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An Investigation of Racial and Gender Dynamics in Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Gordimer's *The House Gun*

BY

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## Abstract

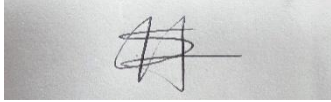
This study explored the intricate dynamics of gender roles within contemporary society, focusing on how these roles are constructed, maintained, and challenged across various contexts. Key findings revealed that traditional gender roles continue to exert significant influence on personal identity, professional opportunities, and interpersonal relationships. However, there is a notable shift towards more fluid and egalitarian understandings of gender, particularly among younger generations.

The research highlighted the impact of cultural, social, and economic factors in shaping these dynamics and the role of media and education in promoting gender equity. Ultimately, this thesis will contribute to the ongoing discourse on gender by providing insights into the evolving nature of gender roles and the implications for policy and practice to foster inclusivity and equality.

## Declaration of original work

I, Iyaloo Ndafika Shipanga, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis, titled *An Investigation of Racial and Gender Dynamics in Coetzee's Disgrace and Gordimer's The House Gun*. This is my original work and I have not submitted it to any university of high education Institution for the award of a degree.

Signature:

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Date: 30 October 2024

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Date: 30 October 2024

## Acknowledgements

This study was successful due to the significant people who guided and helped me throughout the compilation of this study. Utmost gratitude is given to the following individuals

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## Dedication

I dedicate this study to my sisters, my elder sister Helvi Kovambo Fotolela, your hard work and dedication towards all your goals in life keep pushing me to always do my overall best. Thank you so much for setting such a good example for us. My younger sisters, Pomwene-Ipawa Shipanga and Ndapanda – Tate Etuhole Shipanga, I know you will look up to the best, having such exemplary elder sisters like us will take you to greater heights.

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

1. IQ
  - Intelligence Quotient (A number that is often used as a measure of a person's intelligence and is found by dividing the mental age of the person as given by a score on a special test by the age in years and multiplying by 100)
2. CRT
  - Critical Research Theory

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the study

A significant social and political revolution occurred in South Africa in the 20th century as a result of the dismantling of apartheid, a repressive regime that institutionalised and separated people based on race (Adams, 2017). During this period of transition, a new era characterised by more freedoms and democratic principles came into being. However, it also brought to light a number of intricate challenges, including long-hidden racial tensions and gender dynamics (Barlow, 2020). During this time, well-known writers such as Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee used their incisive and evocative prose to examine the nuanced facets of their communities. Post-apartheid South African society is depicted in *The House of Gun* by Nadine Gordimer and *Disgrace* by J.M. Coetzee. The narratives consistently delve into thematic elements of exploitation, vulnerability, and disintegration. Political and societal changes were substantial, nevertheless, a number of Western colonisers demonstrated a restricted understanding of and ability to adjust to the emergent order. Colonialists who arrived in South Africa aimed to exploit the native population in a manner consistent with their historical conduct. Moreover, these individuals held the belief that these specific individuals were devoid of civilisation and were therefore considered to be of a lower social standing as human beings. An analysis of the literary works *Disgrace* and *The House of Gun* presents a chance to ponder how racial and gender dynamics manifest in the daily lives of individuals. Furthermore, these literary pieces possess the capacity to enable people to identify and alleviate occurrences of racial and gender dynamics directed at women within their respective cultures, thereby contributing to the progress of a fair and egalitarian social structure.

### 1.2 Statement of the problem

The purpose of this research study was to investigate the intricate racial and gender dynamics within the literary works of J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Nadine Gordimer's *The House of Gun*. By examining these novels through a critical lens, the study aimed to elucidate the nuanced interplay of race and gender as portrayed in the narratives. Specifically, the research sought to explore how race and gender intersect and influence power structures, identity formation, and social hierarchies within the contexts of post-apartheid South Africa. Through a comparative

analysis of the characters, plot developments, and thematic elements, the study aimed to provide insights into the authors' portrayal of racial and gender relations, thereby shedding light on the complexities of these dynamics within the socio-political landscape of contemporary South Africa. Additionally, the research aimed to contribute to the broader discourse on race and gender dynamics in literature, thus offering a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in the representation of these themes within the framework of the novels.

### 1.3 Research objectives

The main objective of this study was to investigate racial and gender dynamics in J.M Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*. The sub-objectives are:

1. to analyse the portrayal and intersectionality of race and gender in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*, and
2. to assess the socio-political implications of racial and gender dynamics depicted in *Disgrace* and *The House Gun*.
3. to compare and contrast the literary techniques used by Coetzee and Gordimer in portraying racial and gender dynamics in their respective novels.

### Theoretical Framework

#### Gender role theory

The examination of gender roles and the acquisition of distinct roles by men and women has been a topic of extensive discourse in academic circles throughout the preceding decades. Giddens (2022) asserts that the prominence of an individual's sex role surpasses that of their other social functions, a fact that is often considered commonplace. Due to the significant importance of gender in shaping cultural identity, scholars have divergent perspectives regarding the underlying determinants of individuals' comprehension of gender and the formation of gender roles. In the realm of gender and gender role studies, there exists a significant disparity between the enormous volume of literature produced and the little consensus reached on the subject (Maccoby, 2016). The gender role theory was used in this study to provide distinct roles

for men and women. By applying gender roles theory to the analysis of *Disgrace* and *The House Gun*, the research study aimed to deepen the understanding of the complex interplay between race and gender dynamics in literature, thereby shedding light on how individuals negotiate and resist societal expectations based on their intersecting identities.

### Critical race theory

The "critical race theory" movement gained prominence in the United States during the 1970s and persisted until the 1980s. This social movement emerged from the acknowledgement that innovative approaches and frameworks were necessary to combat the subtle prejudice that continues to persist in the United States. Nevertheless, this movement has tackled several concerns that have been brought up in conventional discussions within the fields of ethnic studies and civil rights. However, it does so from a more comprehensive standpoint that takes into account economics, history, context, group and individual interests, emotions, and the unconscious (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). By employing critical race theory in the analysis of *Disgrace* and *The House Gun*, the research study aimed to uncover the ways in which race and gender intersect to shape characters' identities, experiences, and interactions within the narratives, while also shedding light on broader issues of social justice and inequality within post-apartheid South Africa.

### Research design and methodology

#### Research paradigm

The interpretivist paradigm, which formed the philosophical basis of this investigation, was used since it could assist in understanding that there are several realities as opposed to simply one (Bryman, 2019). According to interpretivism, positivist paradigms' probabilistic models can't adequately capture the complexity of human behaviour (Bryman, 2019). As a result, the researcher is inherently subjective and heavily influenced by their personal perspectives when using this paradigm.

## Research approach

For this inquiry, a qualitative research design was implemented. As the objective of this investigation was to provide an interpretation of a literary piece, it is classified as literary criticism (Collis & Hussey, 2019). Its aim is to offer a constructive analysis of the literary piece. The present study aimed to investigate the utilisation of literary theory in the process of interpreting and analysing literary pieces.

## Research design

The researcher utilised a desktop research design. The utilisation of a desktop study provides advantages to the researcher due to the cost-effectiveness, versatility, and reliability of the literary text analysis method. This approach takes into serious consideration the claims and skills of ordinary individuals. Literary text analysis serves the purpose of enabling readers to separate the different logics employed by various social actors. It involves a direct examination of the actors' original texts, while also considering the broader context of their discourses and actions (Collis & Hussey, 2019).

## Text selection criteria

*Disgrace* and *The House Gun* were chosen because they delve into how characters interact based on race and gender. They focus on dialogues, actions, relationships, and conflicts that highlight racial and gender dynamics.

## Data collection methods

There are several stages that were involved in gathering data for this study. The researcher initially performed a cursory reading in order to grasp the essence of the novels. Step two involved a thorough perusal of the data. During the process of careful reading, the researcher assigned grades to the sections of the novels that were used as data. Conversations, words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs constituted the data. Following this, the data was coded and subsequently categorised into themes.

### Data analysis

By employing content analysis, the researcher conducted an exhaustive examination of the novels and pertinent literature. The procedure entailed the recognition and retrieval of data relevant to the racial and gender dynamics after which this data was systematically categorised into logical themes. Following this, the researcher utilised inferential reasoning to draw conclusions in light of the themes that had been identified.

### Ethical considerations

Any data acquired that is particularly relevant to this investigation was obtained with the researcher's and supervisors' informed consent. The study was subject to approval by the NUST review council before its commencement. Moreover, I was cognizant of the fact that researchers must uphold ethical principles when carrying out and disclosing research, thereby guaranteeing the integrity of findings (both favourable and unfavourable).

### Limitations of the study

The study focused only on two novels, which may not be representative of the larger discourse on race and gender in post-apartheid South Africa. The study relied on the interpretation of the researcher, which may have been subjective and influenced by personal biases. The study relied on secondary sources such as literary criticism and analysis, which may not provide a complete picture of the racial and gender dynamics in the novels.

### Significance of the study

The novels explored the themes of ethnic violence and isolation in post-apartheid South Africa, which are the focus of this research. This research study examined sexual assault as depicted in the novels *The House Gun* and *Disgrace*, with a particular emphasis on gender relations. Incorporating the literary works *Disgrace* and *The House Gun* into a Southern African language classroom can help to improve understanding and instruction about gender-based violence and prejudice.



## Chapter summary

This chapter introduced the research project by providing a comprehensive background of the study, which focuses on investigating racial and gender dynamics in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*. The study aims to explore how these novels portray the complex interplay between race and gender in the context of South African society. The statement of the study outlined the specific issues addressed, while the research objectives detail the goals of the investigation, including analysing the representation of racial and gender dynamics through the lens of critical race theory and gender roles.

The chapter also delved into the theoretical framework, subscribing to gender roles and critical race theory as the primary analytical tools. These frameworks allow for an in-depth examination of how societal structures and power relations influence the experiences of characters in the novels. Additionally, the research design and methods are discussed, with the study adopting an interpretivist paradigm and a qualitative research design. This approach enables a nuanced understanding of the themes and dynamics presented in the novels.

The chapter further explained the selection of the original texts, *Disgrace* and *The House Gun*, and outlines the data collection and analysis methods used. The analysis involves a close examination of the novels and relevant literature to uncover insights into racial and gender dynamics. Ethical considerations are also addressed, ensuring that the study adheres to ethical standards. Lastly, the significance of the study is highlighted, emphasizing its contribution to understanding the complex social issues depicted in the novels and their relevance to broader societal contexts.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview and analysis of the literature that served as the foundation for this investigation. This chapter additionally provides an examination, analysis, and evaluation of the pertinent material concerning the racial and gender dynamics.

### 2.2 Gender in the African literature

We see ourselves projected between the words, considering our thoughts as we engage with the author's vision (Helgesson, 2020). In African fiction, roles and relationships between men and women are always shown with precision. Many times, the plot centres on men's dominance, giving the impression that women are underrepresented and treated like objects. Although sometimes regarded as powerful and assumed to be the protagonists, female characters are kept in the background of the story (Bucheler, 2019). Even if not every literary work portrays the lives of women or puts men in positions of authority, cultural chauvinism has obviously had an impact on most male authors. The ideal female figure is frequently depicted in African literature playing conventional roles like being a mother or wife. All respect and consideration that African women may get depends on their positions. But this loss of female authority and sovereignty happened both during and after colonialism when men started to play politics and fight for jobs in the colonising army (Bottoms, 2019).

Conversely, women seemed to be disregarded in the writings of philosophers and writers who tried to use literature to decolonise African minds as they were unable to reclaim their ideas. Male writers of women's studies frequently have a bad impression of the female heroes of African fiction (Bem, 2021). Put otherwise, African women were not given enough credit for their contributions to the success of independence in several nations or for their public prominence.

Achebe's (1988) early works almost entirely showed his disdain for women's ideas. But a twenty-year hiatus from writing has been shown to alter a man's perception of women. Published in 1987, *Anthills of the Savannah* was Achebe's fifth book after *A Man of the People*. Achebe moves female characters from the side-lines of earlier books and towards empowerment in *Anthills of the Savannah* by giving them significant roles in creating and regulating spheres of power. While examining a post-colonial society with an emphasis on politics and social concerns, *Anthills of the Savannah* switches between several viewpoints, including that of female protagonists.

Reviewers applauded Achebe's change of viewpoint on gender roles, especially the way the book shows the new roles that women can play to help mend the wounds of colonisation. Though the first several chapters start with male voices when the stick is transferred to the main protagonists Chris and Ikem to illustrate the story's location and political climate in Kangan, the next chapters are devoted to female voices. This shows how "New Women," or a new perspective on gender roles and relationships have been welcomed by African literature in place of the distorted portrayal of women.

The way the story turns as the woman's voice becomes more prominent shows that Achebe understands that the deeply ingrained notions of power and authority in conventional patriarchal society must be rearranged. Achebe highlights the need for more equal gender relations by using the slow emergence of two important characters, Beatrice and Ikem in particular. These two people go through several philosophical changes during the novel, especially with regard to women's roles. Beatrice is shown as a role model woman who fights masculine discrimination and makes room for herself in public life throughout the novel. Conversely, Ikem is the writer, poet, and journalist of Kangan. One could see him as Achebe's voice, expressing his opinions on gender norms.

