussed rather than telling her story, because Lucy is further humiliated in the rapists' account. Hove (2022) however argues differently; Lucy's silence is read as a strategy for self-preservation in a patriarchal society. She is situated on the margins, and as such she refuses to allow anyone to tell her story. Not even her father; she sees them all as the same. As a white patriarchal figure, David fails to protect his daughter, which is also a disgrace on his part. He loses every dignity by being rendered incapable and helpless. By insisting on Lucy speaking about her experience, he wants to inscribe the white voice as the knower and teller of the story. He does not expect Melanie to speak and is certain that she did not report him without the help of her boyfriend, because during apartheid that was not obtainable, but David expects Lucy to speak about her rape. To voice her experience and not to be silent, because he does not see her in the same light as the coloured/black women he has encountered to feed his lusts. Though Coetzee inscribes David as the knower and teller of the story, he is disregarded on many grounds by Petrus who barely speaks, but in silence speaks a lot. Petrus is then reinscribed as a black and menacing patriarchal figure in the narrative. The narratives then pitch David and Lucy as the 'other' in Salem.

Barnard (2013) explains that *Disgrace* might be seen as a contemplation on rape in all of its complexities, expressing and reflecting on many of the radical feminist ideas of the 1970s. Prostitution is considered by some feminists to be a type of rape. For David Lurie, prostitution is the perfect form of sex since it enables him to fantasise about a lady who shares his desires. In the relationship involving David and Melanie, a young student, the line between rape and consensual sex is tricky. The claim of sexual misconduct is therefore unacceptable for both parties, and David attempts to render the accusation unimportant, but due to the changed political era, that becomes impossible. During apartheid, many of the women were seen as sexual objects, and their bodies violated as seen in *The Madonna;* as a result, David does not

see anything wrong in his actions but claims he is a servant of eros (Coetzee, 1999:45) therefore justifying his actions. He does not enjoy the privilege of being white in the democratic South Africa, and as such, he must answer for his actions. But when his daughter Lucy is raped, David's perception changes and he demands justice. Here, identity plays out. For David, he expects justice for Lucy, because he does not see her as other coloured women he has encountered, however, being white in the environment Lucy finds herself is a disadvantage, this is due to her minority status in a predominantly black environment.

Lucy decides to marry Petrus, to preserve her land and also for protection, becoming subservient, demonstrating the power of rape in subjectivising women. She decides to give up her identity as a lesbian to marry Petrus for peace in South Africa between black and white people because that is the only way she can be safe. This is suggested by David when he asks her: "Do you hope you can expatiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present" (Coetzee, 1999: 94)? The action of the rapist can also be read as revisiting the past. The rape that occurred in *Disgrace* is quite important because it depicts the intolerance of the other, which in the case of Lucy is a lesbian. Like Gqola (2015) reiterates that lesbians are raped in a bid to correct them, and often times, the rapist is not repentant and will do it again if given the opportunity. It is just a few years after apartheid ended, therefore, Lucy's rape can be read as a revenge, rewriting the past. Lucy views her rapists as avenging the wrong of the past 'apartheid sins', she says: "They see me as owing something. They see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors (Coetzee, 1999: 130). However, in this case it is on the woman's body.

Helman (2018) situates 'rapeability' within colonial structures that are both gendered and racialized, positioning both black and white women as men's property (black and white). She also illustrates that 'rapeability' forms are not simply replicated in the present, but rather altered within the framework of democratic South Africa. Contemporary power structures, such as neoliberal constructs of free will and historical constructs of 'lands of despair,' contribute to further obscure and deny the suffering that rape does to black and white women. The trauma of rape is not just in the action itself, but also in how the act is received and reacted to, as Khwezi's tale so forcefully and cruelly reveals. Refusal to label what occurred to Fezekile's rape as rape, to publicly denounce the rape, and to demand more appropriate and effective institutions (including sexual violence laws, criminal justice procedures, and media depictions) is not only their destruction, but all women's ruin. Khwezi can also be read as an allegorical trope of the occurrences of rape in post-apartheid South Africa. This is specifically derived

from a reading of the national president as personification and embodiment of the state, the voters and all supporters who rallied for his appointment. In embodying the state and then subsequently relapsing into the macabre rapist of Fezekile, the trope of the nation raping and subduing and silencing its women becomes lucidly apparent. This extends to the reading of the barbarian girl in *Waiting for the Barbarians* who is left to the whims of empire's cartographers to preen and peer and penetrate on the phallic potency of patriarchy. One peculiar situation in all the selected texts is that the protagonists and foci are all subalterns, resident in different yet similarly oppressive situations. Hegemony and patriarchy are major factors for examination, likewise, is the concept of identity in those spaces.

Vilakazi and Ulin (2020:32) explain that reading *Khwezi* is a form of resistance in South Africa because it signifies a readiness to hear an alternative narrative as well as an eagerness to learn about the violent history that South African women have had to and still face. By the time they reach the last page, the reader has allowed themselves to go through the experience of all the ways in which Fezekile was let down by the ANC, the court system, her nation, and eventually her president. Tlhabi uses this narrative form to heckle at Zuma and his followers while keeping the focus on Fezekile and her traumatic experience throughout the trial. Given Fezekile's desire for confidentiality, as well as the treatment she received from Zuma's followers, Tlhabi humanises Fezekile and her experience walking through the masses of Zuma's loyalists during the court hearings. Tlhabi addresses the masses, but the language she uses to address them does not give them a voice, hence does not make them palpable to the reader. The experiences in *Khwezi* are quite significant in this study, because she is the only text (metaphorically) among those selected texts for this study that is told by a woman. So in this case, the victim's voice is amplified. Graham (2003) explains that Zuma was mostly supported by black women, who referred to him as "the man of the people; the spear of the nation." This is a form of betrayal from women who are expected to be more understanding and compassionate. In most rape incidences, the victim is silenced by women and put in a vulnerable position; Zuma on the other hand, had the upper hand because of his position and access to power. Instead of protecting the citizens under him, he raped them and was acquitted, only to emerge president a few years down the line.

The four texts focus on rape, politics and identity and several scholars have interrogated various literary aspects. This dissertation offers a comparative analysis of the texts, focusing on the peculiarity of the experiences and their distinctive broader insights into how apartheid has

metamorphosed in South Africa over the years to engender what the study perceives as a complex oeuvre in the post-apartheid fabric.

Chapter Three: Social disparities, silence and emergence of voice in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior*

3.1 Introduction

The second chapter explored the views and arguments of scholars and theorists on social identity, subalternity and the broad spectrum of apartheid in South African society. Tajfel and Turner's (2004) definition of social identity is seminal in understanding the different identities portrayed in the selected texts for this chapter. Individuals who view participation in a specific group to be fundamental to their identity and have deep emotional ties to the group have the strongest social identities. Self-esteem is garnered through group identity, which promotes the maintenance of social identity. In apartheid South Africa, the social group to which one belongs has a way of determining how they are perceived and treated. These groups are largely determined by race/ethnicity, language, colour, and economic class. The different identities in turn helped in entrenching segregation. While the group identity was seen as the higher fraternity, the other was seen as the subaltern, and these in turn determined how they were treated. Since social identity is a broad concept, it is limited to racial/class identity and gender identity in this chapter. The disparities in culture, mainly through racial differences and language, as seen in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) have a palpable impact on the establishment of social identities and in turn, impact social relations. These factors are also reiterated in Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002). As a result, Chapter 3 discusses how Coetzee and Mda portray the fluid nature of social identity and how this affects social connections in a society where members communicate based on class and privilege.

Zakes Mda is a black South African, born in 1948, the year apartheid was institutionalised in South Africa. Most of his writings reflect the struggle of the black man during apartheid, and in post-apartheid South Africa. As a person who experienced first-hand the racial discrimination and segregation of the white government, he laminates these experiences into his writings. His depiction of the apartheid experience is quite different from that of Coetzee because he is a direct recipient of the experiences of exclusion. Coetzee, on the other hand, is a white South African, born in Cape Town in 1940, a few years before apartheid began officially in South Africa. Being white gives him a privilege over other ethnicities, because the apartheid government enacted laws that privileged the white man, above other colours, and races. Coetzee was born in Cape Town, South Africa before he eventually relocated to

Australia in 2002. As a white South African, his parents were Dutch immigrants who settled in South Africa in the 17th century. He experienced what apartheid entailed first-hand through the eyes of a white national and this is significantly projected in his works.

The two narratives in this chapter interrogate the hierarchical structure of apartheid. The social classification was based on colour and race belonging that existed during apartheid. Based on the Population Act of 1950 South Africans were classified based on colour, race, ethnicity, and the likes. Phelps and Nadim (2010:36) state that "belonging can relate to a number of interconnected group borders that represent similar ancestry; also, belongingness can refer to ethnic groupings that share national, racial, religious, or other culturally shared features (e.g., language, norms, or values)." The apartheid government therefore used this scaling in the groupings and classification. This, however, favours whites above the natives or coloured. Social disparities and discrimination are based solely on the hierarchy of belonging that situates whites at the top of the hierarchical structure, giving them a favourable social standing, while denigrating blacks and coloured, especially women. Lwabukuna (2012) posits that massive displacement was employed as a political strategy under apartheid to systematically weaken communities. As a result, several individuals were internally displaced throughout South Africa. Although there were not any camps for internal displacement, the conditions in the homelands and townships where these individuals were imprisoned can be as palpable as the camps. The altered states of belonging and displacement informed an altered identity.

Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* was first published in 1980 during the apartheid regime in South Africa, and although some scholars have argued that it does not address apartheid, this study seeks to disagree. Although it is a story about an unnamed Empire and the Barbarians, the study views the novel as an allegory depicting the ties and constraints between the colonisers and the colonised. Although South Africa was not being colonised at the time, apartheid is simply an extension of colonialism by settlers who had stayed long enough to be a part of the natives and in turn had been handed over the governance by the British colonizers. Although apartheid is a postcolonial phenomenon, it is still a case of continued colonialism of the natives in South Africa. Therefore, this study reads *Waiting for the Barbarian* as an allegorical depiction of apartheid and displacement in South Africa. The narrator tells the story of an elderly magistrate, living in a border town. The magistrate serves as both narrator and protagonist in the story. During the day, he is preoccupied with his registers and civil responsibilities. He is seen as the representative of "the empire," that he has been serving for

more than thirty years. He is unbiased towards his “prisoners” and lives in peace until Colonel Joll, the head of a secret service, arrives from the metropolitan capital to instil fear and wage war against the nomadic people, referred to as barbarians. Throughout the novel, the narrator explains and categorises from the perspective of Empire, not once do the Barbarians have a say. Allegorically, *Waiting for the Barbarians* gives an account of the practices of racial segregation and prejudice during apartheid.

During the apartheid era in South Africa, interracial marriage and sexual interactions were outlawed. By decree, the prohibition was inscribed in the wording and enactment of The Immorality Act. According to the Afrikaners, the White population was a "pure breed" that could be tainted by inter-marriages between people of different races. The idea that culture or identity is pure is debatable in postcolonial discourse (Ashcroft, 1995; Bhabha, 1998). It is against this backdrop that *The Madonna of Excelsior* is set. This chapter examines miscegenation in South Africa as it is portrayed by Mda in *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), racial dehumanisation and retribution, and the development of a new political identity and subsequent crises on identity in the country. The foundation for classifying South Africa's people into several races was designed and encrypted in the Population Registration Act (No. 30) of 1950. All citizens had to identify as white, coloured, or native in accordance with the provisions of this statute. *The Madonna of Excelsior* gives an illustration of the two important moments in South Africa’s history: the semi fictionalised account of the Excelsior 1971 case and the political tensions just before apartheid.

The Excelsior miscegenation case refers to the Excelsior 19 (five white men and fourteen black women); a group of people who were described as political scapegoats for breaking South Africa’s Immorality Act, which prohibited sex between black and white citizens. The Excelsior case caused significant embarrassment for the ruling Nationalist Party, whose ideology was founded on the separation of races (Raditlhalo, 2011). As a result, the case was mysteriously dropped to preserve the dignity of the white Afrikaners, whose reputation had already been damaged and defamed. Though published in 2002, the novel gives an account of racial segregation and prejudice that characterised apartheid and the changes that occurred through the years, with the natives fighting back to reclaim their lands. One notable trait that distinguishes this work from *Waiting for the Barbarians* is the actual emergence of subaltern voices (Popi and Viliki) as opposed to the rumoured attacks in Coetzee’s novel. Also, the characters lived in the same community, although in different social strata that in turn affected

the livelihoods of the black citizens as opposed to the whites. The "them and us" dichotomy plays out in their social distinctions and interactions.

3.2 Naming and social identification in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *The Madonna of Excelsior*

The story in *Waiting for the Barbarians* revolves around an elderly magistrate living in a border town as an employee of "the empire." Therefore, he represents the empire in the village. He serves as both the storyteller and the protagonist in the story, privileging the first-person narrative point of view. The story is quite telling in the choice of identification and categorisation. First, the town is a nameless frontier town, with nameless citizens who exhibit the three stages identified in social identity theory which are social categorisation, social identification, and social comparison. The categorisation of some set of individuals as "the empire" and the other as "Barbarians" divulges volumes on the social categories highlighted in the text. The empire is represented by Colonel Joll, a military title that shows how the other categories are viewed in a replica of military hierarchies. Aside from the Magistrate who is given a military title, every other character is without a name. "There is a connection between a person's given name and their sense of identity and self" (Windt-Val 2012:273). Taken from this perspective, the deliberate act of not naming (*un/naming*) the town and the citizens in it certainly strips them of any sense of identity. During the first conversation between the magistrate and Colonel Joll, the two talk about hunting and animals. In a stunning development, these animals are not deprived of their names, antelope, ducks, and the likes. Animals are not just categorised as animals, but they are named. This is quite telling when read against the colonel's first meeting with the "prisoners:"

> When we return to the hut it smells of wet ash and the prisoners are ready, kneeling in a corner. One is an old man, the other a boy (Coetzee 1999:4).

The magistrate, though a representative of the empire, is not named. He is identified through his professional responsibility as arbiter in a bid to depict him as weak and incapable of delivering his duties to the Empire. Colonel Joll senses this during his interrogation with him. In the little town, far away from the capital, the citizens enjoy a sense of peace and interact with the barbarians occasionally. Although the interaction is not on the same level as the interaction with people in their social groups, there is still some version of interaction. Everything standing in the way of the Empire is depicted as inconsequential, as the empire

enlarges its territories, further pushing the barbarians (natives) into the mountains. Coetzee's deliberate silencing of the 'Barbarians' depicts the relationship between the apartheid government and blacks. By not naming them, he discards their existence and regards them as inconsequential. Throughout the text, not once does Coetzee speak from the perspective of the 'barbarians.' This is read as a deliberate effort to strip them of any sense of identity. The barbarians in the text are depicted as unintelligent minds because of the language they speak, which is different from that of the 'empire.' Language played a key role in identification during apartheid in South Africa. And the language of the 'apartheid' government, Afrikaans, was prioritised above other languages.

Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* also uses (un)naming to instil a sense of identity and class among the people of Excelsior. All through the text, the whites are referred to in full… Tjaart Cronje, Stephanus Cronje, Johannes Smit, Cornelia Cronje, while all the black characters are only referred to by their first name or a nickname; Niki, Viliki, Popi, Maria… Though every character is named, the naming lacks the specificities expected in the onomastics of space, place, and personage. This is read as a deliberate act by the narrator to magnify the differences in the social groups and the interactions between them.

> Niki knew all the revellers. There was Sergeant Klein-Jan Lombard with his voluminous wife, Liezl, stamping the ground as if they were in a military drill… There was Groot-Jan Lombard, Klein-Jan's doddering father, there was the Reverend Francois Bornman, the dominee of the local Dutch Reformed Church… There was Johannes Smit, a very prosperous and astute farmer with a beer belly… (Mda, 2002:7)

The list continues with the narrator paying attention to the tiniest details of the white citizens of Excelsior, while the blacks are plainly referred to, with little or no titles or further means of identification. From the beginning of the story, the narrator strives to magnify the differences between the white and black people of Excelsior. The emphasis on names opens the eye of the reader to social class and status within the Excelsior community. The social disparities play out in every sphere, from interactions, to the choice of occupation and living areas. These onomastic disparities lead to discrimination, segregation, and prejudice towards the blacks, as also seen in *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

3.3 Racial discrimination and prejudice in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *The Madonna of Excelsior*

Fanon (1967) criticises colonial civilisations for creating a "black and white," "self and other," duality and offers an otherwise impractical rediscovery of self-determination free from the constraints of the colonial gaze in his book, *Black Skin, White Masks*. In the post-colonial environment, populations that have previously been colonised are trapped between an unfamiliar ethnic culture and a familiar "white" society, which highlights an important but unanswered question about their future. Chan (2022), echoes what two post-colonial theorists say. Gayatri Spivak (1989) and Homi Bhabha (1994) amplify the complex history between identity and colonialism as a negotiating process in which rulers and colonised subjects reconstruct themselves in a struggle for power within a common colonial discourse, echoing the idea that identity is ambivalent. Apartheid in South Africa was as a result of institutionalised and systemic racism. I argue that racism is maintained through the othering process, which labels members of an inferior group as outsiders and maintains the notions of (white) supremacy and (black) inferiority using a postcolonial perspective. Social disparities cause more harm than can ever be imagined. It leads to social instability, economic regression, and social vices such as rape and human slavery (Ding, 2010). Prejudice and discrimination are features that come when a particular social group looks down on another, as it was in apartheid South Africa. According to Tajfel and Turnel (2004), social categorisation leads to social comparison, therefore the differences are used as an advantage against the lower social class. *Waiting for the Barbarians* symbolises the occurrences during apartheid, the empire takes over the land and the barbarians are forced to flee. The Barbarian characters in *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) experience the brutal impact of discrimination and prejudice from Colonel Joll, the representative of Empire. In a bid to present the Barbarians as weak and less of a threat, the characters are often depicted as sick, ill or injured. Most of the time, they do not speak in a language known to the Magistrate or Colonel Joll. In contrast, the Empire is projected as capable and strong, equipped with the necessary armoury and vocabulary of violence while the barbarians live without a shelter in the mountains and are exposed to the danger of being captured by the Empire's soldiers. The barbarians are always accused of stealing or causing harm and are prone to trivial arrest as shown in the excerpt below.

> Excellency, we know nothing about thieving. The soldiers stopped us and tied us up. For nothing. We were on the road, coming here to see the doctor. This is my sister's boy. He has a sore that does not get better… (Coetzee, 1980:3).

The old man and the boy are arrested by soldiers in a raid of the Barbarians. They are imprisoned without trial, even though the boy is badly bruised. They are presented as prisoners to Colonel Joll, who in a bid to find out the "truth" bludgeons the old man and threatens the young boy into submission. The truth is determined only by Colonel Joll; it must be what he wants it to be, which according to him can only be gotten by inflicting pain on the "prisoners." Through his characters, Coetzee depicts a socially, culturally, and economically unequal society, where those ensconced in authority pay no attention to the lower class, but will do anything to oppress and humiliate them, without following the due processes of law and justice.

> No, you misunderstand me. I am speaking only of a special situation now, I am speaking of a situation in which I am *probing for the truth*, in which *I have to exert pressure to find it*. First, I get lies, you see…this is what happens…first lies, then pressure, then more lies, then more pressure, then the break, *then more pressure, then the truth*. That is how you get the truth (Coetzee 1980: 5-6; my emphasis).

The system of social justice is solely determined by the Empire's officials; he knows what truth feels like and how he can get his truth, even though it comes at a price. Prejudice is a preconceived opinion founded on suspicion and usually the leading cause of social disparities and discrimination (Bhugra, 2016). The discrimination extends to the description of the barbarians as uncultured, babblers and uncivil. Coetzee helps us realise that the barbarians in the quote are people of dark colour. Even the people living on the frontier are terrified of them.

> There is no woman living along the frontier who has not dreamed of a dark barbarian hand coming from under the bed to grip her ankle, no man who has not frightened himself with visions of the Barbarians carousing in his home, breaking the plates, setting fire to the curtains, raping his daughters (Coetzee, 1980:9).

These utterances buttress the fact that the Barbarians are treated with contempt and indignity. They are projected as babblers, dark and arsonists. The Empire is not innocent of the act of (un)naming. Forcefully taking over the lands of the Barbarians and causing them to flee, is in itself an act of theft and desecration and rape of another man's land. Another feature of social disparity is the inequality and social discrimination faced by a particular group of people

because of their race or gender. Even the magistrate is not free from seeing the barbarians as lesser humans than himself. His empathy is also laced with the despicable manner in which he treats the Barbarians. He says, “I do not want a race of beggars on my hands” (Coetzee 1980:21). Even though he sees things slightly differently from the Empire, he shows his distaste and disdain for them.

> For a few days the fisherfolk are a diversion, with their strange gabbling, their vast appetites, their animal shamelessness, their volatile tempers. The soldiers lounge in the doorways watching them, making obscene comments about them which they do not understand, laughing; there are always children with their faces pressed to the bars of the gate (Coetzee 1980: 21).

The message immanent in this caustic appraisal buttresses how the Empire perceives the Barbarians as people without a profound sense of culture, barbaric, and without a sense of purpose. Even the magistrate’s soldiers do not hide their contempt for these prisoners. The kitchen staff do not see the need to give them a spoon for a proper meal; “the kitchen staff refuse them utensils and begin to toss them their food from the doorway as if they were indeed animals (Coetzee 1980: 21).” The magistrate, though he had a sense of pity for the nameless prisoners, he did not hide his contempt, when trying to comprehend their ways. These remarks reinforce what Powell (2015) discusses on how Foucault (1980) believed that the contemporary state may increase its authority by meddling in the bio-politics of the populace. Power has two poles in this process. First, a transformation pole; second, the human body as a site for control and manipulation. The first is concerned with the concept of scientific categorisation, such as species and populations. It is these categories that become the objects of systematic and sustained political intervention. The human body becomes an object of control and manipulation under such categorisations. As seen in the texts, race remains the main basis for control and manipulation in *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

Mda’s *The Madonna of Excelsior* in its entirety is based on racial discrimination, which is how apartheid functioned as a zeitgeist. The people of Excelsior were divided into two categories, the whites, and the blacks. In a reading of the text, racial discrimination plays out in several ways. Though the two racial groups exist in the same geospatial space, the differences between them are highly palpable. Certain jobs are reserved for the black men and women, while the whites in the first part of the text enjoy power and the perks that come with it. Niki’s

experiences starkly contrast the disparities in the lifestyle of the white social groups. Niki and the rest of the black community attend a different church from the white Excelsior community.

> This was our church. It was Niki's church. She belonged here. As she passed, she could hear seeping through the porous walls a hymn about God's amazing grace that distinguished itself by its sweetness. If she had been inside, she would also be singing about the amazing grace, while Viliki would be snuffing out with his little thumb termites that traced their path across the aisle up the pew in front of him (Mda 2002:28).

The picture painted of the church that Niki and Viliki attends is quite different from the church Stephanus Cronje and his family attend. Mda etches what the church looks like:

> …Today Niki was going to another church, the one in town. A distance of twenty minutes at an easy pace. Fifteen minutes if she didn't have someone slowing her down. The Reverend François Bornman's beautiful church built of sandstone and roofed with black slate. Everyone said it was shaped like hands in prayer, but Niki did not see any of that. Often, she had tried to work out how exactly the strange architecture translated into hands in anything let alone prayer… (p.29).

The picture painted of the two churches is a clear example of disparities at play. The structures are quite different, while one is sophisticated, the other is not. In Cronje's church, the blacks are not allowed in the main auditorium, Niki and Viliki stand outside the gate where they remain for the rest of the service (p.30). This indicates profiling, and the superiority of the whites compared to the black subalterns. This spatial separation speaks of inequality and social discrimination that are quite evident throughout the text, for the Afrikaners, their beliefs uphold inequality between whites and blacks, "He who confirmed to his people: *As a Calvinist people we Afrikaners have, in accordance with our faith in the Word of God, developed a policy condemning all equality and mongrelisation between White and Black. God's Word teaches us, after all, that He willed into being separate nations, colours and languages*. The house of God" (Mda 2002: 30). Marginalisation describes both a process and a condition that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social and economic and political life. It derives from exclusionary relationships based on power (Alakhunwa, Diallo, Martin & Campo, 2015)(Alakhunova *et al.*, 2015). The margin between blacks and whites in *Waiting for the*

Barbarians and *The Madonna of Excelsior,* spreads widely and consolidates separate development, even in worship.

Although various types of racism have been established by a range of scholars, it suffices that each one has prejudice as its root cause. Institutional racism, which favours one group over another when it comes to environmental conditions, is largely influenced by a preconceived notion that says the disadvantaged group does not deserve such environmental conditions due to their race (National Research Council and Committee on Population, 2004). In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, the blacks are restricted to certain types of jobs and are exposed to poor working conditions with a pay that does not compensate the work done. Pule, Niki's husband works in the mines of Welkom (p. 22), where he is exposed to harsh working conditions and prone to illnesses. Niki, on the other hand, works as the nanny that cares for Tjaart Cronje. These jobs expose them to ridicule and disgrace. Just like in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the Barbarians are accused of theft and vandalism, while Niki in *The Madonna of Excelsior* is accused of stealing from Madam Cronje who conceives a ridiculing practice of weighing her workers before and after work to ensure that nothing is stolen.

> Cornelia Cronje had started a new custom of weighing workers twice a day to make sure they were not stealing any of her meat. The morning clock-in weight had to tally with the afternoon clock-off weight. Any discrepancy meant that there was some chicanery somewhere (Mda, 2002: 40).

This act in itself is both ridiculous and questionable and targeted to disgrace her black workers. Being black for Cornelia translates automatically into being vulgar or a negative attribute in general. Niki is accused of theft because her weight has increased by one kilogram at the end of the day.

> At five it was time to go. As usual she stepped on the scale while Cornelia Cronje recorded her weight. It was 62 kilograms. "You are hiding something," said Cornelia Cronje. "It is not true, Madam Cornelia," protested Niki. "I am not hiding anything." "Your weight was 61 kilograms in the morning. It can't just increase by a kilo for nothing. You must be hiding meat under your dress," insisted Madam Cornelia (Mda, 2002: 40-41).

This practice highlights the degradation and dehumanisation of blacks in the Excelsior community, to create obscure and implicating scenes, Madam Cronje takes her pursuit to the next level. To prove a point, she would rather strip a woman naked to verify an alleged theft.

> Madam Cornelia was determined to teach Niki a lesson. And to teach the other workers by example. She ordered her to strip. Right there in front of everyone. When she hesitated, Madam Cornelia threatened to lock her up in the cold room with all the carcasses, as it was obvious that she loved meat so much that she had now become a meat thief. Niki peeled off her pink overall and then her mauve dress. She stood in her white petticoat and protested once more that she was not hiding any meat on her person. Then she peeled off the petticoat and stood in her pink knickers and fawn bra (Mda, 2002: 41).

Another example of racism practice in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* is attributing criminal actions to a particular race. This is evidenced not just by the old man and the boy's arrest, but also by the arrest of those who are termed the Colonel's prisoners but are just fishing people. Usually, the law enforcement agencies (ideological state apparatuses in Louis Althusser's terms) are integral contributors to enforcing social disparity and racial discrimination in any given setting. This is largely because the orders of social disparity come from the national government and law enforcement agencies are obliged to perform the stipulated orders of the national government which in *Waiting for the Barbarians* is the Empire. The orders of the Empire are carried out by Colonel Joll and the prison guards. Even though the magistrate is uncomfortable with the actions of the Colonel, he does not stop the arrest of the old men and children when in actual fact, the guards should be raiding and arresting thieves, bandits and invaders of the Empire. Another clear evidence of social disparity in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* is the continual disregard of the fundamental human rights of the arrested prisoners. It can be suggested that the reason why the barbarians are wandering nomads is because the Empire does not make provision for any housing conditions for the Barbarians. The environmental conditions the Barbarians are forced to live in are made of dry and powdery timber, which has only been held together by the surrounding sand and these are expected to crumble soon. The houses contain no furniture, and they are made to dwell in uncivilized settlements.

3.4 Torture and humiliation as tools for eliminating subversion in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *The Madonna of Excelsior*

Also, the result of social disparity threatens the right to life in most cases. For example, in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians,* a prisoner is killed in a scuffle between the prisoner and the interrogating officer. During the scuffle, the prisoner falls heavily against the wall and dies.

The 1988 Amnesty International report states:

> Torture and ill-treatment of prisoners, particularly political detainees held without charge, remained common and widespread. There were persistent reports of detainees, including children, being beaten with sjamboks (rhinoceros-hide whips), hooded and subjected during interrogation to 59 electric shock torture or partial suffocation with plastic bags or rubber tubing pulled over the face, a method of torture which leaves no marks. Many detainees were held in prolonged solitary confinement and allegedly threatened with death or injury to themselves or their relatives and abused by security police interrogators. (Amnesty International (1988:128).