Fast computation of prevalence shows that gender relations are the most significant and/or widespread intricacy highlighted alongside colonialism in African literary narratives. Literary works present men as strong and controlling, while women are seen as inferior in their culture and as subjects of a higher power (Bindu & Krian, 2019). The African novel presents men and

women based on the idea that women are not trustworthy, are careless, and defenceless (Bem, 2021)

The background of gender prejudice in African literary legacy must be understood. Most often, especially by male African playwrights, they are shown as existing inside the bounds of tradition and society, carrying out the traditional duties of wife and mother (Hall, 2019). Because men are typically shown as having power, physical strength, and stability, African women are stigmatised as being less stable and more dependent on them. Limitations and standards related to gender have an impact on both sexes differently. The clearest light on gender dynamics comes from gender expectations, limitations, and preconceptions. The African book portrays these biases as firmly ingrained cultural customs that go back hundreds of years. There are some gender-biased myths, sayings, and upbringings (Blau & Ferber, 2019). According to Gilman (2019), a woman's life in most African communities is centred on getting married and having a family. As a girl gets older, these seem like her greatest achievements. Men define what it means to be a decent woman; they think that women should fit into predetermined social roles and not exceed them. In society as much as at home, men are expected to be disciplinarians, providers, leaders, and guardians (Bank, 2020). Most of the decisions in society are made by men or a group of men. Conversely, having a boy child makes a guy feel proud and at ease, whereas a married lady without children may be frustrating and a married woman with only girls is essentially socially unacceptable (Attridge, 2020).

Attridge (2020) further explains that from an early age, boys and girls are assigned gender roles. It is a common expectation of women to follow social standards and to have their interests and actions regulated or limited. One can only elevate a woman by marriage and childbearing, especially with male children. It has come to light that this status quo are established customarily in many African processes. A lot of literary works reinforce gender stereotypes using myths and proverbs. Traditions hold beliefs that impede a woman from being self-sufficient and autonomous. The main heroine is usually denied the option of who she marries, despite her protests.

The author and the historical period the works are situated in determine how gender relations are portrayed in African literature. For instance, female writers present their female characters in somewhat diverse ways. Their goal is to liberate women from the constraints of a gender-biased society, hence they usually write with female characters as the main or supporting roles (Gordimer, 1984). Male authors may marginalise their female characters in terms of the plot by portraying them as tough and careless. Fonchingong (2005) explains the historical variances by pointing out that before colonialism, women's roles and positions in literary depiction were usually shown as complementing their male counterparts. In literary representations after colonisation, women's standing as equals with males in African literary history was undermined (Gordimer, 1998).

### 2.3 Race and racism

Though it can also refer to a conviction in basic differences between people or groups based on IQ and physical traits, racism is best defined as the animosity of one ethnic group against another (Angelides, 2019). Gilman (2019) asserts that many people's lives are destroyed and interfered with by this widespread phenomenon with ancient roots. In the Middle Ages, two opposing ideologies took the front stage and racism began. The first was anti-Judaism or the intellectually driven hatred of the majority Christian society against the Jewish religious minority; the second was pigmentocracy, or white supremacist legislation that let white people control others they thought inferior.

For those facing racist laws, literature developed into a potent weapon of resistance. Black Africans in particular, used it to resist their oppressors by expressing their ideas and emotions about the injustices they had to endure. Almost as soon as blacks could write, it seems, they set out to redefine - against already received racist stereotypes - who and what a black person was, and how unlike the racist stereotype the black original could be (Dean, 2019). Invoking and rebuilding a heroic significant African past, colonial literature sought to restore Africans' dignity. According to Attwell (1993, p. 1007-1025), "the use by black intellectuals of print culture has been crucial to their establishing themselves as modern subjects, in direct opposition to the identities ascribed to them in colonial and apartheid ideology"

Black writers like Du Bois (2020), a coloured author from District Six who had personal experience of the frustrations and deprivations of the marginalised segment of the African population, have captured the plight of black people in Africa, who were at the mercy of an authoritarian society and an oppressive environment (Du Bois, 1996). Black people expressing their African identities is supported by Gates (1987) who says that writing was a deep explanation and defence of the critical self rather than a useless endeavour. Writing in self-defence, the author affirms and distances the self while simultaneously defending it. The phrase "double consciousness" was first used by African American professor and activist W.E.B. Du Bois to express the difficulty of being the other in a culture that views colonial people as inferior and uncivilised (Du Bois, 1996). Kenyan writer of Gikuyu heritage Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues that African writers have to deal with extra language limitations in their writings. "Language has two distinct personalities because it serves as a medium for communication and a cultural bearer" (wa Thiong'o, 2003, 100). Cultural manifestations of one's identity and language as a tool of communication reinforce one another. Conversing creates culture and language represents all the values that shape our perception of the world and ourselves since it is a vehicle for culture.

Ngugi wa Thiong'o contends that this is detrimental to African authors who write in English since it forces them to adopt European semiotics and culture in how they see and represent themselves and their place in the world. Africans may thus be taken further from their surroundings to other worlds and from themselves to other selves through language and literature. Ngugi holds the view that "the dominance of the colonised's mental universe was crucial to the dominance of a people's language by the languages of the colonising nations" (wa Thiong'o, 2003, p. 100). Writing in particular is a potent tool used to oppress Africans.

According to wa Thiongo, African writers should write in their own language to represent their own culture and legacy rather than in English, which encourages white culture. It is noteworthy that conflicts arise not only between civilisations but also inside the same cultural group. When men and women from the same tribe or race quarrel with one another, this is evident in the communities. African women found themselves in a more vulnerable position in society than black males because they lacked interiority twice over. They lived in a tight patriarchal culture

where men had total control, hence they were persecuted for both their gender and their race. Since most women's issues stem from the belief that men are superior to women, African women have long experienced persecution within their own communities (Hill et al., 2019). African women's literature, such as that written by Tsitsi Dangarembga of Zimbabwe and Mariama Bâ of Senegal, is a potent reminder of the oppressive attitudes that white colonists and black males had towards women in their society. Their books draw attention to the oppression and subjection that patriarchy and imperialism bring about for many African women. Their account of their experiences shatters the quiet surrounding their pain. The content of female literature also exhorts women to resist African male tyrants and colonisers in order to elevate their social standing. Two literary characters that openly and proudly oppose their lower social status are Tambudzai in *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga and Aissatou in *So Long a Letter* by Mariama Bâ. African female writers aim to inform readers about the abuse of African women. In order to "find and expose [the] truth about the interior life of people who didn't write it" (qtd. By Kalu in Suleiman, 2018, p. 13), which emphasises that the most productive method is remembering that moves from the image to the text. Reading works by African women authors forces one to consider the same challenges these authors faced as black women surviving in a racist society in their own continent. Williams and Vining (2014) list some of the functions of women's literature and explain that they are meant to be literary characters whose tragic circumstances linger in the reader's mind, therefore, crystallising the knowledge of gender inequality and problematising these issues in connection to a particular cultural setting (Young, 2019).

## 2.4 Gender differences in race-related experiences

The notion of intersectionality was initially used to explore the oppressive experiences of persons who belong to many social groups and hence have varying disadvantaged positions. To that purpose, this methodology has mostly been used to investigate issues affecting women from ethnic minorities (Maccoby, 2016). Although Black males are sometimes excluded from debates on intersectionality, it is critical to recognise that they have a unique position at the crossroads of several social identities. This unique perspective can provide valuable information about their experiences with discrimination.

It has been proposed elsewhere that, due to the intersectionality of their racial and gender identities, Black men may be more vulnerable to discrimination than Black women, while having male benefits in a patriarchal culture. Blumer (1969) proposed the subordinate-male target hypothesis which states that in a patriarchal society, Black men face more racial discrimination than Black women who face gender discrimination. Badenhausen (2018) provides evidence of racial discrimination in the workplace, criminal justice system, and education. Badenhausen indicates that while gender inequalities persist, the most significant variations in social outcomes are observed between White males and men from ethnic minorities, including Black and Latino men.

According to the evolutionary paradigm used in their examination of social hierarchy, Black men are more prone to racial discrimination due to intersexual rivalry, despite society's expectation that their gender will result in a different conclusion.

According to Ahlburg and Devita (2015), experiences with racism may differ depending on gender, which is most likely due to how African American men and women are perceived in society. Based on an intersectional framework, scholarly research of how African Americans are portrayed in the media has repeatedly shown that stereotypes about Black femininity and masculinity remain in American culture (Bem 1988; Golden, 2013; Marra, 2014). According to previous studies, preconceptions about Black women are comparable to those about Black males, implying that both groups are perceived as unpleasant, violent, and ignorant (Wilder, 1998). Forward and Buck (2017) found that men and women are treated similarly when it comes to intelligence-related stereotypes. Nonetheless, a number of studies on views towards African Americans have found that Black men and women experience various racial stereotypes based on gender (Barlow, 2020).

It has been argued that in American culture, preconceptions about race and gender frequently portray Black men adversely in comparison to other males from different ethnic backgrounds, as well as black women. According to the previously referenced studies (Kessler & Mckenna, 2021; Maccoby, 2016; Bottom 1999; Cox, 1972), black men are usually connected with negative stereotypes that portray them as aggressive or cognitively inferior, as well as being described as



athletic. Nonetheless, negative societal stereotypes affect Black women. Stereotypes and images of the Mammy—a selfless nurturer and servant—Jezebel—a highly sexualised and promiscuous figure—and Sapphire—an irate, uncivilised, and aggressive persona—have been widely disseminated throughout history and in contemporary times, characterising the portrayal of Black femininity (Adam, 2017; Austin, 2019). The many stereotypes mentioned earlier highlight the interplay of race and gender in the Black American community, meaning that Black men and women may encounter distinct types of discrimination.

The existence of gender-based and racial discrimination that specifically targets Black men shows that Black men may face more frequent instances of overt and aggressive discrimination, as well as prejudice caused by others' mistrust and worry. One common assumption is that young Black guys are inherently dangerous or involved in criminal behaviour (Fox, 2015). As a result, people may encounter discrimination in situations where they are perceived to be thieves or are terrified of them due to their violent or aggressive behaviour. As a result, law enforcement officers are more likely to identify Black males as potential criminal suspects than other groups (Barlow, 2020).

Maccoby (2016) investigated the potential impact of gender and race on how people perceive and respond to stressful situations using a computer simulation. A group of white college students participated in an exercise that involved simulated shooting people on a screen. They were told to shoot those who were shown with firearms, but not those who were portrayed with non-threatening things such as mobile phones. The persons in question had a bias towards "shooting" Black people, regardless of whether they possessed guns. Responding to Black male suspects resulted in more mistakes than responding to Black females, White males, or White females. Because of prevailing prejudices about their ethnic group, the authors argue that the aforementioned response is best understood as an involuntary behavioural reaction in response to perceived threats. It is especially noticeable in Black males.

Stereotypical beliefs about Black women are linked to specific but equally significant forms of discrimination. It is stated that preconceptions about Black women frequently perpetuate the impression that they are different from Black males and White women.

Black women are frequently stereotyped as non-prototypical due to the aforementioned assumptions (Pippin, 2012). Because Black women do not fit into the typical roles allocated to "women" or "Blacks," their experiences are sometimes neglected or portrayed incorrectly in order to fit into frameworks developed by White women or Black men. Thus, Black women are routinely marginalised and denied recognition in a variety of societal, legal, political, and intellectual contexts (Marra, 2014).

## 2.5. Narrative Perspective and Structural Choices in Portraying Racial and Gender Dynamics

Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Gordimer's *The House Gun* employ distinct narrative techniques to interrogate racial and gender tensions in post-apartheid South Africa. Scholars highlight Coetzee's use of a limited third-person perspective to focalize the narrative through David Lurie, a white male protagonist whose myopic worldview underscores systemic racial and gendered privilege (Attwell, 2015). This technique, as Attwell argues, creates an unreliable narrator, forcing readers to critically engage with Lurie's moral blindness and the societal hierarchies he embodies. Conversely, Gordimer adopts a multi-perspective, fragmented narrative in *The House Gun*, shifting between characters like Claudia and Duncan to dismantle singular truths about race and guilt (Clingman, 2017). This structural choice reflects the complexities of transitional justice, as noted by Clingman, by decentralizing authority and emphasizing collective responsibility.

The contrast in narrative structure extends to how each author spatializes power dynamics. Coetzee's sparse, introspective prose in *Disgrace* mirrors the psychological isolation of post-colonial whiteness, a technique Kossew (2018) links to the novel's critique of paternalism. In contrast, Gordimer's dense, intertextual style in *The House Gun* interweaving legal discourse with personal trauma foregrounds institutional complicity in perpetuating racialized violence (Cooke, 2016). Cooke suggests that Gordimer's layered narrative acts as a metaphor for South Africa's fractured reconciliation process, where race and gender intersect with legal and domestic spheres. These structural choices, scholars argue, shape readers' ethical engagement with the texts' themes.

The role of silence and dialogue further differentiates the authors' approaches. Marais (2018) observes that Coetzee's *Disgrace* uses strategic silences particularly in Lucy's refusal to explain her choices to highlight the inadequacy of language in addressing trauma. This contrasts with Gordimer's emphasis on dialogic tension in *The House Gun*, where courtroom debates and familial conflicts expose contradictions in post-apartheid liberalism (Burgis-Kasthala & Sanders, 2024). For Sanders, Gordimer's dialogue-driven narrative underlines the necessity of confronting uncomfortable truths, whereas Coetzee's silences evoke the unspeakable residue of colonial violence.

Finally, comparative studies by scholars like Graham and Dass reveal how both authors deploy irony to destabilize power structures. Coetzee's ironic portrayal of Lurie's academic detachment a man who teaches Romantic poetry yet enacts exploitation critiques intellectual complicity in systemic oppression (Kossew, 2019). Gordimer, meanwhile, uses situational irony in *The House Gun*, where a progressive white family hires a Black lawyer, only to confront their own latent prejudices. These techniques, as Dass (2020) notes, expose the paradoxes of "post-racial" societies, urging readers to interrogate performative allyship. Together, these analyses demonstrate how narrative and structural choices are pivotal to each author's critique of racial and gender hierarchies.

## 2.5 Review on *Disgrace*

Coetzee's work *Disgrace* has earned a lot of praise from critics since its debut in 1999. Coetzee was awarded the Booker Prize in the year it was released, and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2003 (Babock, 2019).

*Disgrace* addresses issues that Coetzee's previous writings were criticised for disregarding. Unlike his earlier works, which mainly made casual connections to national events, Coetzee's modern fiction appears to include realism: themes such as political issues and geographical settings all contribute to crucial discussions about current events in the country. Gareth Cornwell notes a significant difference in his analysis of *Disgrace*, claiming that it appears to be a realist text (Angelides, 2019). According to Austin (2019), who studies tense in relation to place and time, Coetzee's distinctive tense is the present tense. However, when Coetzee turns his attention to

modern South Africa, he complicates several contentious topics without proposing solutions. When the book was published, apartheid had only been abolished four years before, and South Africans were still coming to terms with their horrible past. Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela dubbed it the "Rainbow Nation," referring to the unique cultural milieu that arose as a result of this event. This setting was distinguished by a strong and energetic vibe (Bazin & Seymour, 1996). However, Coetzee's fictional works once again stood out from the prevalent cultural norm. As a result, *Disgrace* was regarded as a critique of South Africa's post-apartheid landscape.

## 2.6 Review of *The House Gun*

As fictional philosophers, they used postmodern concepts to challenge the prevailing current worldview and held it accountable for the socio-political turmoil that accompanied the brutality and absurdity of late twentieth-century society. Some academics, including Stuart Sims, are suspicious of cultural development. Some argue that postmodernists take an anti-authoritarian posture when examining and evaluating the world and its artistic forms, in addition to rejecting overarching narratives. This concept may help to explain the protagonists in *The House Gun*'s hostile attitude towards societal and cultural standards that impede their drive for independence.

Postmodern literature investigates the premise that human experience is defined by instability, contradiction, ambiguity, and fragmentation. As a result, the global domain is viewed as a collection of uncertainty, ambiguity, and inconsistencies. During periods of incoherence, the writer creates literary works with an open aspect. Because the reader has a good foundation in reading, these works enable readers to construct alternate interpretations and unguided comprehension of the text (Erritouni, 2016). This is in stark contrast to contemporary writers whose works impact, if not demand, the reader's attitude.

*The House Gun* uses a postmodern style to provide insights into a violent and unstable geopolitical setting. This climate is defined by paradoxes and a shift in cultural beliefs that the younger generation is destroying. Gordimer's style is heavily modified to reflect the challenges that South Africa faced following apartheid, rather than using a theme approach.

According to Gordimer (1984), a writer's authorship is determined by the subject matter they chose to write about or, more precisely, their overall comprehension of the historical period. In the aftermath of apartheid, Gordimer recognised the significance of shifting away from Lukacsian realism towards a postmodern aesthetic during a period of diminishing hope and ongoing challenges in bringing communities burdened by past traumas together. This decision was especially significant since it enabled the creation of a plot that aimed to strike a balance between practical limits and aesthetic independence. Although Gordimer focuses primarily on the South African context, she recognises the importance of intertextuality in connecting her stories to the greater "grand narrative family," as emphasised by Bazin and Seymour (1996).

The preceding line of thought is shown by Bucheler's (2015) analysis of *The House Gun*, in which she investigates the reasons for violence and devastation among white South Africans and other socioeconomically and racially divided communities. When asked if it was possible to write novels when apartheid ended and the worn and overdone subject matter was discarded, Gordimer responded positively. Babcock (2019) claims that the author's great respect for the unfathomable elements that distinguish existence is the driving force for her desire to keep the story moving forward. In works such as *The House Gun* and *None to Accompany Me*, the author explores the enigmatic aspects of life through the eyes of characters who defy social expectations.

According to Clingman (2013), these persons might be considered as heroes not just because of their great skills, but also because they are ordinary people facing extraordinary challenges. This refers to a period in a country's history when violent events brought dissimilar communities together (Giddens, 2020). Gordimer's most recent piece of fiction, according to Coetzee, demonstrate an extraordinary proclivity for forging new routes and providing unexpected insights into the world. The present study analysed Gordimer's ability to interpret and assess ambiguous evidence, which characterises his newly acquired worldview, using postmodernist concepts.

## 2.7 Research gaps

A notable research deficiency in the examination of racial and gender dynamics within Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Gordimer's *The House Gun* pertains to the insufficient consideration given to the intersections of race, gender, and class.

Previous scholarly research has focused on analysing the representation of power, gender, and race in post-apartheid South Africa. However, there is a requirement for a more comprehensive examination that considers the intricate interplay between these dynamics and social class. This holds significant significance in light of the intricate social and economic terrain of post-apartheid South Africa, where matters pertaining to race, gender, and class are intricately interconnected. A thorough knowledge of the racial and gender dynamics in post-apartheid South Africa could be achieved through a study that explores the intersectionality of race, gender, and class in the two aforementioned novels. This study has the potential to utilise established scholarly works on intersectionality and postcolonial theory in order to offer a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the novels.

## 2.8 Theoretical framework

### 2.8.1 Gender role theory

Gender theory looks at how gender is socially and culturally constructed and how that affects both society institutions and human behaviour. Gender as a social construct and biological sex are distinguished from the manner in which cultural norms and expectations affect gender roles and identities (Barthes, 1977). Understanding gender as dynamic and socially regulated rather than as a biological requirement requires this theoretical framework. Academic circles have been quite interested in the ways that gender roles and the adoption of particular duties by men and women have been studied in recent decades. According to Giddens (2022), an individual's sexual function is seen to be more significant than any other social function.

The total psychological and social adaptations, emotional responses, cognitive processes, hidden attitudes, and outward behaviour of an individual are all more profoundly impacted by no other social vocation. Furthermore, the crediting of every work is necessary for society to survive and

advance. Every society genders the allocation of tasks, obligations, characteristics, and behaviours (Golden, 2023).

Gender is a major component of cultural identity, hence experts disagree on what affects people's views of gender and how gender roles are created. The enormous volume of material that has been published and the little agreement that has been reached on the topic defines the discipline of gender and gender role studies (Maccoby, 2016). Scholars have offered six different theories about the genesis and maintenance of gender norms. Six themes are usually covered in academic literature. The theories include biological, structural-functional, gender schema, social learning, cognitive development, and symbolic interaction theories.

Fundamental to gender theory is the idea that gender is socially created. This idea holds that gender is not a natural biological feature but rather a social and cultural construction. People are socialised into gender-specific tasks and behaviours after being given a gender at birth according to their biological sex (Bhabha, 1994). For instance, femininity is usually linked with traits like sensitivity and nurturing, but masculinity is linked with traits like strength and assertiveness. Gender norms affect many parts of a person's life, including personal and professional relationships. Gender theory looks at the ways by which institutional practices and socialisation processes maintain gender norms, therefore exposing the sometimes restrictive and prescriptive character of these roles (Bigsby, 2022).

Gender theory must include a study of patriarchy, a system in which men occupy roles of moral authority, social privilege, political leadership, and property control (Hunt, 1988). Gender inequity is maintained by patriarchy in many social institutions, including the family, the job, and the legal system. Gender theory looks into the tenacity and continuation of patriarchal structures across time (Bank, 2020). Boehmer (2015) states that men are expected to be the main providers of income, for example, and women to take care of the home. This keeps up the division of work, which limits women's economic and personal freedom. Gender theory looks at these activities to highlight the many ways patriarchy limits men and women, albeit in different ways.

A further essential idea in gender theory is intersectionality, as defined by Marra (2014). Intersectionality theory holds that people are subjected to several repressive and discriminatory systems based on their identities, including race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so forth. Gender theory recognises that a wide variety of interacting social categories affect the experience of gender, which is not static. Because racism and sexism interact, a black woman will experience gender discrimination differently than a white woman. This multidimensional method makes it possible to understand the nuances of oppression and identity more deeply (Fox, 2015).

The way that *Disgrace* by Coetzee and *The House Gun* by Gordimer skilfully address issues of gender dynamics and power relations makes their study especially well-suited to gender theory. Complex tales that look into how patriarchal systems and societal expectations impact people's relationships and actions define these works (Radithale, 2017).

Coetzee's *Disgrace* features a protagonist whose encounters with women highlight the consequences of gender power disparities and deeply rooted patriarchal ideas. Gender theory can be applied to the way the novel depicts the protagonist's fall from grace and the effects of his deeds on the ladies in his life (Clingman, 2013). Readers may learn how patriarchal norms affect individual destiny and maintain gender inequality by examining the protagonist's deeds and sense of masculinity (Ahlburd & Devita, 2015).

Comparably, *The House Gun* by Gordimer looks at how society's expectations affect people's lives, especially when it comes to crime and justice. The way that the book presents a family dealing with the terrible crime committed by their son provides a framework for looking at how gendered expectations affect their responses and coping mechanisms. Gender theory can be used to look at how society standards affect the choices and deeds the characters make about masculinity and femininity (Denovan, 2019). The use of this method might help one understand how justice, power, and gender interact more deeply (Erritouni, 2016).



### 2.8.2 Critical race theory

New approaches are required to deal with the growing subtypes and subtler manifestations of racism, and critical race theory evolved in the 1960s and early 1970s (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Furthermore, there was a great deal of outrage over the continuous discussion of race and racial discrimination, which made action that put improvement first necessary to evaluate the rise of racism and its effects on society at large. In the United States, the "critical race theory" movement gained much momentum in the 1970s and 1980s. The idea behind this social movement was that new institutions and approaches had to be established in order to solve the complex discriminatory practices that still exist in the United States. The summer of 1989 saw the group's first workshop, which was facilitated by eminent authors Richard Delgado, Alan Freeman, and Derrick Bell (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

According to Austin (2019), a social and intellectual movement known as critical race theory (CRT). CRT studies the complex interrelationships between race, law and power. It provides a critical structure for examining how cultural representations and societal processes support racial injustice. In order to pinpoint the fundamental reasons for systematic injustice, critical race theory (CRT) aims to question and change the mechanisms by which race and racial power are created and maintained. The analysis of the literature on racial dynamics benefits especially from this theoretical framework since it makes it possible to understand more fully how race affects both individual and group experiences (Clarkson, 2019).

A fundamental idea of critical race theory (CRT), is "racialisation" which is the process by which cultures create racial categories and assign certain attributes and responsibilities to these categories. A racial hierarchy is established and maintained by social, political, and economic processes together, referred to as racialisation (Head, 2019). These artificially created racial divides, which occasionally assign advantages and disadvantages according to perceived racial distinctions, then justify and sustain disparities. CRT looks into the various settings including the court system, the classroom, and the media where racism is used to maintain social hierarchy (Helgesson, 2020).

Examining racialisation in literature can be done through character development, social interaction, and conformity to social standards (Adams, 2017). For example, the racially charged exchanges among characters in *Disgrace* reflect the ongoing racial tensions in South Africa after apartheid ended. The novel shows how racial identities develop and are opposed; these are signs of larger racial and power-related societal tensions. With CRT, readers can assess critically how racialisation affects the main storyline of the novel as well as the experiences of the individuals.

Critical race theory (CRT), which looks at how race interacts with gender, class, and sexual orientation, also includes intersectionality (Ansell, 2015). Intersectionality acknowledges that people experience privilege and oppression in concert with other overlapping identities, rather than on their own. This strategy helps us to understand how many kinds of prejudice and inequality interact to influence people's and society's experiences (Badcock, 2019).

It is important to understand intersectionality to analyse literature on complex social processes. In *The House Gun*, by Nadine Gordimer, the way that race and other social categories interact greatly affects the lives of the characters and the plot. The novel looks at the protagonists' decisions and deeds being driven by legal and societal ideas as well as how their overlapping identities affect how they understand morality and justice. Because oppression and identity are so complicated, CRT's use of an intersectional lens allows for a thorough examination of both in the novel.

The main emphasis of the research on CRT is institutional racism, which looks at the ways that systemic and institutional structures uphold racial privileges and disparities. According to McLeod (2020), CRT questions laws, rules, and practices that, although seeming neutral, affect different ethnic groups in different ways. This critical analysis demonstrates how often groups use covert and hidden techniques to sustain racial prejudice and exclusion.

In *Disgrace* and *The House Gun* institutional prejudice in society is illustrated by the media, the legal system, and the educational system. In *Disgrace*, Coetzee shows how institutional racism persisted in South Africa after apartheid, thus limiting the prospects and connections of the main characters. The way the protagonist dies and meets different ethnic groups afterward in the

novel serves as a critical lens through which to see how institutional racism affects society dynamics and personal destiny (Rich, 2017). Similar prejudices found in the legal system are examined in Gordimer's *The House Gun* and how they affect the protagonists' quest for justice. By using CRT, which gives a more thorough grasp of the systematic foundations of racial inequality, the study was able to determine how these works portray and criticise institutional racism.