The disregard of the right to life is carried out by those charged with the responsibility of protecting the lives of the people. Most often, this is done with utter disdain and nonchalance. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, a young barbarian girl is among the tormented inmates, and the Magistrate decides to take her in. Her ankles are malformed, and she is practically blind. Despite this, he develops a fetish attraction to her. The Magistrate starts his journey of self-discovery via the barbarian girl, which runs throughout the story. He makes the difficult decision to take her to her people and sets out on a perilous trek through the desert. The Third Bureau takes over the outpost while he is away, and when the Magistrate returns, he is accused of working with the barbarian enemy. As a result, he is imprisoned and tortured. The tale concludes with the Third Bureau abandoning the tiny hamlet and the Magistrate's release: Empire has been defeated due to the barbarians' ingenious tactics. In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Johannes Smit is very violent and forceful in his interactions with the black women of Excelsior, it has to be his way and once he does not have access to them or their bodies, he unleashes violence. Years after the Excelsior case, he attacks Niki, who is picking wood on his farmland, "You of all people have the cheek to trespass on my farm," shouted Johannes Smit. And he released the leashes. The dogs attacked. She tried to run. But they grabbed her brown

seshweshwe dress with their teeth and ripped it off" (Mda, 2002:121). The reaction is tacitly cruel and uncivil, simply because he no longer has access to her body.

Also, in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians,* the soldiers refuse to hear the pleas and explanation of the magistrate concerning the people who have run for safety, thereby committing mass murder of the community. It can therefore be said that those the magistrate does not kill are exterminated by the soldiers. An example of this is described below:

> The kneeling prisoners bend side by side over a long heavy pole. A cord runs from the loop of wire through the first man's mouth, under the pole, up to the second man's loop, back under the pole, up to the third loop, under the pole, through the fourth loop. As I watch a soldier slowly pulls the cord tighter and the prisoners bend further till finally they are kneeling with their faces touching the pole. One of them writhes his shoulders in pain and moans. The others are silent, their thoughts wholly concentrated on moving smoothly with the cord, not giving the wire a chance to tear their flesh…(Coetzee, 1980: 104-5).

The prisoners are exposed to torture and ridicule. They become objects of spectacle and entertainment to the people in the frontier town. This can be explained further in the perspective of the relative deprivation theory, which states that a particular group of people is disadvantaged compared to certain social standards and living conditions and it is usually accompanied by feelings of anger and resentment which fuel the intergroup conflict (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015).

The Barbarians in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* are deprived of their right to self-determination and self-will. Just because they belong to a different racial group, they are hunted down and punished for criminal actions attributed to them. Therefore, their lives are designed and controlled by the powerful group in the society which emasculates them. The social disparity pervasive in the novel shows how social injustice is accepted by the government and enforced by the security agencies. Therefore, the attempt to change made by the magistrate is perceived as strange to the 'normal' culture of discrimination in the country. The heart-breaking recurrent theme in *Waiting for the Barbarians* is the acceptance of social injustice as a normal living condition that the Barbarians should assent or die. This goes against anything related to fundamental human rights.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the right to liberty is disregarded several times as the unlawful imprisonment of civilians keeps recurring. The Barbarians are mistaken for thieves and threats to the Empire and their rights of liberty are restricted by the guards and the order of the Colonel for no just cause. They are also mistreated in prison, as they are caged under ridiculous living conditions. Several times, the magistrate has noticed the state of living in the prison, as the cell smells of old urine, and the prisoners look sick, famished, damaged and terrified. This is also seen through the nomad girl the Magistrate saves. Her father is tortured and killed in her presence. She is also tortured till she almost loses her sight, gets her ankles broken and is scarred in her face from what the interrogators use to burn her eyeballs. The prisoners are exposed to torture as they are beaten by the soldiers with stout green cane staves, which leave red welts on the prisoners' backs and buttocks, "Go on, don't be afraid!" they urge her. A soldier puts a cane in her hand and leads her to the place" (Coetzee, 1980: 122). The privileged members of the group, including the children are also given the canes to beat the prisoners while the rest of the crowd cheers in a macabre spectacle.

The same treatment is meted out to the magistrate when he is arrested on actions that would be termed social injustice. Because the magistrate sides with the barbarians, he is stripped of the right to liberty and exposed to several humiliations in prison. For example, his requests for clean clothes are ignored and he has nothing to wear save what he brought with him. Despite his status in the society, he is made to wash his shirt and a pair of drawers with ash and cold water under the eye of a guard and is made to squat over a pail to relieve his bowels. If such humiliation could be meted on the magistrate who sided with the barbarians, the humiliation meted out to the innocent barbarians could only be worse. The humiliating treatment of the magistrate is designed to stem from his support of the barbarians. He also suffers a large share of physical torture from one of the soldiers when he protests to the beating of the barbarians. He also suffers a blow from a hammer when he tries to save the barbarians who are not aware of the punishment that is coming. Additionally, the Colonel also insults the magistrate in the presence of the soldiers and the barbarians by mocking his *passion* for social justice for the Barbarians.

These were the words of the Colonel:

> You seem to want to make a name for yourself as the One Just Man, the man who is prepared to sacrifice his freedom to his principles. But let me ask you: do you believe that this is how your fellow-citizens see you after the ridiculous spectacle you created

> on the square the other day? Believe me, to people in this town you are not the One Just Man, you are simply a clown, a madman… These border troubles are of no significance. In a while they will pass, and the frontier will go to sleep for another twenty years. People are not interested in the history of the back of beyond (Coetzee, 1980:131).

The magistrate is no different from Colonel Joll, even though his approach is less vicious. His continuous violation of the barbarian girl is also a form of violence unleashed by the 'empire' against the 'barbarians.' His objectification and claiming of the girl's body speaks volumes on how the empire besieges the territory of the 'barbarians', rendering the original occupants stateless and homeless. Colonel Joll repeatedly highlights that the border troubles are of no significance; this is read as the barbarians are no threat to the empire. In the text, this is true because the barbarians do not have the means or the voice to fight back.

Social inequalities reflect the lack of freedom; and in the case of the barbarians, erode the culture of freedom in the society. This also negates the concept of morality and constitutional provisions all over the world. This started from when the founders in the past centuries would misinterpret the concept of freedom as an advantage or power of a group of people over those who did not possess it. This is read as the 'us and them' dichotomy, the ingroup sees the outgroup as an 'outcast'. During apartheid, blacks and coloured people were denied basic human rights, while whites enjoyed full benefits at the peril of other races and colours. The interpretation of this is that the right to liberty is only applicable to a group of people; hence the beginning of social disparity (Rozbicki, 2011). The whites that led the apartheid government only privileged themselves and made little provisions for blacks and coloured groups.

Upon the arrest of the prisoners in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians,* it is obvious that the due processes of law are not followed by the Colonel or the prisoners' guards. The Barbarians are kept away from the public upon the preconceived opinion that they are a threat to the Empire. The same pertains to the case in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, where the women are imprisoned because they cannot afford the bail. Another instance of using the law to aid inequality and racial discrimination is when the magistrate is ambushed on his way to the Barbarians. It is widely accepted that in instances where the law was made to favour a group of people while it disfavoured another group of people there is evidence of a case of social disparity (Houle *et al.,* 2022).

Upon his arrest, he knows exactly what the soldiers will do to him - “to use the law against him as long as it serves them, then they will turn to other methods” (Coetzee, 1980: 97). As the magistrate narrates the events in the novel, these types of people twist the provisions of the law to their own advantage and to the disadvantage of other people, and so to them, the legal instrument is nothing but a piece of paper. It is ironic that the law enforcement agencies would rather protect themselves than protect the people they have been called to serve with the same legal instrument that upholds the will of the people.

3.5 The female body as a site of socio-political contestation in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *The Madonna of Excelsior*

In situations of social disparities , the female gender is susceptible to rape and sexual abuse by the dominant social group. In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, the story opens with the narrator saying, “all these things flow from the sins of our mothers (p. 1),” (an inversion of the primaeval sins of the fathers) a reference to the Excelsior 19 case, where 14 black women were arraigned for giving birth to coloured babies. These women were already at some point molested or sexually abused by some of the dominant white men in the story, yet they were blamed for the sin of immorality and fornication. Their sin was breaking the Immorality Act, simply meaning that they were punished and imprisoned for being black women and having sexual relations with white men. While the men, were fighting for “freedom” or working in faraway mines like Pule, the women were being raped or exposed to sexual molestation from the white men of Excelsior. In some way, for every woman they had sex with, it was depicted as winning a trophy of some sort. To untangle the complicated web of racial connections during the apartheid era, Mda employs a tactic involving tugging on the string of sexual desire. In contrast to the Apartheid laws, the Excelsior men are obsessed with black women and blame these women for seducing them as evident in the two texts. As a result of stereotypes, black women are reduced to sexual objects. Black women are stereotyped as being only suitable for sexual abuse and molestation. They are depicted as the prime motivator behind the demons that entice the Smits, Cronjes, and Bornmans to preserve their wives to maintain chastity and virginity. They preach against immorality, adultery, and miscegenation yet are unable to withstand the libidinal urges that lead to these evils. These acts contradict what the Afrikaners' national party stands for. As pure breeds, none of these evils are to happen. They are supposed to repent after the fall, even though it is human to make mistakes.

> The devil had sent black women to tempt him [Afrikaner] and to move him away from the path of righteousness. The devil had always used the black female to tempt the Afrikaner. It was a battle that was raging within individual Afrikaner men. A battle between lust and loathing. A battle that Afrikaner must win. The devil made the Afrikaner to covertly covet the black woman while publicly detesting her. It was his fault that he had not been strong enough to resist the temptation. The devil made him do it. The devil had weakened his heart, making it open to temptation (Mda, 2002:87).

Apart from the devastating effects inflicted on the rape victim, the act of rape by the dominant social group suggests violent objectification, ethnic shaming, and cleansing. This reflects not just the act of rape but also the motive and intention behind the practice of rape and the message passed to the oppressed social group of their status in the society (Keogh, 2015). The rape of the Barbarian women by the soldiers in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* is the evidence of of oppression and objectification. Hence, the hatred for the Barbarians is translated to the female gender through forceful penetration without consent.

In the Excelsior case, they decide to pass on the blame to the women; in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians,* the women do not have a choice or a voice. The Barbarians' voices is never significantly heard, instead, they are portrayed as unintelligent and babblers. Every conversation about the barbarians are reflected from the Empire's point of view. The silence is a tool used by the narrator to portray the weak state of the barbarians. They are depicted as persons without a sense of belonging and just wanderers and nomads. Ideally, the land is stolen from them, and they are sent into the mountains by the Empire, while the Empire occupies the best spaces and environment. This situation is peculiar and can be likened to any colonial space. The voice of the natives is silenced and replaced with the colonisers' perspective of the locals. They already accepted their fate of being the oppressed social group; and therefore, the soldiers need not get their consent before penetration (physical, psychic, and emotional). In these instances, the law enforcement agents are the perpetrators of the offence of rape and yet are not punished due to the skewed rule of law that favours their actions over social justice. The same applies to *The Madonna of Excelsior*, once the apartheid government realises that the case is going to bring shame to the white community and "values" it upholds, the case is dismissed.

In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the magistrate also describes the girl as being defiled and violated, mentioning that the girl's people would never take her back as a whole woman.

Therefore, the magistrate believing that the girl's honour was stripped upon her defilement further contributes to sexual assault and violence. This is because the Magistrate forces her to perform a ritual of cleansing, which is also a form of sexual defilement.

This is depicted in the following scripting:

> First comes the ritual of the washing, for which she is now naked. I wash her feet, as before, her legs, her buttocks. My soapy hand travels between her thighs, incuriously, I find. She raises her arms while I wash her armpits. I wash her belly, her breasts. I push her hair aside and wash her neck, her throat. She is patient. I rinse and dry her. She lies on the bed and I rub her body with almond oil. I close my eyes and lose myself in the rhythm of the rubbing, while the fire, piled high, roars in the grate. I feel no desire to enter this stocky little body glistening by now in the firelight. It is a week since words have passed between us. I feed her, shelter her, *use her body*, if that is what I am doing, *in this foreign way*. There used to be moments when she stiffened at certain intimacies; but now her body yields when I nuzzle my face into her belly or clasp her feet between my thighs. She yields to everything. Sometimes she slips off into sleep before I am finished. She sleeps as intensely as a child (Mda, 2002: 30).

'Use her body' sounds like a right. The magistrate without any sense of the violence feels compelled to have her body because he makes sure she has access to basic things (rights). Using her body in a foreign way also indicates that the girl is not used to this norm. She is uncomfortable, yet he does not seem to read her subtle reactions as refusal. She even falls asleep off, which shows utmost disinterest and even stiffens at times, but he refuses those signals and still goes ahead to 'have' her. He colonises the Barbarian girl's body while refusing to see the similarity between his action and that of colonel Joll who oppresses the tortures the prisoners, this is read as power play. This also occurs in *Disgrace* (1999), in the affair between Melanie and David Lurie. The deliberate silencing of these characters as they stiffen at the intrusion into their bodies situates them as subaltern and without a voice. In the instance of the Magistrate and the nomad girl, the nomad girl is deprived of the ability to make an informed refusal.

This therefore points to the insensitivity of the white society towards sexual abuse in the narratives. The focus is often shifted from the man as the perpetrator to the chastity and

innocence of the woman after a rape incidence. This leads to victim shaming, where the victims are forced to maintain silence after a sexual abuse incident, to avoid the consequential shame and dishonour from the society. According to Haskell and Randall (2019), this could result in a gap in justice which would inevitably lead to social injustice. This would also affirm the actions performed by the perpetrators as they would come to understand that the law is in their favour.

Rape is also evident in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, and it is read as an act of violence. Johannes Smit's rape of Niki shows the impoverished and vulnerable situation of women.

> Deep in the sunflower field, Johannes Smit pulled off Niki's terylene skirt. She tried to hold on to it, but he had *the strength of ten demons*. He *threw* her on the damp ground. Then he pulled down her panties and took them off. He sniffed them, which seemed to *raise more demons* in his quivering body. He stuffed the panties in his pocket. Yellowness ran amok. Yellowness dripped down with her *screams*. He *slapped* her and ordered her to shut up. Her *screams* were now *muffled* with his hand on her mouth. …He lay on top of her and pleaded, "I am sorry, I didn't mean to hurt you. But if you make noise, people will come and spoil our *fun*" (p. 16).

The 'strength of ten demons' is a description of his fierceness and violent actions. He becomes vicious in a bid to 'have' her. Her screams also show that she does not give her consent to him, yet he goes ahead to brutally violate her body. Zulu (2006) posits 'to Johannes Smit and his Afrikaner friends, such rape is a 'great sport', some game. For the so-called 'pure breed' this is a negation to what the conservative Afrikaner party stands for, a mimicry from the ideal. Rape as a 'great sport' is read as something that the perpetrators know they can get away with. Muffling Niki's attempts at screaming also indicates that he clearly understands the implications of actions. To him, the violation of Niki's body is fun, when it is in fact an act of corporeal sublimation.

Women in African culture are often seen as dumb, weak, dependant, frivolous, and seductive. It tends to cultivate "men's prerogatives to the allegiance and subservience of women and legitimatise men to exercise power over women to sustain the latter's subordination and marginality" (Hussein, 2005: 60). Like Niki, after she has been raped, she cannot talk about it at home, defeated and worn, she keeps it to herself. Going forward, her body is used to survive,

just like Mmampe and Maria within the Excelsior community, while for the men, it is a continued quest for ownership and control.