All the same, this movement tackles a wide range of subjects that have been covered in civil rights and ethnic studies departments in the past. But it takes a more thorough tack on the issue, taking into account the unconscious emotions, context, personal and community interests, economics, and history (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The theories of this group about legal ambiguity come from critical legal studies. Furthermore, the group seeks to create feminist interpretations of the complex and sometimes unseen networks of patterns and behaviours that make up patriarchy and other forms of power. Furthermore, looked at is how authority shapes social roles (Horby, 2015).

CRT and CLS are easily recognised. Stone (2016) claims that CLS's analysis ignored racism and prejudice as suffered by blacks. Derrick Bell claims that CLS's criticism of the law lacked workable solutions for social change (Schomor, 2014). As Ansell (2015) notes, CRT researchers critiqued CLS for giving economic and class dynamics precedence above racial dynamics. They also maintained that CLS should consider the unique qualities of race and how it shapes racial identities rather than just reflecting and bolstering racial power (Fox, 2013). These findings imply that although racism is pervasive in many aspects of American society, CLS is more concerned with legal, social, and economic frameworks than with racial issues.

Besides, CRT is no longer limited to the legal setting. Critical race theorists (CRTs) are educators who use theory-based approaches to understand problems including tracking, affirmative action, high standards testing, curriculum and history disputes, bilingual and multicultural education, alternative education, and charter schools (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Zimna (2005) thus suggests that CRT absorbs and applies a wide range of critical theories from sociology, history,

law, women's studies, and ethnic studies. As so, this theory offers a comprehensive analysis of the social structure of humanity and the degree of ethnic conflicts.

Furthermore, the foundations of this intellectual system are racial and biased. Critical race theory (CRT) as described by Richard Delgado (2017) is the study and redefining of the relationships between power, prejudice, and race. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) further contend that racism is a social distribution mechanism rather than a collection of unfavourable views directed at members of different ethnicities. Racism was further defined by Delgado and Stefencic (2017) as any law or practice that results in the abuse, persecution, segregation, or discrimination of people according to their race or ethnicity.

Critical legal studies were the antecedent of critical race theory since his main concern was racism in the legal system (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Critical legal studies mostly concentrate on the hierarchical injustices seen in institutions, the legal system, and economic and cultural systems (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This school of thought also looks at the ways that the judicial system has helped people in positions of authority since it is a mirror of the biased and biased views of privileged people with power in society. Critical race theorists address race from a wider angle and with an emphasis on all possible reasons for racism, whereas critical legal studies focus on class and economic structure (Forward & Buck, 2017. Also, they exceed these accepted conventions. Another important contributor to critical race theory is American law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, whose studies complemented Bell's. She started creating a course based on the subjects Bell had covered. Bringing together a critical mass of academics and students, "the course focused on the need to develop an alternative of racial power and its relation to law and anti-discrimination reform (Golden, 2023). This theory questions established ideas about racism by providing a new viewpoint on the "ordinariness" of racism and racial heterogeneity within a community.

The belief that racism is a widespread social problem that represents the traditional acceptable way of life and is a shared experience among all members of society, regardless of their ethnicity, is referred to as "ordinariness". Moreover, it is not unusual for people to be separated and ruled by their race, which has led to the creation of racist organisations in society that are hostile to

people of other ethnicities. Critical race theory also deals with the social creation and characterisation of black people (Stefancic, 2018). As such, its main focus is on the assimilation of ethnic attitudes and practices into society and looks into possible remedies.

Foundational to critical race theory is the idea that race is a social construction. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) highlight that race and unfair racism are seen as products of social cognition, so disproving the idea that racial differences are the product of nature or heredity. On the other hand, these differences might be explained by the fact that people in society assess other people according to their race for a variety of reasons. As such, ethnicities are purposefully created by people within civilisation and are not influenced by a person's genetic makeup (Wenzel, 2020).

This is demonstrated by the labour force of Rhodesian miners. Its extreme data selectivity and more significantly, its direct obscuration of the most fundamental aspects of White labour ideology set it apart as an empirical study of the social awareness of White mineworkers. Undoubtedly, race is a keystone of that ideology; but, racism is a result of existing within a certain set of social interactions, especially those that control men during the industrial process (White, 2020). Still, the dominant class in society uses racial distinction to separate the less capable and ethnically varied elements of society into a skilled workforce.

This particular kind of social structure encourages racism and serves the interests of the dominating group in a society, thus they do not view racism badly and do not want to see it eliminated. Using critical race theory, Washington (2018) also offer an explanation for the creation of stereotypes in society and their development throughout time. Even if it meant working as slaves and suffering hard, unpleasant, and low-paying jobs, some Black Africans in the apartheid state were happy and willing to complete any duty that their owners asked. One of the best illustrations of how presumptions can evolve over time is the attitudes that white people had towards black people during the apartheid (Thomas & Beasley, 2019). They were always afraid of white people since they were notorious for abusing and torturing black people who were stubborn and too scared to get out of line. In *The Grass is Singing* by Doris Lessing, two

grownups who are not beyond using physical force and cruelty to punish agricultural labourers are Mary Turner and Charlie Slatter. For their part, the labourers mindlessly follow the orders of their superiors and carry them out. The common assumption among white people that black Africans are happy with their slave-like position in the labour market is the source of the stereotype that black people are submissive, unsophisticated, and meek. Still, this parody developed in moments of resistance as black Africans showed their independence and refused to accept their precarious social status as circumstances altered. If they ignored the instructions of the white people, they were seen as hostile and rebellious (Trepagnier, 2016).

As both *Disgrace* by Coetzee and *The House Gun* by Gordimer explore the complexities of racial relations in post-apartheid South Africa, the subject is especially relevant to critical race theory. These novels provide engrossing stories of the long-lasting consequences of apartheid as well as the current ethnic and power conflicts in South Africa.

In *Disgrace*, racial tensions persist and navigating a society still reeling from apartheid's legacy is made difficult by the interactions between persons of different races. The way that the novel examines racialised identities, power relations, and the protagonist's fall from grace makes CRT possible. Examining how institutional racism, intersectionality, and racialisation are portrayed in the story can help to highlight the many ways that power and race interact in the novel (Walker, 1991).

In addition to other racial-related topics, *The House Gun* looks at how racial prejudices affect society's perceptions and the legal system. A paradigm for analysing how race interacts with other social categories and shapes the characters' ideas of justice and morality is offered by the novel's depiction of a family dealing with their son's terrible crime (Pechey, 2018). Critical race theory (CRT) applied to this story allows an examination of the ways in which intersecting identities and institutional racism affect the lives of the characters and the main idea of the book.

## 2.9 Chapter summary

Chapter Two of the study was dedicated to conducting a comprehensive review of the existing literature. This chapter elucidated the theoretical framework that forms the foundation of this study and contributed to establishing a comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics and race.

## CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 introduction

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology used in the study. The study was hinged upon interpretivism. Interpretivism challenges the idea of a singular, objective reality and instead supports the existence of multiple realities that are shaped by individual subjective viewpoints (Bryman, 2019). This qualitative study specifically utilised literary theory to give critical perspectives and improve understanding. The chapter provides an overview of the study's framework, approach, structure, data collection methods, analytical tools, and ethical considerations, and succinctly explains the primary objective of employing interpretative narratives to introduce novel viewpoints in literary criticism.

### 3.2 Research paradigm

The interpretivist orientation of this study is determined by its philosophical underpinnings. The choice made aligns with the acknowledgement of multiple realities, providing a challenge to materialist theory that asserts there is only one reality (Bryman, 2019). According to interpretivism, the probabilistic models presented in positivism cannot help explain the complexity of human behaviour (Maxwell & Miller, 2021). Interpretivist researchers understand and value subjectivity because they acknowledge their own perspective of the world significantly influences the research process. This means that researchers use methods of data collection, interpretation, and analysis differently, thereby highlighting the importance of interpretation, and cultural and personal experiences when the study's findings were made (Maxwell & Miller, 2021).

### 3.3 Research approach

The present researcher embarked on a qualitative study that examined people's interpretations and meanings within their "real-world" situations, rather than quantitative methods (Collis & Hussey, 2019). Specifically, the focus was to generate an interpretation of a literary work, therefore, the qualitative methodology was appropriate. Similarly, the study was classed as a qualitative study.



Collis and Hussey (2019) provide a definition of literary criticism as the systematic review of literary texts to reveal context present in hidden meanings, symbols, and patterns. The constructive criticism in the study gave the researcher a more sophisticated understanding of the text's artistic, cultural, and historical elements. The study used literary theory for the interpretation and analysis of the data because of the potential for useful frameworks and methodologies to better understand books, novels, authors, audiences, and the cultural and social context in both the production and consumption of literature.

This study is more than an attestation to the idea that literary theory and qualitative research methodology is often more effective than casual observation. Literary critics often overlook subtlety and complexity and this is how the researchers interpret theme development, character motivation, and plot construction (Neuman, 2022). To critique and understand literature influenced the study, using theory and approaching the work from a literary analysis of the work required a critical component and a theoretical lens.

### 3.4 Research design

Rather than conducting original experiments or fieldwork, the researcher utilised a desk research methodology that encompasses reading books and previously published materials. The distinctive features of this type of literature review, and desk research analysis are its low cost, easy adaptability, and reliability (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2021). Collis and Hussey (2019) state that desktop studies allow academics to explore a variety of sources without having to be restricted by the expense or time available and that field research does.

According to Teddlie and Tashakkori, Tang (2021) showed that the best way to do research is in a library, using secondary sources like books, dissertations, and texts. The researcher used the theory framework in a structured way and read texts as data with this method, which makes this study perfect for this type of work (Neuman, 2022).

The desktop research method used in this study is important because it lets the text be looked at and interpreted in great depth. Researchers can look into the details of literary works because many people, like readers, authors, and literary critics, have added their thoughts and ideas to

the understanding of these works (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2021). This could mean that people have realised that there are different points of view and levels of understanding, as well as the connection between the text's parts and the larger field of literary criticism (Maxwell & Miller, 2021).

By looking at the existing literature, the researcher got a better idea of the historical and cultural factors that affected the creation and acceptance of literature, which gives us a bigger picture of these things. It is possible for scholars to understand literature and the worldviews, logic, and points of view that literature expresses by figuring out theoretical frameworks and placing writings in their larger cultural and social contexts (Maxwell & Miller, 2021). In this study, literature was used to look into how literary theory could be used to look into specific literary objects in order to make literary studies more advanced.

### 3.5 Text selection criteria

This study aimed to study the role of race and gender, especially in the examination of literary narratives by selecting texts that were already framed by a particular culture. Such frames served as signifiers of a particular social order set in place. *Disgrace* and *The House Gun* were chosen for their detailed examination of race and gender as concepts, as well as their use of a variety of different storytelling modes.

### 3.6 Data collection methods

Data collection methods refer to the way information is collected for scientific purposes. Techniques vary depending on the type of research. It can take several forms such as textual analysis, qualitative interviews, and quantitative surveys (Maxwell & Miller, 2021).

This study collected data using a variety of standardised ways and closely examined the chosen novels, *Disgrace* and *The House Gun*. First, the researcher read a few pages of each novel in order to get a general look at the general narrative and thematic base. This served as an initial position to a more intensive reading in order to understand the stories and see what future aspects were looked into. The next step was to carefully go through each individual book. Each piece of literature was diligently read and analysed by the researcher throughout the process. The

researcher chose to give each section a different level of centrality, the focus of the book was in regard to social, racial and gender dynamics.

Text analysing techniques helped the researcher to interpret and examine complex relationships of texts that uncover how matters of race and gender influence character interactions, which was necessary for this study.

### 3.7 Data analysis

In order to examine implied themes and patterns from textual data, the researcher utilised content analysis in this study. In terms of analysing qualitative data, specifically in literature reviews, utilising content analysis "offers, for example, a structured and systematic way of reviewing a body of research" (Yin, 2018, p. 121).

Content analysis refers to the systematic analysis of content data-reading and interpreting the data to find patterns, themes, or underlying meaning. In content analysis the texts are sorted into categories based on specific counting criteria, which allows researchers to discover connections within the data (Yin, 2018).

The employment of content analysis, which provided the researcher with an in-depth textual analysis of *Disgrace* and *The House Gun* was monumental. This type of analysis allowed the researcher to investigate race and gender dynamics through the lens of the text. This methodological lens enabled the researcher to locate and identify key areas of significance related to race and gender encoded in the narratives.

Inferential reasoning was utilised after the data was coded and themes were formulated. The themes that were derived and interpreted and meanings were derived based on the greater theoretical context and previous research. It was intended that larger implications would be achieved in regard to how gender and race are portrayed and challenged in the literature by making connections and positing interpretations based on the theories in the data/findings (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2011).

Structural analysis in the data analysis phase ultimately allowed the study to explore the thematic depths of the literature in a more nuanced way, thereby providing an organised approach to understanding the complex relationships and social dimensions portrayed in the stories. An approach similar to the methods that were used in this study was based on readings supported by structured textual analysis and inductive reading to engage with scholarly debates around race, sexuality, and literature.

### 3.8 Ethical considerations

To assure the safety of study participants and the credibility of the research, the ethical implications of the study were carefully considered. Furthermore, because the NUST Ethics Committee approved the study before its commencement, the study incorporated ethical standards and protocols.

Ethical issues are standards and rules that researchers have to follow in order to protect the welfare of study participants and they act upon these ethical considerations. Ethical considerations affect the validity and reliability of the findings (Neuman, 2022).

During all phases of our study, the development and the conduct of the study ensured that all of the participants provided their informed consent and that we secured the appropriate ethical clearances to maintain and protect the rights of our parties who were involved in the study. This ethically sanctioned approach gave the study a sense of legitimacy, as well as transparency and openness (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2021).

Also, following ethical rules was important for this study to get good results that could be trusted. Similarly, I was cognizant of the fact that researchers can be respectful and ethical in how they do their research by following ethical rules. These rules also make the research more credible and have a bigger effect on both academic and non-academic audiences.

### 3.9 Chapter summary

The interpretive paradigm was used as a philosophical framework in this study. Instead of one objective truth, the interpretive paradigm is couched in the belief that there are many truths that come from many individual points of view (Bryman, 2019). On the other hand, the interpretive paradigm values the complexity of human behaviour and the researcher's personal interpretation of the study, while the quantitative paradigm focuses on statistical methods. With the hope of giving new ideas on how to do literary criticism, this study project used a deconstructive approach to look at the usefulness of literary theory.

## CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed analysis and discussion of the racial and gender dynamics explored in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*. Each component of the study's specific objectives has been used to address the chapter. Critical race theory and gender role theory formed the frameworks through which the analysis was conducted, as they dive deep into the intricate layers of identity, power, and social interactions found within the narratives. This chapter starts with a synoptic presentation of each of the texts; progresses with the thematic analysis of racial and gender relations and ends with an exploration of strategies the characters use to navigate through these dynamics.

### 4.2 Synopsis of the texts

#### 4.2.1 *Disgrace* by Coetzee

The novel *Disgrace* takes place in a post-apartheid South Africa where David Lurie teaches at a university in Cape Town. His sex scandal due to his involvement with one of his students, has broken out and damaged the reputation of the university. It follows the story of Lurie's fall from grace and his complicated relationship with his daughter Lucy, living on a farm in the Eastern Cape (Coetzee, 1999). It deals with topics of power, shame, and land in transition from apartheid to democratic order in regard to issues of race and gender. Coetzee revealed how deeply racial tensions were seated in South African society and the pervasive gender-based violence that continued to be a feature through the interactions and experiences of Lurie (Chebet, 2023).

#### 4.2.2 *The House Gun* by Gordimer

*The House Gun* revolves around the incidents of Duncan Lindgard, accused of murdering his friend, and the events surrounding his parents, Harald and Claudia Lindgard. Given that it is one of the early post-apartheid years in which the novel is set. It focuses much on how the characters wrestle through psychological and moral problems related to justice, guilt, and social change (Gordimer, 1998). Through this story, Gordimer tries to examine the interwoven issues of race and gender, especially as they shape the characters' views and actions in the line of changing socio-political dynamics.

### 4.3 Postcolonial Literature: Analysis of fictional characters, hybridity, and ambivalent identities

#### 4.3.1 *Disgrace*: Hybridity and ambivalence in postcolonial identities

The faculties of hybridity and ambivalence are woven expertly within the very fabric of J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*, functioning as principal staples in the probing of postcolonial identity. Perhaps more than anywhere else, these themes are palpable in David Lurie and his daughter Lucy, since their experiences mirror the convolutions of identity formation in the post-apartheid era. As conceptualised by the postcolonial theorists, most famously Homi Bhabha, hybridity is a process of creating new cultural forms and identities in the continuous interaction between the coloniser and the colonised (Chebet, 2023). Hybridity can also be understood not only as mixing or combining those different aspects of cultures but as the manifestation of new, often starkly opposite identities that challenge the more traditional ideas of cultural purity and fixed identity. This hybridity finds manifestation in how Lurie and Lucy have to negotiate power relationships and social hierarchies in post-apartheid South Africa, with the old, tight structures of racial and cultural identity being dismantled and replaced by more fluid and complex modes of identity (Buelens, 2009).

The ambivalence of postcolonial hybridity is reflected in the changing identities of Lurie and Lucy. Lurie, the formerly powerful and now humiliated professor, dismissed from his position in the wake of a sex scandal, stands for the old guard of white South African intellectuals who are trying to come to terms with the new social and political realities unleashed by the post-apartheid era. There is a sense of unease in all his interactions with black South Africans, such as Petrus, the farm worker, who gradually assumes power and lands (Hove, 2022). Lurie represents an ambivalent position of himself in the new social order in South Africa. His mind is torn between the superiority carried over from the colonial past and the growing realisation of the impending necessity to adjust to new realities where the old power structures seem to be turned upside down. Similarly, in Lucy's farm, this hybrid identity comes into being with all its complexities in a society whose race and gender dynamics are in flux. That she remains on the farm after her assault and enters into a marriage of convenience with Petrus tends to underscore the fact that she was seeking to negotiate a space in which her identity as a white woman made her vulnerable

and liable to be positioned as one needing to negotiate with the new power of black South Africans (Gleeson-White, 2003). This ambivalence, felt by both Lurie and Lucy, bespeaks the trouble in negotiating a postcolonial identity within the frame of a past that holds such sway over the present, even as new forms of identity are hammered out.

David Lurie, the protagonist in Coetzee's novel *Disgrace*, exemplifies the ambivalence that typifies postcolonial identities, and more especially, those of individuals who once occupied positions of privilege in a colonial or apartheid regime. Lurie's life and identity are invested in the remains of his privileged childhood in apartheid, an age of stringent racial hierarchisation, of which white South Africans were the beneficiaries (Coetzee, 1999). Now, in post-apartheid South Africa, he finds himself ever more out of place as the old social order crumbles around him. In his experience, such disorientation is not only personal but representative of a more collective cultural and social change. The discomfort he feels is a result of the loss of that dominant culture where the structures within society that once led to his assurance of superiority and entitlement are now crumbling down and leaving him in limbo - existentially and ideologically (Chebet, 2023).

Lurie ambivalently interacts with black South Africans, in particular, Petrus, a farm employee slowly increasing power and land ownership, despite these facts. Lurie does recognise, on one level, the changed power relations; he does recognise the changed social and political environment and the consequently different roles and relationships between the different racial groups (Hove, 2022). Still, even as he starts to grasp, on an intellectual level, the emerging reality that the strict structures no longer hold, including the one that he experienced through the apartheid years, Lurie cannot thoroughly exorcise all this emotional and psychological wastage from his erstwhile habits (Buelens, 2009). He wrestles with his past attitude and conduct, as is evidenced by his discomfort and ambivalence in his situation with Petrus. It is clear that Lurie vacillates between a point of condescending ruthlessness and sensitive respect, an old authority to assert and a new-lowered status to acknowledge. This inner conflict is a vivid illustration of the ambivalence that often accompanies the negotiation of a postcolonial identity. Caught between his past, which he cannot fully let go of, and a present that demands change, Lurie



embodies the tensions and contradictions that define the experience of many individuals who find themselves navigating the complexities of a society in transition (Gleeson-White, 2003).

Hybridity in the post-apartheid era remains a complex phenomenon, which J.M. Coetzee depicts in Lucy's character in *Disgrace*. Through Lucy, who is very different from the character of her father, David Lurie, who is unable to adapt to the clauses of the new social setup, one finds her a good deal more disposed and open to the changes in the social structure of South Africa (Tomar, 2024). This openness is also reflected in the decision of staying on her farm, located in a mostly black, rural area, post the traumatic incident of being raped. Her decision to stay back, as opposed to fleeing into the security of urban anonymity or seeking shelter with her father, was a manifestation of taking a stand to begin life anew based on changing racial relationships and, by extension, social norms in new South Africa (Chebet, 2023). This points toward a decision that connotes hybridity - no matter how much a white woman she wants to be, Lucy tries to reconcile her identity with the realities of living in an environment no longer stratified by historical racial orders. This hybridity is fraught with ambivalence, for the identity of Lucy actually occurs not just because of her wish to adapt to the new order but also from the deep-rooted tensions and contradictions springing from the very same circumstances (Coetzee, 1999).

The ambivalence in her identity becomes rather dull after the assault; her choice to stay quiet about the rape and to marry Petrus, a black man representing the emergence of power in the community, a marriage for convenience purposes, shows the complex negotiation between power, survival, and identity (Gleeson-White, 2003). On one hand, Lucy's action can be read as one of empowerment; she decides her destiny by aligning herself with Petrus over the land, thus securing her base in this shifting society. It is being aligned with Petrus as strategic hybridity that serves as the mask under which Lucy adjusts and makes herself one with the new social fabric of South Africa as the new power structures have been instituted. As I see it, on the other side of the coin, it is a way to internalise the violence and oppression that has always been a lot for women, especially when viewed from patriarchal and colonial viewpoints. Her silence and her marriage to Petrus carry all the seals of acceptance of the situation she found herself in - she was

not seeking justice and retribution in any way. Her silence attests to the problem of her hybridity in that, in wanting to become someone else, she suffers a loss of her own self (Hove, 2022).

Indeed, Lucy's ambivalence underscores how very difficult it is to negotiate movement in the midst of a postcolonial identity that is both liberatory and entangling. Despite efforts to maintain a life based on those two new social realities of South Africa, in most cases, choices continue to be bounded by old legacies of violence and gender oppression. In pushing the question of hybridity through the post-apartheid era, Coetzee uses Lucy to interrogate the dilemma: it creates the possibility for new kinds of identity and relationship but continues to entrench existing, symmetrical relations of power and inequalities (Buelens, 2009). Experience in Lucy also personifies speech among the clamour and struggle of the Third World people who have to struggle painfully with the balance when negotiating their identities in a world where the demarcation lines between the past and the present, the coloniser and the colonised, have blurred and continue to shift. Her story is very telling about the complexities of hybridity in post-colonialism: the tale of finding a new identity that may, at once, be empowering and further entrenching historical injustices (Chebet, 2023).

Working from the characters of David Lurie and Lucy, Coetzee sets out to explore the intricate hybridity and ambivalence tensions in postcolonial South Africa. In so doing, Coetzee has captured the life worlds of the processes of identity formations within a postcolonial framework as always irreducible, opposed, and self-contradicted. The characters seem to negotiate a landscape where historical legacies still bear resolutely upon life, even within the consciousness of the new social and cultural realities of post-apartheid society (Coetzee, 1999). This constant bargaining, past and present, underlies the problems of creating a coherent identity in a world where the lines separating the old from the new, the colonizer from the colonized, are blurred but actively contested. Through these struggles of Lurie and Lucy, Coetzee illustrates deep-reaching ambivalence, inseparable from any such attempt of reconciliation between two opposing forces, in the attempt to suggest no fixedness within identity in a postcolonial context but its constant flux (Salami-Boukari, 2012).

The hybridity reflected in Lurie and Lucy's identities speaks to some of the bigger social and cultural changes in South Africa. One is Lurie, a relic of the erstwhile colonial elite, and another is Lucy, a representative of the new generation, who has the will to wade into the new social order; right away, this is a tension between the remnants of colonial power and the rising identity of post-colonialism (Hove, 2022). The ambivalence of Lurie is the difficulty in letting go of the privileges and mindsets developed within apartheid; Lucy's, struggle to adapt to a society and survive without those same privileges protecting her. Hybrid sites of identity constituted at the crossroads of these contesting influences have found their place in a broader redefinition of roles and relationships across post-apartheid South Africa (Gleeson-White, 2003). Yet, against this backdrop, the process of redefinition bears its share of strain, for each of these characters is embroiled in inner and outer struggles alike, which muddle their efforts at hammering out new identities. Coetzee fleshes out these challenges to underline the fact that the postcolonial condition must be essentially a continuous struggle between continuity and change, where the past flows incessantly into the present; hence, an enterprise as delicate as forming a stable, unified identity is deeply ambivalent and contestable (Coetzee, 1999).

#### 4.3.2 *The House Gun*: Negotiating hybridity and identity in postcolonial South Africa

Most tellingly, hybridity and ambivalence are brought out in Gordimer's *The House Gun*, with the tumultuous landscape of post-apartheid South Africa providing the background against which the experiences of Harald and Claudia Lindgard are set with charges against their son Duncan. The Lindgards epitomise the white, liberal middle class who find themselves at an intersection where the social props on which they used to depend- the familiar landmarks - are no longer stable or predictable (Gordimer, 1998). It is in relation to this crime their son has committed that they are brought into a position of confrontation with the changing power dynamics that redefine roles and identities in the new South Africa. Both Harald and Claudia have to come to terms with what Duncan did, its legal and moral implications, and not least - which would be no easier- the problem of their own identities, historically couched in privilege and strong faith in liberal values. Yet, challenging these values in the changing social order lays bare the profound ambivalence felt in the attempt to adjust to a society no longer working according to the rules by which they had learned to operate (Golden, 2018).