3.6 Silence, emergence of voice and agency in *Waiting for The Barbarians* and *The Madonna of Excelsior*

Agency is a vital part of emancipation. In 'Postcolonial studies (2007) the ability to carry out an action is referred to as agency. According to poststructuralist philosophy, the key question is whether people can act independently and freely, or if their actions are in some way influenced by how their identities have been built. In *The Madonna of Excelsior,* Mda portrays the creation of underground groups that fight and speak against the ills of the apartheid government. This form of agency is not found in *Waiting for the Barbarians,* and as such they are left to their fate. This period is read as the period before the then struggle for emancipation started. Through interactions with other black groups fighting for emancipation, Viliki begins to question what has become a norm in South Africa, as depicted through the Excelsior community. He questions the subjugation and segregation of the blacks in the society, thereby becoming a voice of 'hope.' This act puts Niki in a state of constant fear. Viliki's life is in danger, but that is the only price to pay to be "free." "They got Viliki… What for?... I don't know. Maybe it's for smuggling dagga… It must be. They say he goes to Lesotho a lot. People who go to Lesotho a lot are dagga smugglers…But the quality of Lesotho dagga is not better than that of Swaziland… You see, there is Sekatle. He must have sold him out. They must have been doing this dagga thing together…Yes, where do you think Sekatle gets his money? Ja, he works for the system"(Mda, 2002:130). In the struggle to emerge, Viliki is faced with imprisonment and torture, which is a constant tool used by the oppressor to ensure compliance and stem subversion, but with Viliki that is not the case. With every attack on the "freedom fighters' by the apartheid government, his voice becomes stronger, and his will strengthens to eradicate the apartheid system altogether. While Viliki is fighting underground for the freedom of his people, Sekatle is engrossed in the corrupt system of the white national party, thereby working against his folks; his reward is power and money. Like his mother, he had a better life and lived in a house with corrugated sheets, because he "submitted" to the white authority in some ways. In turn, he sells his voice to the dictates of the national party.

The pressures from the freedom fighters caused numerous changes within the national party, inclusion in the government became the only way out. Unlike the subaltern in Spivak's

essay, the voices of the black natives were heard, though this was after much tussle. The subalterns did speak and were heard. Sadly, as the story unfolds in the latter parts, Sekatle and his men carry on the legacy of the white men, which is the exploitation of their fellow blacks due to exposure to power and authority which is very much like now with only an elite few reaping the benefits of being free. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* gives us an insight into what is expected by the Empire. The reason for the invasion by the Empire is that the Barbarians are fighting back to reclaim their land. Although there is no actual indication of that, the Empire fights to retain its power and authority by unleashing mayhem to dissuade any action from taking place. Ironically, the Empire lives in constant fear of the Barbarians.

Power plays a huge role in stifling the voice of the black people during apartheid, also power has maintained the exploitation of black citizens even after apartheid ended. Just as Mboti (2022: 217) explains in his apartheid studies, 'in 1994 apartheid entered a wormhole and transfused and metamorphosed from primitive apartheid to the current sabbatical, on-holiday, breakfast in bed, participatory apartheid… apartheid was deconstituted to be reconstituted.' This is in tandem with Fanon's thoughts on decolonisation. For men like Sekatle, the exploitation cycle continues, and the legacy of apartheid continues, although it is no longer white against blacks but rather blacks against blacks as represented towards the end in *The Madonna of Excelsior*.

Spivak (1988:102) explains that 'between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernisation.' For women like Niki, and the barbarian girl, they are both caught in the tradition of oppression, enabled by apartheid and a highly patriarchal society. For Niki, she is continually stripped of her rights, even after the Excelsior case. Her identity is desiccated, and she remains silent as a means of self-preservation. This plays out when she is attacked by Johannes Smit on his farm, years after the Excelsior case. Women are shrunken within their own society and seen as sexual objects, to satisfy the needs of the dominant men in their social space.

3.7 Conclusion

In *The Madonna of Excelsior,* Mda satirises the Excelsior 19 case, to ridicule and expose the activities of the white nationals, who subverted everything that the national party stood for. He ridicules the so-called boundaries that the apartheid government puts in place that the white men in Excelsior do not uphold in the narrative. They find the bodies of the black women/girls irresistible, thereby violating the Immorality Act of 1950. Also, the likes of Sekatle represent the irony of post-apartheid government. The artifices created during apartheid were not pulled down completely by the post-apartheid government. While the likes of Viliki and Popi strive to merge the lines between the different classes created during apartheid, Sekatle does everything to maintain power within a few people. Mda successfully satirises the apartheid and post-apartheid situation in South Africa through his narrative. Catastrophes that left the nation split along racial, ethnic, religious, and gender stereotypes have historically described South Africa's struggle for national identity. In addition to marginalising black communities, their heritage, customs, and democratic representation, apartheid policies also maintained white dominance. Inhumane living conditions, exploitation, and denial of human rights for natives (blacks) and other non-white people including Coloureds and Indians were supported by the apartheid regime. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the idea of not naming the characters in the text is a bid to highlight the 'them' and 'us' dichotomy, with the Empire representing the higher ups and the Barbarians representing the subalterns. As in every institutionalized colonialism, the person of colour is usually disempowered and treated as "them." Colour plays a huge role in the classification of individuals and affects their identity. The Magistrate in his narration describes the Barbarians as black, uncultured, and uncivil. Once he is disempowered, he becomes invisible and must work his way to be seen and regain his position and power in the town. For the Empire, discrimination comes to anyone who is not particularly on the side of the Empire; such a person is stripped of his/her identity and treated as an outcast, like in the case of the magistrate, who has served the Empire for more than thirty years. Spivak's concept of the subaltern explains the situation of the black Barbarians in the text. They all remain perpetually helpless, especially the female. They cannot fight back, as opposed to Viliki and Popi in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, who are able to claim their sense of identity back by fighting the white government, unlike their mother Niki, who just retreats to her shell and basically lives a miserable life. Like the women in Spivak's subaltern, Niki remains helpless, though she does not attempt suicide, in a way, she regains her sense of identity through her children. The

narratives place an emphasis on the fact that racial and gender discrimination is entrenched in the social system of the apartheid society.

Through an emphasis on Niki and her children's experience, Coetzee posits that an individual gains "freedom and a clear vision once he or she becomes empowered and independent. Viliki evolves to become a voice, through his interaction with the underground people, he embraces his people and joins the movement. The movement is not a legal one, so it works underground. That is the price to pay, for a new South Africa to emerge. Popi's interest for activism sparks from her interaction with Viliki. Viliki is involved in the emancipation of their land from the Afrikaners' national party. After seeing the need for the struggle, she joins her brother in activisms against the white government. This is around the time where the voices of the blacks all over South Africa are growing stronger. Though inhibited by some corrupt practices, Viliki and Popi find their voices and that way, reconstruct their identity in the evolving democratic government. Popi refutes the ostentatious lifestyle of the people in power and finds her voice in the struggle to end apartheid. She is no longer seen as the coloured child from the Excelsior incident. She gains attention and voicing through her participation in the emergence of a new South Africa. The two texts also highlight the fact that the war of identity and ownership is often fought via the female's body in colonial institution. This is evident in the rape and abuse of women as depicted in the texts.

Chapter Four: The rape and precarity of women in Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Tlhabi's *Khwezi*.

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed social disparities and the erasure and emergence of voice in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior*. The themes range from racial discrimination to segregation, torture, erasure, and, eventually, the emergence of voice. The two texts interpellate the experiences of blacks in apartheid South Africa, just like in every institutionalised colonialism. Highlighting Spivak's concept of the subaltern and the social identity theory by Tajfel and Turner, this study addresses the issue of identity and how it cuts across the social space, leading to the categorisation of groups based on race, skin colour and class. The texts amplify the experiences that the Empire constantly fears the Barbarians and can do anything to ensure that no uproar occurs. The constant attack of the Empire's army leave the black citizen in despair and poverty, as they are denied fundamental human rights such as good housing conditions, job opportunities, and purposeful education.

Moving forward, the study explores gender as a social construct in this chapter, with the issue of rape, identity, and the precarity of women taking priority. Judith Butler (2009:ii) posits that precarity characterises that politically induced condition of maximised vulnerability and exposure for populations bared to arbitrary state violence and to other forms of aggression that are not enacted by states and against which states do not offer adequate protection. She further asserts that people who do not live their genders in comprehensible ways are more likely to be harassed and subjected to violence (this plays out in the character of Lucy and Fezekile). As a result, precarity is strongly related to gender norms. In many colonised countries, women are victims of dual oppression, as they are exposed to terrifying circumstances and are often blamed for the occurrences in which they are the victims. In South Africa, rape exhibits a high prevalence in the post-apartheid era. The troubling statistics and accounts are often reported in local media, academic literature and common conversation (Nuttall, 2004). Also, the erasure of the female voice is highlighted in the texts.

This chapter lays emphasis on rape and the precarity of women within the framework of Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and Tlhabi's *Khwezi* (2017). These two texts depict post-apartheid South Africa's complex situation. As South Africa slowly emerged from the apartheid government, it was named the "rainbow nation." This is in a bid to accommodate diverse

culture and identities. Hence, identities like LGBTQ+ became a fraction of the minor identities and people, especially women who affiliated with such groups were openly disenfranchised, even though such rights are engraved in the country's constitution. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is a body that was created to look into the ills perpetuated during apartheid and to right some of the wrongs that were committed by compensating the victims. However, the TRC has been faulted on so many grounds as being partial and not performing its duty. One of the many issues that was handled with levity by TRC are the reported rape cases. As Gqola (2015) records, many women who fought alongside their male counterparts were exposed to the risk of rape and without protection, they were raped. In one of the interviews conducted by the TRC, one of the men accused of raping a lesbian responded that if given the opportunity, he would do it again to correct her sense of identity. Given the patriarchal nature of the country, many ills are perpetuated against women. In such a closet, and without a voice, they either keep quiet or speak out and earn the singular chance of being publicly humiliated throughout their lives. Like in many countries in Africa, it is not just men, power, and position against women, the matrix extends to women against women.

This chapter examines how patriarchy and gender discrimination breed rape, discrimination, and violence against women in South Africa. In the narratives, the authors projects the privileges that male citizens have over females due to the patriarchal nature of the country. The privileges and impunity are also traceable to the country's history of apartheid. Apartheid was spearheaded by white men in South Africa; the women were not at the forefront of the movement. Like in many African countries, patriarchy is at the core of repressive societal norms and privileges. It breeds gross human violations and gender-based violence. According to Enaifoghe (2019), gender-based violence happens around the world as a result of systemic gender inequality in cultures that marginalise women, girls, and other minority groups and muffles their voices.

Coetzee's *Disgrace* depicts the result of systemic gender inequality in post-apartheid South Africa. Through his characters, Coetzee illustrates the unequal relations between men, women, and girls. With apartheid having become history, black men are no longer the direct victims of discrimination and segregation, but the bodies of women become the site for a new and monstrous contestation and violence. The bodies of women like Soraya, Melanie and Lucy, become the tools with which the male characters exercise power and control. Spivak (1994) uses epistemic violence to interrogate the marginalisation and silencing of the subaltern groups.

One of the ways Spivak highlights as a means of playing out epistemic violence is by causing damage to the subaltern's ability to speak and be heard. Tlhabi's *Khwezi* and Coetzee's *Disgrace* offer an insight into women's vulnerability in post-apartheid South Africa and the reasons behind it. Like other Coetzee's narratives, the women are often depicted as weak and vulnerable, therefore exposing them to ridicule, shame and violence, either physically or sexually. In Fezekile's story, the protagonist is doubly victimised and even has to go by a pseudonym during her trial to hide her identity. This biography exposes the African National Congress' (ANC) internal culture of repression and violence and paints the grim political situation in South Africa at the time. Moreover, it depicts the historical patterns of violence unleashed on women and the ANC's strategies in covering up issues regarding rape during apartheid, which came to the limelight after the end of the apartheid government. This shows the gap and ills in the ANC's government as it ordained Zuma into power in spite of his pending rape case. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) also brings to the limelight issues like rape that were not really addressed during apartheid but became something of significance in post-apartheid South Africa.

4.2 Sexual violence, race and the vulnerability of women in *Disgrace* (1999)

Disgrace mirrors South Africa's post-apartheid regime with the various challenges in its wake. Examining the setting and historical background of *Disgrace* helps to establish a standpoint from which this book is understood. From 1948 - 1994, an apartheid system was in place in South Africa. This apartheid regime was a time and system of serious racial segregation where blacks were ironically considered illegal citizens of South Africa. In a country that belongs to the indigenous South Africans, blacks were oppressed and marginalised; they sought treatment at separate hospitals, went to separate schools, were made to live in slums and separate areas of town and had separate public amenities and services. The beaches were segregated and there were spaces reserved specifically for whites and therefore inaccessible for the blacks. The apartheid government created laws to legalise the exploitation and segregation of blacks; amongst them the Group Areas Act (1952), which regulated the areas where different groups could live. The segregated blacks did not have the rights to rent or work in certain regions or provinces. The Bantu Education Act (1953) regulated the quality of education that blacks could access. The Population Registration Act classified individuals into racial groups based on colour, while the notorious Immorality Act (1950) prevented any form of relationships between whites and coloured/black groups. All these 'acts' were crafted and legislated to ensure white

supremacy and their autonomy in South Africa. With the eclipse of Apartheid, many of these laws were revoked, giving room for a negotiated inclusivity. Apartheid was legally and officially abolished in 1994 and it is on this demise that *Disgrace* (1999) is constructed.

Disgrace projects the realities of a newly transitioned government in South Africa. Though it is fiction, it is an allegorical representation of the happenings in South Africa post-apartheid. *Disgrace* portrays the intricacies of South Africans, blacks, and whites, in the post-apartheid period. In his work, Coetzee depicts how society descends into chaos when there is such a seismic political upheaval as the demise of apartheid. It is a story that fictionalises South African reality with a disturbing focus on black-on-white violence, a lateral inversion (and invasion) of the apartheid archive. In this transitional narrative, Coetzee portrays the violence and politics that characterise the end of apartheid.

Armstrong *et al.* (2018:101) posit 'sexual violence is about domination - across race, nation, class, gender, and other dimensions of inequality'. Through the character of David Lurie who sees women's bodies as a possession and something that must be used, Coetzee paints the picture of the alarming new realities in a changing postcolonial state. *Disgrace* follows the journey of David Lurie, from his life as a university professor, to his life as a dog attendant towards the end of the narrative. Coetzee highlights important issues of violence, race, gender, and politics in the narrative. This study focuses on the silences and vulnerability of the female characters in the text, Soraya, Melanie and Lucy. The narrator explains the line-up of events from David Lurie's perspective. Coetzee focalises Lurie's thoughts and voice, therefore silencing the other characters: we can only understand them and appreciate their precarity and vulnerability from the standpoint of an aging David Lurie. The female characters are mostly silent, and their bodies objectified and vilified by men, this is indicated in Lurie's relationship with Melanie, and Petrus' subtle overlook of Lucy rape. This is read as a deliberate effort by Coetzee, in gagging the female subalterns. In *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), Coetzee also focalises the male magistrate's voice while silencing any other voice, especially that of the unnamed girl. Through this act, Coetzee inscribes the white man as the knower and teller of the story. The character of David Lurie, quite like that of the magistrate in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, represents the white supremacists, who find solace in the bodies of women, and think it is for pleasure and to be shared. These two characters embody entitlement which also translates to their worldview. Though one is more sympathetic than the other, they both used their position to violate the bodies of women; 'Melanie and the Barbarian girl.' Lurie, however,

finds it difficult to come to terms with the political change in South Africa. Due to the country's history, there is still that lingering divide on racial grounds. In an uncanny authorial design, Coetzee relocates Lucy to the Eastern Cape on the fringes of one of the 'homelands' where blacks were apportioned space during apartheid. Robson and Oranje (2012) explain that the Eastern Cape border has been a prominent site for historical conflicts between white colonist and blacks since the 18th century.

Coetzee is well-familiar with the landscape at this time, of colonial subversions, racial injustice and what these years' long implications might mean for the post-apartheid regime that was just assuming new powers and stances of presencing. He presents black and white women in overt and covert relations. These representations have nuanced significations in the post-apartheid context. At first glance, it looks like he tries to reverse the coloniser-colonised roles and balance the black-peril. He inscribes and disrupts white anxieties in the narrative, focusing on the tensions that comes with it. He does this using David Lurie's relationship with the different (coloured) women in his life and those closest to him in ethnicity.

David Lurie is a 52year old Professor of Communications at the Cape Town Technical University who is also enamoured by Romanticism. This genealogy in art and literature is quite pivotal to his character, temperament and the events portrayed in the novel. Romanticism is a literary movement that values freedom from rules, a grand positioning that privileges solitary living to living in society, with individuality and spontaneity at the very core of David Lurie's own existence.

Right at the beginning of the novel, David Lurie is introduced as someone who has 'to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well' (Coetzee, 1999:1). The libidinal narrative is mostly told from Lurie's perspective. He is a two-time divorcee who lives alone and engages the services of alter-native prostitutes to gratify and quicken him. This is the arrangement he has with Soraya. As a sentimental person who is aware of it, David Lurie derives immense pleasure from women and apart from his idea of a Byron-inspired opera that he is toying with, it is during sex that he is at his most active. His power over women of colour in the novel is a sly reflection of the power play between men and women mirroring that relationship between whites and blacks that dictated the pace and tempo of the apartheid regime.

In a fast-changing post-apartheid landscape, David Lurie's relationship with Soraya is read as possible by the dissolution of the 'Immorality Act' at the end of apartheid. However, Soraya, a

coloured woman, still uses prostitution as a means to provide for her daily needs. Through Lurie's lenses, we get an inside view of what the living conditions was for Soraya and the life she lives:

> Of her life outside Windsor Mansions Soraya reveals nothing. Soraya is not her real name that he is sure of. There are signs she has borne a child, or children. It may be that she is not a professional at all (Coetzee, 1999:3).

Soraya is deliberately silent about who she is outside of the 'services' she renders to David Lurie. She is not obliged to tell him even if he wants to know. To a large extent, this reflects her curtailed freedom that she could not practice during apartheid. At least for now, in the liminal space between the old and the new, she has a right to keep her private life private. It is equally worrisome that her room in Windsor Mansions carries the baggage of coloniality in name. Her acquiescence to David Lurie's recursive and possessive penetration also reflects the precarity of her living on the margins. She needs the money, while Lurie needs the pleasure. This is not rape, but sexual violation plays out in Lurie's relationship with Melanie and Lucy's rape as the narrative progresses.

Brownmiller (1975) defines rape as a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear. If a woman chooses not to have intercourse with a specific man and the man chooses to proceed against her will, that is a criminal act of rape. This definition captures Lurie's invasion of Melanie's space as rape. David Lurie's relation with Melanie also mirrors the white-black relationship that was shifting and unstable at the time. David Lurie represents the white citizen who has not fully grasped the change of government, and still feels entitled to anybody, black and white. He is not so comfortable when Soraya exercises her right to disdain him.

> '… a long silence before she speaks. 'I don't know who you are,' she says. You are harassing me in my own house. I demand you will never phone me again, never… A shadow of envy passes over him… (Coetzee, 1999:10)

He is quite aware of how he gets away with subtly dominating women and, in this situation, violating Melanie because the sexual act is without her consent; focalising rape in the sense of this discourse as 'anything not consensual'. It is worthy to note that he never acknowledged his affair with Melanie as rape throughout the narrative. He takes advantage of her femininity and deliberately misinterprets her refusal and subtle body language to carry out his own intent and

thinks to himself that 'she must like it' (emphasis mine). The imperative modal verb 'must' is a telling indictment of David.

That conscious process of intimidation is further heightened in the novel in Lurie's encounter with Dawn, a fellow-coloured staff member at his university.

> Her name is Dawn. The second time he takes her out they stop at his house and have sex. It is a failure. Bucking and clawing, she works herself into a froth of excitement that in the end only repels him. He lends her a comb, drives her back to campus (Coetzee, 1999:9).

Lurie, as depicted in the narrative, objectifies women for his own sexual pleasure. He is not enamoured by Dawn's assertiveness. That she is not compliant and silent, the borderline between the passivity he has known from the other women he had had under his control repels him. David Lurie's constant comparison of women in the narrative is quite telling:

> Soraya is tall and slim, with long black hair and dark, liquid eyes. Technically he is old enough to be her father; but then, technically, one can be a father at twelve. He has been on her books for over a year; *he finds her entirely satisfactory*… (Coetzee, 1999:1).

The statement, 'he finds her entirely satisfactory' is quite telling of how he views women. He can discard them at will once he has used them, or if they are not satisfactory like in Dawn's case. In *the Madonna of Excelsior* (2002*),* all the white men in the text objectify women. Their bodies are possessions for carving, objects for the carnal desires of the men, and David Lurie extends this also in *Disgrace* (1999).

As Angela Davis (1983) mentions in *Women, Race and Class,* sexual aggression is most of the time unseen and is easily justified by the committers:

> Of course, the sexual abuse of Black women has not always manifested itself in such open and public violence. There has been a daily drama of racism enacted in the countless anonymous encounters between Black women and their white abusers; men convinced that their acts were only natural. (p. 115).

This statement explains David Lurie's stance on his sexual exploitation of Melanie. He refuses to see his act as a violation of his student. He believes that the woman's body is to be shared. It

is a gift that must be shared with the rest of the white male world, “Because a woman’s beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it (Coetzee, 1999:16).”

The idea of black-peril and white anxieties is clearly portrayed when there is a representation of this mirroring depiction of white intimidation when Lurie's daughter is violently raped by three unnamed black men. It is worthy to note that violence should not be detached from any act of rape, whether subtle or overt because it has the same goal in mind. Such violence in raping comes from the same thought process and usually yields the same outcome – subjugation and silence of the victims who are usually women. It would be quite unfair to describe Lucy’s rape in this novel as violent and Melanie’s as not because, as earlier stated, the above acts are compulsively similar in the two cases. Although Melanie case was not outrightly rape, she was sexually assaulted and violated against her wish. Melanie is never able to confess or even give a statement or stand up to her abuser; and the same happens with Lucy. We see that in both cases, the men in their lives try to stand up for them, making the obvious silence a tool for the rapists poignantly obvious. Melanie's boyfriend vandalises Lurie's car and her father later comes to confront him. A complaint is lodged with the University administration, but no mention is made of Melanie having a fair hearing or even submitting a personal statement. This reading is consistent with Lurie's statement:

> Melanie would not have taken such a step by herself, he is convinced. She is too innocent for that, *too ignorant of her power*(pg 17, my italics).

This ignorance also plays out In Lucy’s naïve decision to marry Petrus. While David sees beyond the words of Petrus, Lucy sees differently and believes that in marrying Petrus, she stands a chance of being protected. David, however, sees a menacing black man wanting to take over Lucy’s farm and land, while neglecting to admit his wrong wilfully in front of the committee.

The narrative reveals the abetting of Lurie's crime by fellow men during the disciplinary hearing, with one even going further to console him after:

> 'Speaking personally, David, I want to tell you you have all my sympathy. Really. These things can be hell.' (pg 18).

Coetzee depicts the men in the committee as sympathisers of Lurie, carrying therefore the connotations that they subtly agree with the logic of David being a servant of Eros. The excerpt conveys the machinations and perhaps the frivolity of the disciplinary committee. Instead of duly interrogating and reprimanding David Lurie, from the statement above, the men in the committee do not particularly view the tabled issue as sexual violation. It is not mentioned that the committee renders any assistance to Melanie; rather the men subtly console David Lurie. However, the only woman in the committee is not pleased. The imbalance in the representation of gender on the disciplinary committee speaks volume. The committee is a farcical representation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which has been accused of treating cases of sexual violence with levity.

Mardorossian (2011) posits that Lucy's rape should be read as a manifestation of an environment in which other instances of gendered violence are normalised, rather than merely as an example of the black on white violence that is thought to define racial relations in post-apartheid South Africa. *Disgrace*, in other words, emphasises the unfathomable relationship between incommensurable categories of identity like gender, class, or ethnicity in the application of legal and moral authority rather than simply portraying post-apartheid violence as a racial issue that operates in isolation from other axes of power. The violence directed against Lucy should be read not just as an instance of the black on white violence that is seen as defining racial relations. Rather, it also depicts the inherent gender inequality and the political tensions of the post-apartheid era.

O'Hehir (1999) posits that political change can do almost nothing to eliminate human misery. This is portrayed in *Disgrace* because the same issues that were highlighted as a major problem during apartheid continue after the political power change. In South Africa, the violence that characterises the transition and early post-apartheid era is in tandem with what Fanon says about the decolonisation process. In *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon (1963:35) declares 'decolonization is always a violent phenomenon…decolonization is quite simply the replacing of a certain "species" of men by another "species" of men.' Coetzee's *Disgrace* emphasises the violence that characterises the 'decolonisation' process in South Africa. It is noteworthy that the end of apartheid simply signifies the transfer from one oppressive male dominated system to another, leaving the women as unprotected, vulnerable, and direct victims of violence and oppression. The struggle to end apartheid is read in this study as a local decolonisation process; and it is this setting, with apartheid just becoming a thing of the past that *Disgrace* chronicles

the transience of transition. Sexual violence, political tensions, subtle racial hostilities, gender inequality and injustice are all fomented in *Disgrace*. From the character of David Lurie to the university's disciplinary committee, to the life with Lucy in Salem and the character of Petrus, Coetzee scripts the macabre that foreshadows the problematics of becoming and belonging differently. Here is the David Lurie who hitherto chases a girl that does not want him:

> He has given her no warning; she is too surprised to resist the intruder who thrusts himself upon her. When he takes her in his arms, her limbs crumple like a marionette's. Words heavy as clubs thud into the delicate whorl of her ear. 'No, not now!' she says, struggling. 'My cousin will be back!'' (Coetzee, 1999:18).

In this instance, Melanie tries to refuse Lurie, but he is too blinded by his desires. As a servant of eros, he forcefully invades Melanie. 'He succumbs to his desires'. David Lurie does not rule this situation as an act of sexual violence or rape, instead, he subtly attributes it to being a servant of Eros and succumbing to the desire to have Melanie at that moment. It does not matter what her own desire is, as long as he is satisfied. Melanie shows restraints, but she is ignored by Lurie, who admits that it was 'undesired to the core (p. 23)'. He is eventually penalised for his actions, and wilfully resigns later, without acknowledging assaulting his student. Ironically, when the narrative changes and his daughter is raped, he speaks out on the injustice and impunity of the perpetrators of the horrid deed (in his words).

He comes to Salem in Eastern Cape to witnesses his daughter subjected and objectified in the same precarious reality as he performed on Melanie and Soraya. It seems his daughter is so morphed and befuddled at how the situation turns out, making her weaker and helpless. It is quite ironical how David Lurie still does not realise how the action on his daughter perfectly mirrors his.

It is expected that the end of apartheid should end its concomitant vices but Coetzee presents the plight of a country already marked by years of oppression and how at the very basic level, every human is the same and capable of evil. This is portrayed in David Lurie being a 'servant of Eros' and the black men that rape Lucy, almost with the intention to rip her of her virtue, her voice, and the independence she has the illusion to have. According to O'Hehir (1999), the brutal tyranny had been replaced with brutal anarchy, and a state of lawlessness looms as the sure prospect.

The very fact that the three black men trick Lucy by faking a plea for assistance and going on to humiliate and subjugate her is quite symptomatic of the history of apartheid in South Africa and slavery and colonialism generally in Africa:

> "'His sister is having a baby?'
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> `Where are you from?'
>
> 'From Erasmuskraal.'
>
> He and Lucy exchange glances. Erasmuskraal, inside the forestry concession, is a hamlet with no electricity, no telephone. The story makes sense (Coetzee, 1999:92)

Deception is here used as a tool that appeals to Lucy's humane side. It is this intimate enemy that subsequently gains entrance to her property and ultimately her body, violently. The three men end up plundering her properties, killing the dogs, and raping her. The power tussle that ensues between Lurie and the men is also symbolic of the atrocities of apartheid, this time with David Lurie and his daughter at the receiving end of the violence.

> A dangerous trio. Why did he not recognise it in time? But they are not harming him, not yet. Is it possible that what the house has to offer will be enough for them? Is it possible they will leave Lucy unharmed too? (Coetzee, 1999: 92).

David Lurie is quick to worry about the safety of his own daughter, while turning a deaf ear to the pleas of Melanie not to sleep with her. It is almost as if Coetzee pre-empts the possibility of not recognising Lurie's encounter with Melanie as rape, especially after his liaisons with prostitutes making him even culpable of transferring sexual diseases to the innocent girl. That is beside the point, it becomes unsurprising that other reviewers and critics of *Disgrace* refer to Lurie and Melanie's encounter as an affair, seduction, and other similar cosmetic descriptions, even agreeing with him that is it is 'not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core (p. 23)'. This is shown in how Coetzee presents Lurie's admission of being a servant to Eros, and the degradation and disgrace that the episodes afford him, even subtly linking him and relating him to animals that have no free-will, are not in control of their minds, do not have a brain to discern right from wrong, as a human being otherwise does.