The trajectory of the Lindgards serves to illustrate the problem of negotiating hybrid identity in a society where traditional social structures are collapsing around one. As representatives of a class that was once apparently unassailably powerful, Harald and Claudia are made painfully aware that it is no longer their birth-right to assume a place at the pinnacle of society (Munro, 2009). The hybridity in these identities is a product of their struggles to reconcile their liberalism with the new realities that are rapidly taking the shape that those who used to be on the margins are now inscribing on a post-apartheid society. On the other hand, trying, by all means, to stay close to their ideals of justice and equality, hallmarks of what it is for them to be liberals, the Lindgards do not act in that course without tension and ambivalence. They are met on the other side by the cruel fact that their social status and identity were embedded in a history that is now being torn down at breakneck speed (Tomar, 2024). The struggles of these subjects to reconcile these contradictory aspects of their identity are demonstrative of the wider problem of selfhood formation within people living in postcolonial societies, wherein continued negotiation between historical legacies and the demands of a transformed present marks the process of identity construction (Golden, 2018). It is through the Lindgards that Gordimer most compellingly makes the point that, in the end, the movement toward post-apartheid South Africa entails political and social readjustment but also an assiduous re-imagining of personal and social identity—a process necessarily nuanced by hybridity and ambivalence (Mussi, 2017).

That Harald and Claudia Lindgard have to rely on Hamilton Motsamai, a black lawyer, to defend their son Duncan, is a strong indication of the hybridity characteristic in their postcolonial identity in Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*. Symbolically, it means that the Lindgards have taken note of the power shift happening in post-apartheid South Africa, where black South Africans are getting positions of responsibility and influence that were previously closed to them (Munro, 2009). It is in the person of Motsamai that the Lindgards realise how they must now learn to live in this new social order where history does not guarantee them power over control anymore. The adjustment, however, is not easy to make (Mussi, 2017). Even as Harald and Claudia overtly work according to those principles of equality and justice which so resonate with their liberal values, what comes across in their interaction with Motsamai is a strong sense of ambivalence. This ambivalence can be ascribed to the tension between intellectual acceptance of the new

social reality and an emotional inability to reconcile with the erosion of former status and influence (Gordimer, 1998).

For Gordimer, the interactions between the Lindgards and Motsamai work to problematise hybridity within a postcolonial framework. In such a fusing of different cultural and social identities, there is a powerful sense of disorientation and conflict. On one level, the Lindgards' decision to hire Motsamai speaks to their commitment to liberalism, justice, and equality; in that sense, it represents a willingness to embrace the new South Africa (Golden, 2018). At another level, there is also a litany of emotions: uncertainty, unease, and lingering senses of loss. The Lindgards are torn between wanting to do the right thing by their lights and the anxiety of giving up powers and control that they once felt their due. This is a disorientation symptomatic of postcolonial hybridity, where the old and the new identities do not combine but clash and remain unreconciled. In the Lindgards, Gordimer illustrates that such a process of negotiation of a hybrid identity in a postcolonial society is full of contradictions because individuals have to make constant readjustments due to the changeability of the world in which the past and the present, as well as the various cultural and social identities, continue redefining themselves (Munro, 2009).

The theme of ambivalence runs through the ill text of the Lindgards', and hence through all personal reflections on the part of them both as parents and members of a society in times that are marking almost a cultural renaissance, as seen in Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun*. The ambivalence, in this case, cuts deepest in Claudia, who is first and foremost a mother and could not disentangle herself from an intense self-blaming feeling of responsibility for her son Duncan's criminal behaviour (Mussi, 2017). Claudia's struggle is not just a personal one; she regards Duncan's crime as a reflection of her failures as a mother and generally of the failures symptomatic of the social cataclysms that South Africa is undergoing. Her internal struggle is made more severe by the fact that even the traditional gender roles that her generation knew and adhered to are being challenged and redefined in this post-apartheid society. Claudia is ambivalent because she is trying to protect and promote her child, roles traditionally meant to be carried out by a mother, while in reality, her son has put her in a position where exactly those

roles are to be questioned. This intrinsic tension symbolizes the larger cultural ambivalence that Gordimer tries to bring out, wherein personal identities have to be forced anew according to the ever-changing power dynamics and norms of post-colonial society (Golden, 2018).

Gordimer uses Claudia's inner conflict as the microcosm for the larger societal ambivalence that characterizes the condition of post-coloniality. If the question of her identity as a mother and a woman is somewhat tenuously placed by the very nature of her society, in which everything is in the process of redefinition after apartheid, then much like Claudia, this society remains poised at a crossroads (Munro, 2009). Ambivalence on her part bespeaks the greater ambiguities that face all people in a society where the sureties of old based on race, gender and social roles can no longer be depended upon. The definition of changing gender roles complicates Claudia's sense of herself, especially because this is mediated through what society expects from her and what her own conscience puts upon her. This she does with great sensitivity, illustrating how Claudia's ambivalence reflects societal handedness, in redefining the power structures and cultural mores of South Africa (Tomar, 2024). The author shows that in carrying on identity within a postcolonial order, the sense of being is not fixed but is rather fluid and even contradictory. It is constantly renegotiated in correspondence to changes from the outside. Therefore, Claudia's experience becomes a useful lens through which readers can appreciate - though probably the touchiest and most volatile of all facets of contemporary society - the subtlety and challenges of living in a churning society where everything from the definition of gender roles to moral responsibilities is in a state of flux (Mussi, 2017).

Harald's journey to face an existential crisis at the heart of Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun* is closely woven with ambivalence over his place in a legal system that is, at least outwardly, now post-apartheid but is still dictated very much by these deep-seated racial biases. Harald pragmatically adapts to the new social orders of post-apartheid South Africa as he has to turn to a black attorney, Hamilton Motsamai, to intercede on his son Duncan's behalf when the young man's chances of evading punishment look increasingly dim (Gordimer, 1998). This reflects Harald's realisation - that the old racial hierarchies, which had accorded him overt authority and privilege, are giving way to a new order in which black South Africans like Motsamai are rising to

roles of power and authority. Such appreciation, though, is not achieved without its implications (Golden, 2018). The way Harald treats Motsamai pains and burdens even the whole body, wrestling with changes that have destroyed the social order with which he was conversant. This ambivalence epitomises Harald's inner struggle for coming to terms with the strongly held liberal ideal of equality and justice with the unnerving realities of a society divided on racial lines, in spite of striving for a better and fairer future (Munro, 2009).

It is in the character of Harald that Gordimer explores intricate tensions between hybridity and ambivalence involved in a postcolonial setting. In this, within the context of Harald's relationship to Motsamai and the legal system more generally, identities old and new blur - a process at times tinged with profound feelings of fragmentarily and instability (Mussi, 2017). At first glance, it would seem that Harald's reliance on Motsamai represents a convenient way for him to break out into far greater society, where white South African legal dominance no longer exists, nor in any sphere of life. That ambivalence, though hosted within Harald as he grapples with what all this bodes for his identity and sense of self is what lies underneath. To that end, the interaction between Harald and Motsamai becomes a locus of tension, as the old certainties of racial and social hierarchies crash into the new realities of a post-apartheid society. And with that, a showcasing of more general navigation difficulties within a world where the lines of past/present and different cultural identities grow blurred. The way Gordimer has portrayed Harald's journey testified to the fact that at the end of the day hybridity within a post-colonial society is not eclectically just or expressional but disharmonised when elements of the old and new combine to produce feelings of instability and disorientation (Salami-Boukari, 2012).

Gordimer's reproductions of the journey of the Lindgards in *The House Gun* indeed present incisive comments on broader challenges of negotiating identity in post-colonial South Africa. Taking the Lindgards as a representation, Gordimer lessens the power of imagining that the processes of post-colonial identity formation could be straight or harmonious. Instead, it is marked by deep ambivalence and conflict as individuals and communities come to grips with the ongoing legacies of colonialism and apartheid that shape their lives (Munro, 2009). The Lindgards represent this position of the white, liberal middle class in a society where the power structures

they once knew are now being dismantled and new forms of authority emerge. But this change was not smooth; it was blurry with uncertainty, tension, and endless fighting to adjust their past identities to the prescriptions of the present. Their experiences add to the general understanding that personal and collective identity in the current system is nothing short of life in a postcolonial society with interwoven residuals of historical injustices of strong bearings (Mussi, 2017).

In *The House Gun*, Gordimer explores hybridity and ambivalence, which underline the continuing struggle for identity within the postcolonial situation, where the boundaries between self and other, past and present, are constantly renegotiated. This is depicted by the Lindgards' experiences, which prove that, in a postcolonial society, identity is not a fixed or stable construct but is fluid and often self-contradictory (Golden, 2018). According to the novel, with the arising of new forms of power and authority, individuals must constantly readjust and redefine their persona - a process fundamentally ridden by ambivalence and conflict. It is at the site where there is friction between old and new, between apartheid legacies and democratic South Africa that the question of identity can be up for contestation and reinvention (Stratton, 2020). For Gordimer, it is in the Lindgards' experiences that there is a setting for broader social commentary on the challenges of moving beyond a colonial past, acknowledging that this will neither be linear nor easy. In this way, the novel reflects on how hard it is, especially in a postcolonial world, to form an identity at the intersection of history and the present, continuity and change—a question left open (Gordimer, 1998).

#### 4.4 Thematic analysis of racial and gender dynamics

##### 4.4.1 Racial dynamics in *Disgrace* and *The House Gun*

It is in the lines of this strained relationship between individuals of different racial groups that Coetzee brings out the lingering effects of apartheid in his book *Disgrace*. This comes out very clearly in the interactions that the protagonist, David Lurie, has with his black neighbours and farm workers. Coetzee relates quite clearly that it is not a case of an abolished apartheid law; rather, the prejudices are so deeply engraved in South African society (Curry, 2004). This is clearly reflected in both Lurie's behaviour and his attitudes toward the black characters he meets. Lurie is a white professor who has been dismissed from the university due to a sex scandal and retreats



to his daughter Lucy's farm in the Eastern Cape, where, for the most part, he relates to the black community with a sense of superiority and detachment (Afshar, & Maynard, 1994). For instance, he is very condescending to Petrus, a black farm worker who becomes a landowner, and always maintains a reluctance to treat him on equal terms. Lurie's perception of Petrus as a gardener (Coetzee, 1999, p. 64) shows how he cannot accept the changes that have come with the end of apartheid, a residue of the racially stratified society (Stobie, 2009).

The story of *Disgrace* also indicates that although the political system in South Africa has changed radically, the social mindset of the people, especially whites, has remained the same. Lurie's response to other black characters, like the police who come to investigate the rape of his daughter, is also very telling. It is his reluctance to engage fully with them as equals and his expectation of deference based on his race, underpinning, thereby, the enduring power dynamics entrenched by apartheid (Cousins, 2001). Coetzee uses Lurie's character to underline deep-seated racial prejudices still influencing interactions in post-apartheid South Africa and suggests that changes at the legal level alone cannot break the web of racial hierarchies defining this country (Munro, 2009).

Moreover, the relationship of Lurie with Lucy becomes a microcosm of the bigger tension between races within society. Lucy represents a new generation that has tried to move out and be reconciled with a new social order who decides to stay in a rural area mostly populated by black South Africans (Curry, 2004). It is in this sense that even Lucy, seemingly holding her life together in a more integrated way, is compelled to confront the brutal realities of this racial divide when she is brutally attacked by a group of black men. This will be what forces her, along with Lurie, to confront the racialised violence which endures as part of life in South Africa. His reaction to this attack, mirrored in his instant association of the crime with racial retribution, brings out the depths of Lurie's fears and prejudices and shows how deeply perceptions and reactions among white South Africans continue to be influenced by the apartheid legacy (Martins, 2015).

In *Disgrace*, this racial dynamic becomes even more impossible to talk about in the context of Lurie's shifting attitude towards Petrus. Initially, Lurie perceives him as servile, still locked within

the master-servant hierarchy that typified apartheid days. But with increasing power and land ownership, that perception is no longer tenable (Munro, 2009). This shift still does not make it easy for Lurie to accept the new status of Petrus; rather, it shows the problem many white South Africans face in coming to terms with the new social order, where roles defined by race are increasingly blurred. Coetzee uses this tension as representative of the macro-level societal struggle to find a balance between a past riddled with racial inequity and a future that is at times very slow and painful in unearthing systems of racial hierarchy buried very deep (Afshar, & Maynard, 1994).

Another example is Gordimer's *The House Gun*, which deals with the racial polemics in South African society even after apartheid. For instance, Gordimer takes the reader through a prolonged, detailed courtroom trial of Duncan Lindgard, a young white man accused of murdering his friend, to show how race remains an overriding factor in considerations of justice and societal perception (Cousins, 2001). The novel projects the entire complexity of the South African legal jurisdiction, which, despite the generally proclaimed end of apartheid, continues to be tainted by racial biases in judicial decisions. The description of Duncan's trial exposes the lingering inequalities within a legal system in which race, be it that of the victim or the accused, remains a paramount factor in the formation of public opinion and judicial decisions (Curry, 2004).

Gordimer utilises the character of Hamilton Motsamai, a black lawyer representing the Lindgards, to underline the subtleties of such relationships that deal with racial dynamics in a society yet settle with its apartheid past. The Lindgards' encounters with Motsamai are filled with tensions, somehow a projection of their inner tension between their liberal ideas and the stark need to seek help from a black professional in a situation of great personal crisis (Martins, 2015). This relationship is indeed a microcosm representing the new social dispensation developing in South Africa, where old structures of power and privilege are being overhauled and old psychosocial residues of apartheid continue to influence everyday interpersonal relationships. The Lindgards exemplify deep-seated prejudices existing among those espousing support for social change, and

their presumed superficial commitment toward racial equality but uneasiness with Motsamai (Munro, 2009).