This moral ineptitude is further portrayed in Lurie's appraisal of Byron in the novel; "from where Lucy stands, Byron looks very old-fashioned indeed." This is a critique of the Romantic and humanist attitude that rejects moral and ethical responsibility in reality. Still, David, a scholar of Romanticism, is believed to be 'attitudinising' when he justifies his abuse of Melanie Isaacs as an act stimulated by Eros, or enthused by Aphrodite, the goddess of the foaming waves. It is in this condition that David Lurie claims that 'beauty does not belong to itself' (Coetzee, 1999: 16). Hahn (2004) explains that the relationship between David and Melanie runs parallel to David Mamet's *Oleanna* (1993), depicting the variances of sexual exploitation and harassment in a university campus setting. Unlike Melanie who finds it difficult to speak up for herself in *Disgrace*, the voice of the victim in Oleanna is stronger.

The inversion of moral expectations can also be read along the lines in the book and somehow looks like something the author is not directly projecting. It seems David Lurie somehow is atoning for his sins by feeling pity for the animals and at least having some level of connection with them that he does not have with the women in his life. David's moral ineptness is shown in his sleeping with Bev Shaw. Despite describing her as repelling, he sees her as another conquest. Morally, he does not see anything wrong in having sex with Melanie, Shaw, Soraya, or any other woman whereas he recognises the rape of his daughter as a punishable crime. Being a 'servant of Eros', and starved of sex in Salem, he moves on to his next conquest, Bev Shaw. David Lurie sees his actions throughout the events in the story as justifiable, while he views the rape of his daughter as an unacceptable form of injustice.

> Not your business, she seems to be saying. Menstruation, childbirth, violation and its aftermath: blood-matters; a woman's burden, women's preserve. Not for the first time, he wonders whether women would not be happier living in communities of women, accepting visits from men only when they choose. Perhaps he is wrong to think of Lucy as homosexual. Perhaps she simply prefers female company. Or perhaps that is all that lesbians are: women who have no need of men. No wonder they are so vehement against rape, she and Helen. Rape, god of chaos and mixture, violator of seclusions. Raping a lesbian worse than raping a virgin: more of a blow. Did they know what they were up to, those men? Had the word got around? (Coetzee, 1999:105).

David finds it difficult to understand Lucy's identification as a lesbian. This depicts the masculinised heteronormative nature of South Africa. Even though this new identity is entrenched in the laws of the nation, it is not yet a widespread norm at this time. Consequently,

when Lucy is raped, David wonders if it is because of her white and lesbian identity. *Had the word got* around indicates that it is not widespread knowledge and can be a triggering factor for her rape if words got around. Moreover, the actions of the rapists are read as teaching Lucy a lesson on identities and belonging. Coetzee's decision to situate her in Salem, a small holding, and mostly black community is questionable as it opens her to the vulnerability of being a target. As a lesbian in such an environment, with Petrus, a patriarchal and menacing black figure who is no longer satisfied as hired help or co-owner, Lucy's chances of being victimised are heightened.

This helps to give a better understanding to Lucy's unwillingness to report and label confidently what happens to her as rape:

> Nothing could be further from my thoughts. This has nothing to do with you, David. You want to know why I have not laid a particular charge with the police. I will tell you, as long as you agree not to raise the subject again. The reason is that, as far as I am concerned, what happened to me is a purely private matter. In another time, in another place it might be held to be a public matter. But in this place, at this time, it is not. It is my business, mine alone (p. 115).

There are different takes on Lucy's refusing to speak about her rape. Murphy (2021) posits that in keeping quiet after being raped, Lucy atones not just for the crimes committed by white South Africans during apartheid but also for the complacency of everyday people who upheld a discriminatory and oppressive society. It also crystallises the failure of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in getting justice for the victims of rape and violence. The nonchalant attitude of the police towards the violence is quite telling. Petrus' attitude tells a story of a possible involvement in the process that led to the incident. As Hove (2022:3) puts it, post-apartheid South Africa is a highly masculinised heteronormative society, therefore putting Lucy (due to her lesbian identity) in harm's way. Spivak (1988:99) asserts 'the group rape perpetrated by the conquerors is a metonymic celebration of territorial acquisition. I read Lucy's rape, as an act of displacement and a brutal jab from the rapists that she is not welcomed anymore in the environment.'

> 'This place being what?'
>
> 'This place being South Africa' (Coetzee, 1999: 112).

The country's history of a divided racial past is one reason for Lucy to make the above statement. She reads her rape to be a result of the brutality that came with the apartheid government. With blacks being in the seat of government, she easily becomes a target for rape and violence. Imene (2015) re-examines Lucy's silence as a fiercely resistive denial of allowing her rape to be utilized to propagate false narratives about the black threat or to promote fresh representations of fusion and peace. Thus, her silence serves as a reappropriation of the experience and prevents the political use of her rape in institutional systems. The tone in the excerpt above is morbid, crystallising the ineluctable racial divide. Due to the country's history and the new transition, Lucy is reluctant to report her rape. Relating Lucy to Spivak's idea of who the subaltern is, though white, Lucy is also a lesbian, making her a minority and situating her within a social group with less acceptability and representation in South Africa. During the apartheid regime, blacks were usually forced to confess to crimes they did not commit under whips, labour, and force: "A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestors" (Coetzee, 1999:156). It is believed therefore that Coetzee presents the stereotypic perception of the black man by the whites in the post-apartheid regime that fuelled the black peril and the white anxieties concept. This is in tandem with Fanon (1963) on violence being a crucial part of the decolonisation process. But in this instance, women become the 'other' and victims of violence, sexual and political subjugation.

Wills (2016) argues that short of a radical re-orientation of themes and topics of history which can adequately account for the multiple identities and experiences women in the past have had; the post-apartheid South African National Curriculum Statement and Curriculum and Assessment Policy statement will unfortunately continue to privilege masculinist interpretation of the past. This contributes not only to the general marginalisation of women as subjects of history but more importantly reinforces, or ignores, oppressive gendered ideas, thus fuelling violence. The post-apartheid regime as depicted in *Disgrace* comes with an unwillingness to follow any moral order, re-placing and re-inscribing as it does another dispensation that invents an innocuous moral compass. David Lurie refuses to admit to raping Melanie and sweeps it under as 'not exactly rape.' He arrogantly justifies his actions and calls it natural eros, justifying the violence and oppression of black women by white men that had existed for years in the South African context. It is important to note that rape of women has been a problem for years, and not specifically the rape of white women by black men and vice versa. However, there is

a connection between a subversion of the black peril narrative and his blood boiling when the same is done to his daughter.

The erstwhile apartheid regime and black peril are mirrored here with a representation of that in the raping of his own daughter who is a white woman by three black men. In the present post-apartheid regime, Lucy tells her father "…Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept, to start at ground level. With nothing ... No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity ... Like a dog (Coetzee, 1999: 205).

The rape and precarity of women seen as weaker vessels in post-apartheid South Africa can only be better understood along the lines of power and racial profiling in South Africa. The characters of David Lurie and Petrus contribute significantly to the oeuvre in the narrative. They are both subtle in their approach to violence. The author describes Lurie in a way that makes the readers apologetic to his character. He is a white supremacist who does not handle the change in political power quite well. To Petrus, David Lurie is just another man, like himself, nothing more. The two main men in the novel, David and Petrus, use women as a tool to gain power psychologically and even physically.

Petrus is a servant to Lucy at the beginning. He slowly morphs into a monster through violent means by subjectivising the woman who owns the land and turns from being 'the colonised to being the coloniser':

> In the old days one could have had it out with Petrus. In the old days one could have had it out to the extent of losing one's temper and sending him packing and hiring someone in his place. But though Petrus is paid a wage, Petrus is no longer, strictly speaking, hired help...It is a new world they live in, he and Lucy and Petrus. Petrus knows it, and he knows it, and Petrus knows that he knows it (Coetzee, 1996:116).

The change in the status of Petrus in the narrative tells of the political transition in South Africa at the time. His casual response to the rape of Lucy and his 'solution' to the situation makes it impossible to think that he is not complicit to the act. Coetzee portrays Petrus and Lurie in the same light in their macabre approach to Lucy and Melanie's rape. When Lurie tries to lay his hands on one of the perpetrators of Lucy's rape, Petrus shields the culprit.

> ‘You see,’ says Petrus, frowning, ‘David, it is a hard thing you are saying, that this boy is a thief. He is very angry that you are calling him a thief. That is what he is

> telling everyone. And I, *I am the one who must be keeping the peace*. So, it is hard for me too.' 'I have no intention of involving you in the case, Petrus. Tell me the boy's name and whereabouts and I will pass on the information to the police. Then we can leave it to the police to investigate and bring him and his friends to justice. You will not be involved, I will not be involved, it will be a matter for the law.' Petrus stretches, bathing his face in the sun's glow. 'But the insurance will give you a new car.' Is it a question? A declaration? What game is Petrus playing? (Coetzee 1999: 110, my italics).

Petrus' refusal to assist in handing the culprit over to the police makes his motives questionable and can also be read as a case of protecting his own at the expense of the victim's safety. He is now in a position of authority; he answers to no one. The transition to a new political era makes this shift possible. His evasion of the rape situation is quite questionable; he acts as if the rape did not happen.

> About the party, about the boy with the flickering eyes, Petrus says nothing. It is as though none of that had happened (Coetzee 1999: 109).

Hove (2022) reads the character of Petrus (simply calling him Petrus is another subtle way Coetzee uses to show the perceived superiority of Lurie) as the actual menace in the narrative. Even though he barely speaks, and the author does not give an insight into his thoughts, his reactions and inactions are dubious as much as they are sinister. He replays the character of the postcolonial administrators (apartheid government), and also crystallises the menacing effect of a patriarchal society and government. To him, rape is not a crime, just as Johannes Smit in *The Madonna* sees the rape of Niki as 'fun' despite her screams of terror. To Petrus, Lucy's rape is not up for discussion, he would 'rather marry her and make her a woman' like the rest of his wives. His new wife never speaks and is just a peripheral character.

Lucy asserts that in South Africa, 'in this place, at this time', the harassment and violation she has experienced cannot be a public issue, and her rejection to recount the crime may portray an extreme stance in rejecting a history of oppression. Also, Judge (2017) posits that 'the violent ordering of sexualities, integral to colonial and apartheid ideologies, produce a set of historical conditions in which contemporary formations of homophobia-related violence are to be located.' This study reads Lucy's rape and reaction to be a result of these conditionings. In classical western literary narratives, rape is most of the time represented as unspeakable and

separated from expression; literary references to secret rape stories generate the complicated relationship between the effects of actual violation and silence.

In *Disgrace,* the rape of Lucy is questionable. Rape has been used for decades as a weapon of war, and in the wake of democracy in South Africa, Lucy's rape could be read in several ways. She is white, a member of a minority group, and a lesbian. Although the policies of inclusion were already in place, the traditional South African social and cultural norms were not yet accommodative of homosexuals. In her article, *Rape as a symbol of hate,* Morrissey (2013:73) explains these issues explicitly as seen below:

> Seated at the centre of these episodes of sexual violence is an intense desire to reclaim an authentic South African identity that foregrounds strength, heterosexuality, and what are perceived to be traditional South African gender roles, rendering the body of the Black lesbian powerless within a culture recovering from years of violent colonial rule and apartheid. In particular, this article demonstrates the ways that local discourses and attitudes about lesbianism, as well as human rights reports attempting to end violence against Black South African lesbians, collude to continue rendering this population vulnerable (Morrissey (2013:73).

Although, the group of people referred to in the excerpt above are black South African lesbians, it helps to understand the vulnerability of Lucy as a white subaltern in the newly democratic regime. She is anything but the definition of a traditional South African woman. Her rape raises several questions on identity, social constructs, and the implication of a political transfer from a minority to a majority previously oppressed social group. As a white lesbian, in a typically black environment, owning a piece of land, she is 'supposedly seen as a threat, and must be put in her place.' Petrus' proposition of marriage as a way of protection speaks volumes on patriarchy in South Africa. With the black majority now in the position of power, crimes continue unabated, therefore continuing the legacies of apartheid. Melanie is portrayed as one who cannot speak for herself, without the help of ‘her boyfriend.' Lucy, on the hand, is stripped of her voice after the brutal rape and the metaphorical invasion of her land beyond the dam by Petrus which marks annexation of her space. The once assertive woman is 'put in her place.' Men remain the higher cadre in the replication of social classification, and as a result, after apartheid ended, the woman's body is subject to 'ownership', sexual assault, and other forms of subordination. It is no longer just segregation based on colour, but on gender and socio-economic classification. For both women, there were no proper hearing from their perspective

as to what exactly transpired. The committee that probes into Melanie's case does not require her presence. Petrus, housing one of Lucy's rapists, will not give him up, under the guise that he is still a child. Either way, violence against women is not treated with the urgency it deserves. It is normalised and seen as fulfilling the man's sexual inclinations. Petrus' character reflects the effect of the transition in South Africa. The black man now has the right to speak, live and own, which was compulsively illegalised during apartheid. With these privileges granted to him, he reduces Lucy's rape to a mere act of (in)justice, simply glosses over it, and instead proposes marriage to her, while also taking her land, as a means of 'protecting' her. Like in every patriarchal society, Petrus asserts his authority and position as a man, and as a free citizen of South Africa. By suggesting marriage to Lucy, he reduces her to a property and pauperises her into 'more' silence, just like his harem of wives. David and Lucy become the elite subalterns displaced under the new administration, pushing them further to the margins, while Petrus is armed with more power and authority.

4.3 Rape and politics in Tlhabi's *Khwezi* (2017)

The argument in this thesis in based on Spivak's concept of the subaltern and it is steeped in gender and social constructs. In Spivak's (1994) view, the subaltern cannot speak, or the subaltern woman cannot speak for herself. Her essay speaks on various subjects, but she narrows it down to the experiences of colonised women in third-world countries, using India as an example. The example of the sati women, though limited to India, gives us a perspective of what goes on in many other colonised nations of the world. In analysing the text *Khwezi*, the study is exploring the concept of the subaltern in *Khwezi* as a reflection of the aftermath of apartheid in South Africa. This is no longer the case of white-on-black oppression but the exposure of an intricate practice of rape without justice for the victims. This 'rape of the lock' (a' la Alexander Pope) has persisted from apartheid into the post-apartheid period. The study posits that gender anomalies have always been deeply rooted in the South African social fabric and only came to light when the collective aim was achieved: to end apartheid.

Posel (2005) challenges the idea that rape crimes have increased since apartheid was formally abolished in 1994 and instead contends that rape discussion has increased in an environment greatly liberalised by politics, the media and law enforcement. Issues regarding racism and other forms of discrimination took prominence during apartheid; however, the end of apartheid also meant attention could be paid to other ills and issues such as gender talks, rape, and other forms of violence. Rape is viewed as a sign of the severity of patriarchal gender relations and

the maintenance of patriarchal hierarchies in post-apartheid South Africa (Brown, 2012; Buiten & Naidoo, 2016). Posel (2005) illustrates that in 2001, a media propaganda first brought the topic of rape to the limelight, but it was not until 2006 that the public became very interested. Zuma, a vice president at the time, was accused of rape. A young woman sued the ruling vice president on account of rape. The revelations and occurrences that followed during the trial made it clear where South Africa was, regarding relationship between masculinist power and (in)justice. The prosecution personified the dark side of South Africa after apartheid. Under the heroism of the Constitution, it appeared that a vile brew of violence, misogyny and hatred developed (Hassim 2009). The victim is further victimised in the wake of owning up to her truth. It is a war between power, position, and truth.

In their critical review, Anderson and Doherty (2007) observe that studies on how people perceive rape frequently draw on identity theory and use positivist methods to investigate "casual reasoning about rape, attribution of fault, blame and responsibility and the beliefs and attitudinal characteristics of social observers." Victim blaming and other culturally pervasive myths on rape are unintentionally incorporated into the findings. Remarkably, the questioning of the victims as opposed to the culprit is quite telling and simply implies that some rapes are deserved, and that the victim should understand this. In the case of Fezekile in *Khwezi*, the media and the justice system in South Africa proved this beyond any reasonable doubt.

It is important to understand that Redi Tlhabi narrates the story of *Khwez*i to challenge the public and the government. She provides an insight into what power-play looks like in the post-apartheid era. Power-play is infused into every aspect of governance and sometimes helps to promote the re-victimisation of the victim, especially the female gender, as amplified in the text. The post-apartheid era, as depicted in the narrative, exposes the ills of the ANC government, highlights its strength, and shows that the so-called democracy is far from what the common people expected of it. Evidently, as in the text, Khwezi is not allowed to defend herself rightly and openly, like every subaltern woman, as Spivak argues, the higher-ups and party women pressure her to refrain from saying her truth, I read this as political affiliations and benefits, and protection of the alleged culprit to prevent his image from being tainted. Also many women will rather have Fezekile keep quiet, which shows the conditioning of many women when rape occurs. Although, the narrative centres on the life of Fezekile, the plight of other women is documented, especially during apartheid. This helps to trace how pervasive rape is in the South African fabric. It is a form of violence that has continued and still has not

been stalled. The subaltern is usually to blame for the mishaps and is expected to take responsibility for the actions of other persons.

Consequently, in looking at the power relations between the South African ruling elites, and the dispossessed female bodies, Tlhabi contends that the exploitation of women's bodies and silencing of their voice can be traced back to the practice before apartheid, and during apartheid, which has only continued unabated in the present era. This recollection of the past for the benefit of the present has been explained by Chisholm (2012) who states that the past for many black South Africans is far more 'complex and rich', that the irony about nostalgia is how the past is essentially the present, and these present anxieties are refracted through the prism of the past (p. 82). Hence by depicting the historical abuse of power by the politicians in South Africa, Tlhabi speaks for women and other victims of abuse. Regardless of the many writings on rape and its effect on the victim, Tlhabi draws attention to the societal response to the rape case and the role of the judiciary in glossing over pertinent issues and choosing to protect Zuma's image at the expense of the victim's liberation, just like the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Khwezi (2017) is both a post-apartheid era story and a record of events that took place during apartheid. Using the infamous Zuma rape trial as a mirror to examine the problems with rape and power dynamics in South Africa, Tlhabi places the social experiences of her characters in the context of those occasions. Through the text, she demonstrates that the ANC government, which was duly elected, had egregious shortcomings that led to these problems. The narrative opens with an exposition of the Zuma rape trial and victory. Tlhabi says, 'that is the legal truth' (2017:3). She questions if the process that led to this 'legal truth' was moral and ethical enough. This is the premise upon which she delves into Fezekile's story and other rape victims briefly mentioned in the book. It gives us an insight into the menace of rape in South Africa, as depicted in the book, even before apartheid ended. It brings to the limelight the problem of rape as deeply rooted in the South African socio-political fabric and goes beyond the experience of apartheid. bell hooks (1989) explains that the experiences of back women differ from those of white women because of race. As a result, race plays a significant role in black feminism. The history of slavery and colonisation makes white women's experiences differ from black women. This is due to the different background and privileges, for the black woman in this context, it is a case of triple oppression, based on race, class and gender. South Africa's

traditional patriarchal structures are deeply rooted in social and cultural interactions, and the narrative in Redi Tlhabi's text amplifies this.

This study does not dwell on the entire themes in the narrative as the focus is on Fezekile and the ills of rape during apartheid and in post-apartheid South Africa. Kesselring (2017) posits that victimhood is a corporeal experience that does not change in the absence of an opportunity for transformation. Victims can attempt to reclaim a new status in society through a variety of channels. The law is one of them, and it has the power to change someone's experiences for the better or worse. South African apartheid victims have frequently brought their social issues before South African and US courts with the aid of attorneys and support groups. Kesselring (2017) explores the transitional justice systems that enable persons to achieve a new social standing as well as the legal channels open for redress. In the case of Fezekile, her experience in court changes the trajectory of her life forever. In the course of Tlhabi's investigations, she contacted a few persons. Ivan Pillay was part of the persons she came in contact with. He has this to say:

> 'I heard about some incidents in her childhood, I think she was five, and again at twelve? He is correct. She was five, twelve and thirteen. How did you know about it? 'It was spoken about and some comrades knew I had been close to her father so the news reached me. But it is an indictment of our movement that it did not deal decisively with such incidents.' 'So it was covered up?' 'That is another way of looking at it. And perhaps typical of organisations that depend on secrecy and closing ranks' (Tlhabi 2017:29).

The excerpt above is an exchange between Tlhabi and Pillay, which confirms the fact that Fezekile was raped as a child, a fact that the court tried unsuccessfully to present as consensual sex. The conversation between the two shows that ANC, despite fighting for democratic rule in South Africa, was not free of its own accusation: it was characterised by secrecy and covering up. Rape is not new in South Africa, from the narrative, it is an age long violence that has persisted and even strengthened in post-apartheid South Africa. And oftentimes, there is no actual punishment for the perpetrators, instead, the victim is further humiliated, and the society sees them as outlaws and outcasts, as it is with Fezekile.

> 'There is unfinished business in South Africa, on the political and economic front. Conversations about how our democracy has failed to guarantee freedom and

> equality are taking place, at least all-over social media. In academia, and on every single media platform there is. But the sexual violence that women and children endured in the fight against apartheid has not enjoyed the same attention' (Tlhabi, 2017: 41).

The above excerpt directs attention to the pressing issues in South Africa, post-apartheid. Adequate reparations and repercussions are not in place for victims and perpetrators of the heinous crime of rape and violence. Tlhabi (2017:41) demonstrates that 'South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission did not have a category for gender violence against women.' This is quite telling, because rape is also considered a war crime, and not having a category to seek redress for the victims of these crimes after apartheid shows the inadequacies of the ANC government. This buttresses Pillay's statement, mentioned earlier in this study.

> 'The women who came before the TRC were questioned about everything except rape. Gender researcher Nomarussia Bonase says that 'if a woman said it had happened to her, the interviewer often did not record it. When a woman did demand that their experience of rape be counted and treated as an act of political violence, TRC statement takers told her that they would only include it if she reported the complaint to the police' (Tlhabi 2017:42).

Tlhabi records that 'Nomarussia was born prematurely after her mother's gang rape by apartheid police (p. 42). This exposes the police as perpetrators of rape and other forms of violence during apartheid. Tlhabi (2017:43) reveals further:

> In 1997, Professor Sheila Meintjes made a submission to the TRC and has repeatedly questioned the role of the TRC in its failure to address rape. In her submission, she states that of nearly 9 000 cases of violations (reported in the TRC to date) only about nine have claimed they have been raped. Yet in our research we came across many cases of violations which could be described as rape or where women knew of others who had been raped.

This accounts for the inadequacies of the TRC and highlights the fact that many of the women who were victims never got justice or compensation for the gross acts of violence perpetuated by the apartheid government and the ANC supposedly in fighting to right the wrongs of apartheid.

Fezekile's crime was laying 'a charge of rape against Jacob Zuma on 6 December 2006 (Tlhabi 2017: 76).' That was the beginning of a trial that, according to Tlhabi, changed the trajectory of Fezekile's life. From laying a complaint to the police and wanting to push for action for rape, she was exposed to ridicule and cajoling from the political allies of Zuma and the media. It did not count that Judson, Fezekile's father, had been a friend of Zuma during apartheid, and played a crucial role in the fight to put an end to apartheid. It also did not count that Fezekile saw Zuma as a father figure, and he betrayed the trust a child puts in an elder, instead she is silenced.

> Fezekile did as she was told. Confined to witness protection, she had lost her freedom, authority and ability to make choices. She did not have legal representation at this stage; later, her legal team would advise her to rather enter the NPA's witness protection programme as the police were not mandated to provide the kind of protection she needed. In the ensuing confusion and fear, she had stuck to the police, believing that surely, they were on her side (Tlhabi 2017:78).

Fezekile is placed in a precarious position because she lays an implicating allegation on the deputy president of South Africa at the time. It does not matter that Zuma has been in the news for fraudulent activities and his financial adviser at the time is jailed. When it comes to Fezekile's allegation against Zuma, the first response is to *silence* her and treat the case as a political score for Zuma. As amplified in the text, her rape simply becomes a case of gender and political identities at play. In the social stratification, women occupy the lowest rung of the social ladder, and in South Africa, black women are fodder in this category, sacrificed to the libidinal drives of Umkhonto we Sizwe (the spear of the nation, also a phallic symbol of penetration), therefore exposing them to the highest level of oppression and discrimination among social groups (Hove, 2017).

The manipulation by Zuma and his allies place Fezekile in a precarious if not vulnerable position. An apology seems to be the only way to right the wrong of rape, without taking responsibility. Zuma offered money and an apology, washing the haunting spectre of the rape in a shower afterwards. Tlhabi records in the narrative 'Up until now: until the trial, Beauty had believed that Zuma was genuinely sorry. But in the events leading up to the trial, how she and her daughter were hounded out, insulted and misrepresented, it dawned on her that *Zuma was not sorry'* (Tlhabi 2017:83; my italics). Zuma used the resources of the State, and his position to oppress and further victimise Fezekile who referred to him as 'Malume.' In traditional South African society, older men are referred to as 'Malume', which depicts 'uncle' or 'father figure.'

It is with this understanding that Fezekile approaches Zuma, as a friend of her father. Like in Melanie's case in *Disgrace* (1999), ‘Fezekile was not required to be present in the trial, and I was surprised by how much of the trial she had missed. Her testimony and cross-examination happened away from the cameras…’ (Tlhabi, 2017:95). Fezekile said:

> 'it would not have helped to follow everything that was said. I came in and gave my side. I listened to some of the *lies and distortions* only if my advocate said they were relevant. Otherwise, I wasn't there every day and tried to avoid all the *psychological damag*e' (Tlhabi 2017: 95; my emphasis).

This excerpt reveals Fezekile's reluctance to face the situation which she refers to as psychological damage. Her body was violated, and she was only exposing the crime of a political bigot. In a bid to find justice, she became the accused, while the perpetrator was named the victim. She records in her dairy:

> 'I think that what I will do is take it one step at a time. First get through the court case, whatever that brings (of course I hope we win, that the truth prevails and justice is done). Then I can deal with the other stuff more clearly, removing the man who raped me from my father and my father from the man who raped me… I am disgusted by the thought of him on top of me and sweating and ejaculating inside of me. I am confused by him looking at me as anything other than a daughter' (Tlhabi 2017:96).

During the trial, the rape experiences of Fezekile as a child are reopened. Tlhabi records that 'on the fourth day of the trial, Adv Kemp J Kemp produced a copy of Fezekile's diary, much to her shock. He used Fezekile's accounts, there, of her childhood rapes in exile to question her understanding of the concept of consent (p. 97).' The attorney did this to further manipulate Fezekile and to supposedly prove that her childhood rape and Zuma's violation are all consensual. She is depicted as someone who 'willingly went to the premises of the perpetrator, and society, in general, sees this as consent' (p. 97). In the events that lead to the trial, and during the trial, Fezekile is exposed to daily oppression, threats, and public ridicule. Her lifestyle, dress code, choices are all questioned and depicted as seducing and inviting. It does not matter that Zuma mentions that 'Fezekile was emotional and unsettled when she came to his home… about her niece's child, the snakebite victim… But in court, in Zuma's mind, she (Fezekile) could switch from that level of distress to seduction and sex' (p. 157).

Tlhabi further addresses the impact of rape and how it exposes Fezekile, and the other women briefly mentioned to ridicule and further oppression. These acts demean equity and the struggle for equality and proper representation that the ANC 'supposedly' fought to implement. These gaps and blanks slow down equality and equity within South Africa's socio-political system. Tlhabi establishes that social ills and vices, such as, rape, violence and other forms of gender oppression are triggered by the actions of the inept and corrupt government, which finds pride and accolades in using 'position' and 'state resources' to get away with crimes. Fezekile is alienated by and in the very country that her father fights and dies for. After the trial, she is smuggled out of the country, because there are concerns for her safety. Hove (2021) posits that the country that swore to protect her citizens, turns against them. Zuma represents the state, and by raping Fezekile, speaks of the inadequacies of the state to protect its citizens. The very legacies of apartheid are reinstated in this instance.

Using Spivak's subaltern lens and integrating it into the South African social space, the subaltern women are compelled to remain silent by cultural and political institutions (the family, society, and the state). Simister (2012) presents three categories of gender-based violence: physical (which he defines as punching and kicking women); sexual (which is known as rape); and emotional (which includes any public ridicule a woman experiences at the hands of men). Fezekile in *Khwezi* is exposed to all three categories of gender-based violence. Lumsden and Morgan (2017:2) posit that 'silencing strategies are reflected in the ways in which media reports on trolling, including the reconstruction of trolling events (such as rape threats, death threats), and body shaming, the representation of the (female) victim, and the advice given to victims on how they should respond to the abuse.' For Fezekile, the media and police are used as ideological and state apparatuses to threaten her to drop the case against Zuma. In a bid to silence the victim, the narrative mutates blaming the victim for the rape of her body. Also, the victim is forced to migrate, thereby initiating forced displacement by societal factors, the media, party members and Zuma loyalists. Even in death, disruptions by Zuma loyalists almost do not allow the burial to take place. Fezekile is threatened and forced out of South Africa to further silence her. Like in *Waiting for the Barbarians* where the natives are forcefully displaced by the state, Fezekile is forced to migrate by the ‘state’ that swore to protect its citizens.

4.4 Conclusion

The two narratives examined in this chapter amplify and reconstruct the lived experiences of different women in post-apartheid South Africa. Rape and politics are discourses that permeate the texts. In *Disgrace*, David Lurie is yet to fully come to terms with the fact that their black government is entitled to certain privileges and certain ways of re-imagining futures. The makeshift committee that looks into Lurie's case represents the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the inherent lapses and partiality of the committee. Gouws (2021) posits that in South Africa, no category of woman is immune from becoming a victim; nevertheless, depending on the intersections of race, class, and sexuality, some women are more vulnerable than others. The creation of women's vulnerability is significantly influenced by geography. In contrast to middle-class neighbourhoods, where the majority of white women live, for example, black women live in densely packed semi-permanent structures in African slums that are less secure. But it is true that most rapes and femicide crimes are committed by people the victims know (StatsSA Report, 2000). This means that women are generally vulnerable and susceptible to violent acts regardless of their geography, as the perpetrators may be near or in their homes.