In this sense, *The House Gun* points toward social attitudes that trigger the continuation of racial prejudice and, thus, seems to offer a very denying status to the possibility of rising above the legacy of apartheid. Gordimer shows the media representation of Duncan's court case as being completely racialised - they work with contrasts of Duncan's whiteness against the blackness of his victim, linking him to the associated syndrome, and reflecting something broader in the general fear (Mussi, 2017). Such media representations perhaps speak to the comment about how, post-apartheid, race continues to shape public perception and public discourse within South Africa itself. The trial does become an arena for the working out of unresolved issues of race: its many unfair or biased moments suggest a trial that was very pale in comparison to the larger societal struggle to come to terms with the nation's history of racial oppression (Martins, 2015).

Gordimer also deepens the psychological dimension of the impact of apartheid on individuals and families, above all through the introspections and conversations of the Lindergrds - the couple's reflections on their complicity with the apartheid system, which they detested, reveal the complexities of guilt, responsibility, and redemption in a society moving from a world of systemic racial oppression to a more democrat order (Cousins, 2001). Such as it is, the tension between their personal belief and the bleak realities of their situation underlines how really difficult it was to escape the apartheid shadow - for anybody. This reliance on Motsamai, though pragmatic, already camouflages their taking on their own internal prejudices so that they have become uncomfortable witnesses to their own limitations (Salami-Boukari, 2012).

Moreover, *The House Gun* provides that the legal reforms in post-apartheid South Africa, though well-deserved in their capacity, tend to be too little to deal with the deep-seated racial biases that tend to continue in societal results (Munro, 2009). Gordimer posits that equality, which is the requirement for true justice in South African society, cannot be given by legislation alone; it is this radical change in societal attitudes and structures required. The novel criticises the misconception that the end of apartheid automatically translates into the end of racial prejudice;

it is presented as basically an argument on the current society where shadows of the past are extended (Afshar, & Maynard, 1994).

Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Gordimer's *The House Gun* interrogate the entanglement of racial and gendered power structures in post-apartheid South Africa through their protagonists' moral crises. In *Disgrace*, David Lurie's sexual exploitation of Melanie a mixed-race student epitomizes the intersection of racial privilege and patriarchal entitlement (Attwell, 2015). Coetzee frames Lurie's actions as symptomatic of a colonial mindset that objectifies both Black and female bodies, rendering them sites of conquest. Conversely, Gordimer's *The House Gun* centres on Duncan, a white man who murders his Black lover, exposing the hypocrisy of liberal whiteness in the "new" South Africa. Claudia, Duncan's mother, embodies the complicity of white feminism, as her intellectualism fails to dismantle systemic inequities (Clingman, 2017). Both novels critique the persistence of historical hierarchies, suggesting that racial and gender oppression are mutually reinforcing systems.

The authors further contrast how trauma and agency are gendered in their narratives. Lucy's decision to keep her child after being raped in *Disgrace* reflects the burden placed on women to bear the literal and symbolic weight of racial violence (Graham, 2019). Her silence, as Marais (2019) argues, becomes a radical act of resistance against patriarchal demands for explanation. In contrast, Gordimer's Claudia engages in verbose self-analysis, yet her privilege insulates her from confronting the racialized dimensions of her son's crime. The titular "house gun," a symbol of white fear and performative control, underscores how racial anxiety perpetuates gendered violence within domestic spaces (Dass, 2020). While Coetzee emphasizes the corporeal consequences of oppression, Gordimer dissects the psychological mechanisms that sustain it.

Finally, both novels grapple with the possibility or impossibility of reconciliation. *Disgrace* culminates in Lurie's ambiguous "gift" of caring for dying dogs, a gesture Kossew (2018) interprets as a hollow attempt to atone for historical guilt without addressing structural inequities. Gordimer, however, positions the legal trial in *The House Gun* as a microcosm of national reconciliation, where performative justice masks deeper racial fractures (Sanders, 2021). Duncan's acquittal hinges on his Black lawyer's defence, an irony that critiques the limits

of liberal allyship. Coetzee's bleak resolution suggests cyclical violence, while Gordimer's narrative leaves room for incremental dialogue, reflecting divergent visions of societal healing. Both authors, however, agree that racial and gender justice remain aspirational in post-apartheid South Africa.

#### 4.4.2 Gender dynamics in *Disgrace* and *The House Gun*

One of the central issues in both Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun* is gender, which intersects with power and violence in ways that reflect the broader societal dynamics in post-apartheid South Africa. This collection of novels articulates how gendered power imbalances do not relate to personal or domestic problems; on the contrary, they are deeply interconnected with the socio-political context of a country in enormous change (Eming, 2023). In *Disgrace*, the brutal sexual violence inflicted on Lucy is an important metaphor for gender-based violence that rages unabated in South Africa just coming out of apartheid. With Lucy, Coetzee underlines that women's bodies tend to be those sites on which wider, broader social conflicts are worked out, particularly in situations when traditional patriarchal orders are threatened by new social dispensations (Bouilly et al., 2016).

In the novel *Disgrace*, Lucy is raped not as a personal disaster but rather as a socially chaotic environment symbol in post-apartheid South Africa. The violence that befell her characterizes the metaphoric historical violence by race and gender. Thus, Coetzee couches this act of violence as the product of a societal system in a shift of its power dynamics, where people who used to be discriminated against are now exercising their power violently (Curry, 2004). Lucy's silence after the attack (she doesn't press charges against her attackers) seems wrapped in that kind of complex understanding of the new social order, wherein she realises that even the legal domain may not have any scope for justice within the patriarchal formulation. As she says herself, what happened to me is a purely private matter, it does not deserve the attention of the outside world, thus underscoring her resignation to the narrow capabilities of the justice system in tackling gender-based violence (Blanton Jr, 2018).

Coetzee also directs the representation of Lucy's experience as an attack on the failures in the legal system of post-apartheid South Africa, specifically in crimes committed against women. The

insinuation in the novel is that this new legal system has deep flaws, including attitudes that are patriarchal, and very slow to protect and deliver justice for women. This is evident in Lucy's resignation to her fate, where she chooses to remain on the farm and enter into a marriage of convenience with Petrus, a black man, to secure her safety (Bouilly et al., 2016). Here, one sees that the woman still has very few choices in the structure of a society where power is still vested largely in men, despite changes in political governance. Lucy's acceptance of her situation has been a strong social commentary in regard to the prevalence of gender-based violence and its perpetuating structures in society (Eming, 2023).

This interaction of gender, power, and violence is further located in *Disgrace* through the character of David Lurie himself and his actions and attitudes toward women. His sexually abusive behaviour toward the student Melanie at the very start of the novel gives voice to the greater thematic concern of power and violation (Lewis, 2005). The case of Lurie is only a pointer toward increasing patriarchal thinking and womanizing as a tool to satisfy men's desires, as was evidenced by his treatment of Melanie, with no repentance afterwards enacted. The protagonist, Lurie, allows Coetzee to describe how patriarchal power has been maintained through the subordination of women and their objectification. His narcissistic dismissal of Melanie's autonomy, coupled with societal indifference toward her victimisation, underlines something systemic about gender-based oppression in a society still wrestling with its colonial past and patriarchal traditions (Curry, 2004).

Furthermore, Gordimer, in *The House Gun*, weaves through gender dynamics through which it talks about power and violence by considering the family dealing with the consequences of a violent act committed by their son. The novel does not deal as explicitly with sexual violence as *Disgrace*. It has explored the gendered expectations from women, especially through Claudia Lindgard's character, Duncan's mother. Claudia's role in the novel underlines what sort of emotional labour is expected of women at the back end of stressful times (Mussi, 2017). Gordimer presents Claudia as a character inundated with the task of holding the family's moral compass intact while trying to deal with the problems besetting her mind. This could be seen to

mirror the social norms and preferences that disproportionately place emotional and moral responsibility on women (Lewis, 2005).

The story of Gordimer is also an incisive critique of how gendered structures are underwriting patriarchal power, always to the detriment of women. Claudia's own balancing act between being a mother and maintaining her own identity reflects the struggle with which all women have to grapple in a society that measures worth upon women's relationships with, or service toward, men - be it as wives, mothers, or daughters (Bouilly et al., 2016). The novel depicts the view that even in post-apartheid South Africa, with legal and political reforms having been undertaken, has it come nowhere near achieving real gender equality. This is elaborated by the fact that women are still expected to absorb and cushion male violence, as Claudia does for Duncan, pointing toward the deep-seated gender inequalities that continue to mark South African society (Blanton Jr, 2018).

Furthermore, *The House Gun* deals with psychological aspects- considerations of gendered expectations from a feminine point of view - largely from within the introspective moments of Claudia. Marriage and motherhood verge on the melodramatic in their musings, testimony to the internalisation of gender norms that have helped shape her persona and deeds. In Claudia's character, as Gordimer writes, the norms are actually intensified in the family structure, where a woman is primarily an emotional caretaker and moral guardian (Eming, 2023). This then goes on to contrast more rightly with the detached and pragmatic answer of Harald, reflecting the gendered division of emotional labour in a number of families. Claudia's inner conflict and her final decision to take her son's side, despite all her moral objections to the act, underline how gender is an issue that intersects with power and violence at levels of both private and public life (Mussi, 2017).

The characters of Lucy and Claudia have been used to underline the resilience of women who become victims of such interrelated systems of violence and oppression in their respective novels. These two characters, in radically different ways, negotiate the constraints set for them by a patriarchal society with hard choices reverberating with bitter realities (Curry, 2004). As mentioned above, Lucy stays on the farm and eventually enters into a practical partnership with

Petrus, while Claudia chooses to stay with her son despite her feelings on the matter. In this light of view, such decisions, although they might be judged as passively compliant and even collusive, are in fact strategies in a social order where most of the alternatives open to women are few (Lewis, 2005).

In *The House Gun* by Gordimer, Claudia Lindgard fills the position of the central character in regard to gendered experience, most specifically what pertains to motherhood, emotional work, and societal expectations. Claudia's inner self is detailed by Gordimer herself against the backdrop of finding acceptance of this horrific fact - that her son, Duncan, has committed a heinous crime of bloodshed (Mussi, 2017). Claudia's internal struggle is but a reflection of her struggle as a mother; it reviews the expectations of South African society upon women. The point is, throughout her novel, Gordimer articulates very clearly all the roles assigned to women and exactly the expectation that they should actually bear such emotional and moral burdens on their shoulders, families, and minds. This typifies the norms that have bound her to limited autonomy and agency, which she can exercise in a society led by men (Bouilly et al., 2016).

Claudia, as Gordimer depicts her, comes out to be a rather sensitive person to the expectations that are supposed to emanate from her because of her gender. Claudia has to be available at any time for motherly support and emotional stability even when her son commits horrifying. It explores how Claudia internalises these expectations often at the expense of her emotional well-being (Lewis, 2005). This is the central dilemma running through the novel: she will have to juggle her love for Duncan with her moral revulsion over the crime he committed. Probably, the characterization of Claudia is another case in which Gordimer drives home a point: that women are always expected to soak in and soften male acts of violence, acting like an emotional buffer within a family. This puts Claudia in a position where she is balancing so many conflicting emotions and being the moral compass for her family (Eming, 2023).

The kind of social norms that chaperone the roles women play in the family and society is also reflected in the experience of Claudia in *The House Gun*. Gordimer critiques such wide experiences by revealing ways of constraining the autonomy and agency of Claudia. Having performed so well in her work, Claudia's identity is very much strongly defined around her being



a wife and mother. According to the novel, women like Claudia are pushed by society to subordinate personal wants and desires to family duties (Blanton Jr, 2018). This can be greatly seen in closer detail within Claudia's relationship with Harald, her husband, who is more distant and dispassionate in his response to Duncan's crime. While Harald is able to handle it with some detachment, Claudia is not supposed to let her distance become emotional and moral unresponsiveness to the fate of her son. In this way, this gendered emotional division of labour highlights the different expectations for men and women within the institution of the family (Salami-Boukari, 2012).

Moreover, a lot is being said through Gordimer by using the character of Claudia to denounce what society does in restricting the agencies of ladies in a decision-making process regarding their lives. Claudia has been drawn in the middle between acting as per her conscience and the role given to her as a mother in the book. This simply symbolises the larger tussle experienced by most women of getting caught in the fray between the demands of a patriarchal society (Lewis, 2005). Such expectations leave women very little room, according to Gordimer, for assertion because mostly, they have to behave according to the stereotyped expectations attached to their gender. Claudia finally does go along with Duncan, against her most strenuous moral objections; this may be read as the outgrowth of just such societal pressures that privilege familial loyalty and emotional labour over individual autonomy (Mussi, 2017).

However, the introspections of Claudia dig even deeper, bringing to the light of day that emotional labour, not leaving out their interactions time and again with the other characters. It is revealed that women have always been expected, aside from managing their emotions, to attend to those of people around them (Poyner & Poyner, 2020). Whereas Harald is quite detached from his wife, Claudia becomes an emotional caretaker for her family, thus illustrating that this concept relates directly to gendered role expectations about women's role in the family. Gordimer finds fault in this dynamic, showing the incredible pressure it puts on women, who are expected to offer emotional strength and support in the most trying of times. This comes sharply to relief in the scene when Claudia has a meeting with Duncan. She is caught treading on her feelings of shame and guilt while emotionally supporting her son (Sidiki, & Aboubacrine, 2018).