This explains the rape of Lucy in *Disgrace* and Fezekile's rape in *Khwezi* respectively. Lucy is exposed due to the rurality of Salem and the less secure environment in which she lives, coupled with the political tensions that hover over the new democratic era. Fezekile, on the other hand, is exposed to more vulnerability due to her race, colour and patriarchal 'social norms' that circumscribe her environment. She is forced to silence due to her position as a black woman by a society and political constellation of forces that say those males in power cannot be faulted. More importantly, she is raped by Zuma whom she considers both a father figure and a political embodiment of the dreams of her father for political autonomy. Her rape is read as a political tool to bring Zuma down, while ignoring the actions of Zuma himself. This action speaks for itself. The subaltern woman cannot speak. Even when they speak, they are either ignored or forced to keep quiet by the cultural norms that uphold patriarchy by endorsing those in power. More importantly, the narratives dwell on the issue of power relations, and the changing political tide in South Africa. For Lurie, towards the end of the narrative, he slowly comes to a point of resigning to fate. In the environment he finds himself with his daughter, the effect of the political shift is quite heavy. With the rape of his daughter, there is a cryptic message being passed across through the action of the rapist and even Petrus' silence that there is a change in power, and there is nothing that Lucy and Lurie can do in these cases. They both

have to tread gently. The available agencies are unreliable to speak or demand justice for Melanie and Lucy.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Rape and identity: Reimagining post-apartheid

This chapter draws tentative conclusions from the previous chapters on how identities have been constructed and reconstructed from apartheid to post-apartheid times in the South African social and political space. Rape is read as a menace and a tool for inscribing gendered female identities in the examined narratives. It is a social and political tool used to silence and create precarious spaces for women in an attempt to stifle their voices. In traditional South African society, like in many other African countries, women movements played a pivotal role in the fight against apartheid, and in fighting against gross human violations. However, not much has been done to address the violation of women and children in South Africa. This is not for lack of advocacy among women, but due to cultural, historical, and patriarchal orientations in the social settings. Women are continually rendered voiceless, and their bodies are vilified and oppressed by men. Due to the country's history of apartheid, the narratives archive the gross orchestrations of violence during apartheid where racial discrimination was highly privileged and black women were doubly oppressed.

The study prioritised how apartheid has evolved despite its 'end' in the South African social space. This is based on Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, and Mboti's Apartheid studies which examine how apartheid metamorphoses in post-apartheid South Africa. With the structures of apartheid still in place and scaffolded by the ANC government, the silence continues to shape the lives of South Africans, especially women of colour. Using Spivak's essay, these women are considered subalterns and through their lived experiences, deliberate silencing of the female voice and its constant erasure, the study examines the reasons for these silences, and attempts to negotiate a space for conversation on the possibilities of women's voices in post-apartheid South Africa. The research questions were carefully framed to look into the following:

1. How is identity addressed in the selected literary texts?
2. In what ways is the phenomenon and experience of rape depicted in the literary texts considering its magnitude as experienced by the major characters in the narratives?
3. What are the ways in which identities are connected to and inscribed in the power dynamics of South African social formations as seen in the narratives?

To answer these questions, this study undertook a comprehensive analysis of themes ranging from racial, ethnic, gender identities to the power dynamics within the South African social space specifically by zooming in on the experiences of the dominant characters in the selected narratives for the study.

This study of selected South African literature in apartheid and post-apartheid era recognises that identity is an important construct in the South African social space, and the menace of rape is read as a problem of identity crises. Rape is a prevalent social evil that transcends apartheid and the post-apartheid period. The study examined the concepts of rape, gender, racial, and socio-political identities within South Africa. The writers speak largely of the distracting and destructive energies of rape in the South African social space under both apartheid and post-apartheid legal and government architectures. Since African literature is utilitarian, the selected narratives mirror the changes in South Africa over time. J.M. Coetzee is a prominent writer who was born in Cape Town South Africa, and he largely witnessed apartheid from the perspective of a white man. His writings have been tagged as controversial because of his stance relative to the evolving power dynamics which could be read as instances of distancing and proximation. His deliberate silencing of the women in the narratives examined heightens the extent of social injustices perpetrated by whites against blacks during apartheid. His relocation to Australia, years after apartheid ended could also be read as another strategy of distancing himself from a vile cauldron. For this study, his narratives are read from the perspective of a black woman who strives to pry open the nostalgia of a white man in South Africa.

Zakes Mda, is a prominent writer who was actively part of the struggle against apartheid as a black man. Most of his writings reflect the lives of black subjectivities during apartheid and post-apartheid era. In other writings, he extensively discusses the issues of racial discrimination, gender subordination, socio-economic differences and the convenient binaries that existed during apartheid. He describes the experiences of blacks from a black man's perspective. His worldview, therefore, differs from Coetzee's approach as he was part of the struggle to put apartheid to an end.

Redi Tlhabi is a feminist journalist and the only female author examined in this thesis. Her work reflects the rot in the socio-political system that continually vilifies women, as seen in her biography of *Khwezi*. As a woman, she relates with the vulnerability of women in the 'rainbow' nation. She speaks of the ills and failures of the African National Congress'

government under Zuma. She narrativises patriarchy, gender identity, rape, silences, and erasure of the woman's voice from apartheid to post-apartheid, centring on the Zuma rape trial and Fezekile's character. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), and *Disgrace* (1999), Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), and Tlhabi's *Khwezi* (2017) have been scrutinised to establish the ways in which identities are connected to and inscribed in the power dynamics of South African social and political formations.

Chapter two discussed the research previously conducted on the dominant tropes in Coetzee. It elaborates the history of apartheid, the concept of subalternity, social identity theory and the 'other', rape, violence, discrimination, and oppression within South African social space. This analytic approach helps in understanding the context in which the narratives were produced. Apartheid is suffused with the history of internal colonisation in South Africa; it was a practice of discrimination based on colour, race, and gender. It was a system where the natives of South Africa were forced to vacate their lands and live in squalor and rural areas, while the whites took over the fertile environment, and had access to quality systems, such as education and health facilities and the economy. During this period, blacks and other coloured groups did not have access to basic human rights, and were considered the 'other', in their own country, while the white minority took over the realm of public affairs and segregated governance. This is in tandem with Tajfel and Turner's SIT, which focuses on the categorisation and classification of social groups. The social group considered as the 'outgroup' or 'other' during this period were blacks and coloured. These groups are the subalterns.

The subaltern according to Spivak represents the marginalised group, especially women in the third world, of which South Africa is a part. I trace the concept of the subaltern from other scholars including Gramsci and Spivak, and how the subaltern group is slightly different from other post-colonial groups. Spivak narrows the experiences of the subaltern to women who are doubly oppressed by the colonial system and cultural structures of their environment. In this chapter, the study examines the concept of identity and how it is represented within the South African social space. It also traces how identity is reconstructed in apartheid to post-apartheid literatures, while connecting them to the selected narratives.

Chapter 3 examined Coetzee's *Waiting for the* Barbarians (1980) and Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002). The narratives focus on the apartheid state in South Africa. Both texts engage the theme of racial and gender discrimination, erasure of the female voice, torture, and violence among other gross acts for which apartheid gained notoriety. *Waiting for the barbarians*

focuses on an unnamed empire that represents a colonial state, and the relationship with the people of an unnamed colony, whom Coetzee referred to as the barbarians. Although not particularly stated as referring to South Africa, it is a text that mirrors the relationship between the whites and blacks during apartheid, which Tajfel and Turner refer to as the relationship between binary opposites. The narrative is an allegorical representation of apartheid in South Africa. Coetzee depicts the lived experiences of the unnamed 'barbarians' whom the magistrate describes as people with dark skin. Just like the experience under apartheid, the natives are removed from their lands and relegated to the margins, while the 'empire' occupies the rich and vast lands that previously and rightfully belonged to the natives. The study dwells on the deliberate silencing of the 'barbarians' and the violation of the 'barbarian' girl in particular. The depiction of the barbarians as unintelligent is a deliberate act by Coetzee to mirror the views of the white ruling class in South Africa. Like in every colonial structure, the relationship between the binaries is often a master to slave kind of relationship. The study questions the hegemonic masculine practice that was in place during apartheid. Spivak explains that the subaltern cannot speak, and the narrative suggests that during the hegemonic rule of apartheid, there was deliberate silencing of the subaltern (male/female) voices. Coetzee's deliberate act of not naming the 'barbarian' characters is a deliberate if not anxious attempt of silencing them and enforcing the authority of the empire. Coetzee satirises the South African experience during apartheid in this narrative by exposing the inhumane acts of the government, and the plight of the 'other,' during this period.

In Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002), the narrative zooms in on a particular happening in South Africa during apartheid, *the Excelsior case*. Mda centres his narrative around an actual event but fictionalises it. The Excelsior '19 was prominent news that attracted international audiences to South Africa at the height of apartheid. The novel focuses on the brazen affair between some white men and black women in Excelsior, which resulted in the birth of coloured babies. It is an allegorical representation of a historical occurrence in South Africa where the proscriptions of The Immorality Act of 1950 that strove to prevent any form of sexual relationship between whites and blacks is subverted into contagious versions of owning the black woman's body. This palpable breach of this law by its own makers invited public prosecution for the parties involved. Despite this law, the narrative presents the men as enjoying the bodies of black women to the extent of raping them to fulfil their sexual proclivities as reflected in the rape of Niki.

Niki subsequently resorts to selling her body after the designers of the Immorality Act dastardly rob her of her virginity. This results in the birth of Popi, a coloured baby whom Cronje fathered. These subjugating acts become a norm in the Excelsior community. While the black men work in inhumane conditions in mines far away from home, the white men tunnel into the bodies of their wives who work in their shops. Eventually, the culprits are apprehended and tried in court. While the court grants the white men bail, the black women who cannot pay bail are left in the prison cell, with Niki and her baby staying the longest because her baby's father commits suicide rather than face the ridicule and humiliation. The violence and continued defamation of Niki and her silence apexes the oppression of women during apartheid. Unlike Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* lodges a sustained battle fight against the ills of the apartheid government, and this leads to the emancipation of blacks towards the end of the narrative. Even Popi becomes an articulate voice in the new era and contributes to the fight against discrimination and oppression that apartheid engenders.

Chapter four expatiates on two post-apartheid texts that focalise the lived experiences of men and women in post-apartheid South Africa. Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) is an early narrative of transition which it satirises the new political era through its scripting of rape, voice and political tension taking prominence. Coetzee focuses on the character of David Lurie, disgraced because of his affair with Melanie, a student he teaches. As a white supremacist, he does not see his action as rape or sexual assault. The committee to review the case can be read as the Truth and Reconciliation commission, set up by the ANC government to look into the ills of apartheid and bring about reconciliation between the victims and villains. The committee silences Melanie by not inviting her to the interrogation. They subtly do not pin the case as rape but ask Lurie to accept the blame for his inappropriate relationship with his student, which he subtly glosses over and trivialises with his response to the committee, 'I am sure the members of this committee have better things to do with their time than rehash a story over which there will be no dispute. I plead guilty to both charges. Pass sentence and let us get on with our lives (Coetzee, 1999:48).' . Therefore, he is forced to resign, which is the 'crime and punishment' for his gross actions, a' la Dostoevsky. He leaves Cape Town for the Eastern Cape, where he experiences the rape of his only daughter, Lucy. He acknowledges the rape of his daughter and calls for justice, while Lucy refuses to seek justice for the evil done to her. Instead, she chooses silence and slowly succumbs to defeat. Petrus, a black man who works for Lucy, becomes a house owner, and gradually changes from the 'slave' to the authority, limning the change in political power in South Africa. He is read as an accomplice to Lucy's rape because he shields

the felon who rapes Lucy. The lawlessness and anarchy that characterise the period link to Fanon's musings on decolonisation in the *Wretched of the Earth* (1961). The cycle of oppression and violence continues. The only change is the transfer of power from the 'colonisers' to the 'colonised,' therefore the structure remains.

Tlhabi's *Khwezi* zeroes in on the Zuma rape case and Fezekile's character. The journalist-cum-feminist writer also mirrors the lived experiences of women who, alongside their male counterparts, fought to dislodge apartheid. She capitalises on the hidden intricacies of the ANC government during apartheid and post-apartheid. By examining the power dynamics within the South African social space, Tlhabi focuses on the experiences of the subaltern women post-apartheid. She exposes the ills of patriarchy that account for women's continued silencing.

Patriarchy is deeply rooted in the socio-political space in South Africa. The biography satirises the political dynamics in the post-apartheid periods. The ANC, a significant party that fought to end apartheid, emerged as the elected political power after apartheid ended. Disappointingly, it has been constantly accused of injustice, discrimination and a looting kleptocracy. The one thing the party fought to end comes back in this chronicle in the form of Zuma, who represents 'the state' but rapes a young lady in his own home. The courts say he is not guilty and set him free, while the lady, 'Fezekile,' is hounded into exile. Her name is trampled upon, rejected, and she is refused a fair hearing by the social, legal and political structures of the society. Despite the deliberate efforts of the government to silence the experiences of Fezekile, ten years later, during the state of the nation address by Zuma, four women walked into the parliament building with placards showing that Fezekile's experience was not forgotten. In silence, these four women speak of how Fezekile's victimisation represents every woman in South Africa. This act of resistance by these women, showing that they cannot be silenced, evinces the conviction that despite the continued silencing of women in the social space, women still strive to seek redress and justice for the wrongs done to them. Zuma's rape signifies 'the rape of a nation' and institutionalises the performativity of patriarchy against the currency of womanist liberation.

There abound in Africa, women who have continually suffered oppression and a deliberate attempt by those in authority to silence them. Hegemonic masculinity, which apartheid represented, did not allow the voices of the 'other' to be heard. At the demise of apartheid, men climb the ladder and have a certain level of freedom and audibility that women are not given due to the patriarchal nature of the traditional South African society. Every attempt of the subaltern woman to speak is met with a systemic obstinacy that does everything in its power

to revoke that opportunity, using all the resources available, the media, men, politics, and judiciary. Despite these inherent inhibitions, women continue writing and fighting against rape and patriarchal oppression through activism, research, and writings in South Africa. The effort made so far is still a far cry from getting adequate representation, but women are gradually destabilising and rupturing the patriarchal system for adequate representation and agency. No doubt, South African women activists and feminists have garnered and recorded laudable progress in providing agency for women less privileged to fight the ills being perpetrated against them and their bodies. However, as Mboti posits, though apartheid officially ended in 1994, the structures remain; and as such, the practice of discrimination and subordination continues as represented in the selected narratives.

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