Apart from being that of a mother, the experience of Claudia in *The House Gun* reminds one of the general expectations that society has on a woman in as far as her moral responsibilities go. Claudia is actually painted by Gordimer as being very much aware of the morality of what the acts of Duncan entail and heavily troubled by the question of whether she is guilty of committing his crime (Mussi, 2017). As an internal conflict that turns out to be an expectation, women have been tasked with the setting of moral values among their offspring. Gordimer criticises this expectation because it puts an undue burden on women, who are always left to answer for children whose actions have gone beyond their control more often than not. More direct feelings of guilt and self-reproach on Claudia's part epitomise great societal pressure to confirm a higher moral standard for women than for men (Poyner, & Poyner, 2020).

In Gordimer, Claudia's struggle with these gendered expectations is broadened into a critique of the patriarchal structures that have shown continuous reshaping in South African society. This means that even with the onset of social and political changes within the post-apartheid era, traditional gender roles are still very much extant (Eming, 2023). Claudia's struggle typifies a problem of equal rights in a society wherein women are still asked to take up traditional gender roles, even as they increasingly strive to act independently. In this, Gordimer used the character of Claudia to indicate the confining nature of these categories and the need to reassess the social norms governing the lives of women (Blanton Jr, 2018).

Furthermore, *The House Gun* explores how these expectations of gender influence Claudia's self-esteem and identity. Claudia is a character torn constantly between her identity and the simple functions bestowed by society, which Gordimer depicts. Nowhere is this tension sharper than in Claudia's ruminations about marriage and motherhood (Lewis, 2005). Despite all of her professional success, Claudia still defines herself by societal dictates of what a good mother and wife should be. It is precisely this dynamic that Gordimer critiques: Claudia cannot be self-defined because her attempts hedge around the demands of society, often in very sharp contrast to her personal desires and values (Mussi, 2017).

The novel further brings out the emotional draining on women like Claudia due to such gendered expectations. According to Gordimer, Claudia is a woman who has been emotionally drained

from the demands placed upon her but feels obliged to fulfil these roles out of duty and obligation. This quite mirrors the general expectation in society, whereby women are supposed to be emotionally available and supportive all the time, regardless of what their wants or needs might be (Blanton Jr, 2018). She explicitly disapproves of the way it perpetuates the circle of emotional labour, which takes up so much time and energy that there is very little left to care for the self. Claudia's exhaustion and emotional strife thus condense all the more extended pressure cooked into society: women taking care of others first at the expense of themselves (Eming, 2023).

#### 4.5 Strategies for navigating racial and gender dynamics

##### 4.5.1 Strategies in *Disgrace*

Lucy's reaction to being raped in *Disgrace* by Coetzee sets the stage for the underlying profound investigation into the webbing power relations of survival and post-apartheid gender relations in South Africa. Her decision to keep on living on her farm and yield to the will of the act's perpetrators, instead of running to the courts and seeking justice, underscores the acrimonious truth that comes home to roost for most women in a country with no audibility (Mwangi, 2010). This is a deeply nuanced negotiation of power, one in which Lucy finally becomes conscious of the inadequacy of legal and social structures, within the constriction of male domination, to protect or render justice for women who go through gender-based violence. Coetzee uses Lucy's experiences to critique the structures and to show other ways of coping and surviving that, for women, can be distilled from the lived experience of being a woman in a patriarchal society (Sidiki & Aboubacrine, 2018).

The decision that Lucy takes, to be on the farm after the violence, has not only deep resistance that roots out her perceptions of the social and political context in which she lives but also a negotiation with the attackers by taking them up to their word and yielding to their demands. This is a strategy that can be viewed as pragmatic for the power dynamics at play in her rural community, where the legal system is ineffective or complicit in the context of such gender-based violence (Sidiki & Aboubacrine, 2018). As Lucy says in the novel, "What happened to me is a purely private matter, it does not deserve the attention of the outside world" (Coetzee, 1999,

p. 112). Not dealing with the legal system is also a refusal to engage with the potential offered by state institutions - most obviously, but by no means solely, the legal system - to mete out justice in a society that remains overwhelmingly patriarchal (Stobie, 2009).

Coetzee uses Lucy's response to underscore the limitations of the legal process in coming to terms with the complexities of gender-based violence in post-apartheid South Africa. The novel seems to suggest that, despite sweeping political change within the country, this regime of justice is still deeply flawed and far beyond the reach of most women, especially those in the countryside (Lewis, 2005). Lucy's decision not to pursue the case in court is not resignation but a conscious one that reflects the realisation of how systemically flawed the legal system is. The legal structures, even though they are redesigned in nomenclature, remain flawed in protecting the most vulnerable citizens of society. Therefore, Lucy's act can be understood as survival, a process that ensures her own safety and freedom rather than risking justice in a system that would never secure it (Mwangi, 2010).

In a manner of speaking, then, is Lucy party to a kind of practical negotiation when she finally agrees to marry Petrus and, eventually, sell her land to him, which will finally secure her survival to a degree further in the community where she is most exposed and least supported. The decision also brings out the power relations that still exist between men and women, and between different racial groups in post-apartheid South Africa (Salami-Boukari, 2012). She justifies Lucy as acting strategically to belong to the community, cognizant of her precarious position in society generally as a single white woman living alone on a farm. She gains her protection and stability in times of chaos from Petrus, who represents the rising power of the black majority (Sidiki & Aboubacrine, 2018).

The novel reflects Lucy's response to her assault as one which also represents a more profound realization of the limitations of traditional visions of justice and empowerment. Coetzee presents Lucy as one who does not subscribe to the notion that, more often than not, justice is something to engage within the courts, particularly when these institutions have been based on systemic predilections in favour of the privileged (Poyner, & Poyner, 2020). Lucy's path to empowerment, on the other hand, seems to be in the acceptance of these new social realities and in her making

a set of contingent and difficult-to-make compromises for survival. By comparison, to more traditional feminist theories of justice that place their hope in law as a means of redress, what emerges is the relative possibility that arithmetic would likely be many roads to empowerment, including one around strategies involving negotiating with power from within the constraints of the prevailing social structure (Lewis, 2005).

Coetzee extends the implication of Lucy's experience to criticise social expectations from women that dictate how they should respond to violence. The idea is that Lucy's decision to act outside the bounds of the prescribed narrative, that of seeking justice within the legal process, disrupts the notion that women are supposed to react to victimization in general, of which rape is but an extreme instance of almost a genre of violence, with an assertion of no less distance (Mwangi, 2010). On the contrary, Lucy remains adaptable and quietly resilient for survival, which is portrayed by Coetzee as an equally valid form of resistance. Such a portrayal complicates one's understanding of exactly what survival and resistance means within a society wherein traditional avenues of justice are often closed off to women (Salami-Boukari, 2012).

We can, therefore, view Lucy's staying by the farm as a form of resistance to that ideal principle of femininity subscribed by mostly independent women who, in cases of violence, always move to security. By choosing to stay put in an area of attack, Lucy regains power and demonstrates that she will not run away due to fear (Lewis, 2005). This simple act of staying is an enunciated statement of ownership and control in a context in which land ownership is historically bound up with power and privilege. Coetzee seems here to be trying to smash the reader's assumption about what constitutes strength and resilience; survival sometimes entails staying, not fleeing from danger but finding ways to live with it (Sougou, 2010).

In addition to the critique of a legal system and societal expectations set forth within the novel, Coetzee also engages with the psychological impact that Lucy's decision has on her father, David Lurie. The lack of Lurie's ability to make sense of or accept Lucy's decisions is representative of some of the generational and ideological chasms that are represented within the novel (Salami-Boukari, 2012). Lurie's failure to understand why his daughter should not leave a place where she's been so brutally violated reflects deeper questions about the failures of traditional theories

of resistance and survival that cannot acknowledge non-traditional forms, especially in instances where they challenge deeply engrained notions of justice and empowerment (Poyner & Poyner, 2020).

Finally, the social critique of the devastation that Lucy's rape symbolised on its own, in the new power relations that would be established after apartheid. Coetzee uses her to delineate the ways in which women, particularly white women, are required to negotiate these new power configurations within a society on a rough footing with the recent and obstructive legacy of apartheid (Mwangi, 2010). Lucy's choices bespeak an acute awareness of those dynamics and a willingness to adapt to them in order to survive. Hers is a decision to align herself with Petrus and remain on the farm, depicting one portion of the pragmatic survival with an understanding of the limitation of the old social orders and the necessary accommodation of new ways to live within the changing landscape (Lewis, 2005).

The story of David Lurie in Coetzee's *Disgrace* is full of reluctant self-reflection and change, which is gradual and often ambiguous. Lurie is exposed, in the novel, to personal moral failures and the larger societal changes taking place in post-apartheid South Africa (Sougou, 2010). His journey is pointedly an internal struggle for a redesigned partnership with arduously become norms on race and gender in a society in transition. In contrast, Lurie's acts of atonement are refractions of ambiguity, which mirror both the complex and contradictory nature of transformations in the personal and societal world, in a context in which old power structures were being dismantled but whose legacies still cut deeply (Salami-Boukari, 2012).

The characterisation of Lurie implies a person of powerful privilege at the outset whose attitudes about race and sex have, over time, led to complacency and general moral decay. His affair with the student, Melanie Isaacs, stands as both an example of his individual moral degeneracy and an illustration of his ethos of entitlement and the ease with which he moves in and out of the shifting social topography (Mwangi, 2010). For Lurie, Melanie is not a human but only an object to be lusted over, merely representative of his inconsideration of other people's agency in general, but mainly that of women and blacks. It is a mindset fit for the atrophied mentality of apartheid that informs Lurie's thoughts and acts, despite the formal ending of the regime. When

he realises that he must suffer the aftermath of his affair, he reacts indignant instead of remorseful because he has been unable to see the greater implications of his actions in the changing social environment (Sidiki & Aboubacrine, 2018).

Through the scandal, Lurie's life unravels, and he finds himself being drawn reluctantly into a process of reflection. Probably the turning point in this journey, therefore, is Lurie's eventual move to his daughter Lucy's farm in the Eastern Cape. The geographical and psychological distance from his Cape Town life forced Lurie to consider other aspects of himself and parts of his creed that had been heretofore overlooked or taken for granted (Lewis, 2005). On the farm, Lurie cannot avail himself any more of the privileges that once inured him from such gritty realities. The rural landscape becomes a space in which Lurie is suddenly exposed to the raw, unfiltered dynamic of race, gender, and power that post-apartheid South Africa stands as in stark opposition to the urban setting to which he had grown accustomed (Salami-Boukari, 2012).

The black characters on the farm, notably Petrus, confront Lurie with changes in his deeply held belief of racial superiority through their interactions. Petrus's rise from a "gardener" to becoming a landowner forces Lurie to confront the changing dynamics of power in society, where people who were hitherto disenfranchised have begun claiming their rights. At the same time, there is tension and ambiguity in Lurie's acceptance of such changes (Poyner & Poyner, 2020). He acknowledges and yet resents Petrus's new status. This he does through the continued curiosity, suspicion, and veiled condescension with which Lurie often views Petrus. Coetzee uses such interactions to expound on the real difficulty of personal transformation - true change - in a setup where change at the social level is happening at a very rapid pace but the mental and emotional adaptations of individuals lag behind (Sougou, 2010).

Gender is another important contribution to Lurie's self-interrogation process. It was his daughter Lucy, and that too, after she was raped, who mostly epitomised the evolving definition of power and responsibility for Lurie. He first takes a male chauvinistic look at it. He has to prevent this from occurring and rescue Lucy (Lewis, 2005). She does more, however, in that Lucy's refusal of his presumption wards Lurie to the limit of himself and on the extent to which such patriarchal notions were involved in the outcome of the manner wherein he has dealt with

women. Lucy's insistence on never leaving the farm and living on her own even after the physical abuse inflicted on her defies the conventional thoughts of Lurie concerning gender, independence, and strength of will (Mwangi, 2010).

Additionally, Lurie makes the process of being redeemed complicated by not being able to accept the changes taking place around him. He recognizes that he has to change, personally, but the process per se is half-hearted and ambivalent. For instance, the work Lurie does at an animal shelter - the euthanasia of unwanted dogs - is a metaphor for trying to atone for past sins. Even in this act of penance, however, there is ambiguity (Sidiki & Aboubacrine, 2018). There is something futile and resigned about David's work at the shelter, driven further and further into activity without meaning or purpose by an action that can only bring such little solace and no such redemption. Coetzee uses this subplot to underline the complexities of seeking redemption in a world where clear moral lines are increasingly blurred (Salami-Boukari, 2012).

Additionally, one follows the rising consciousness of Lurie about the sophisticated post-apartheid society. His inner self is torn apart by the effort to find his bearing amidst a landscape where old certainties have been demolished, but new forms of injustice and inequality persist. All the characters Lurie meets in the novel are telling; from the black workers on the farm to the personnel at the animal shelter, they all, in their way, are effectively teaching him to come to terms with the contradictions and ambivalence of the new social setting (Mwangi, 2010). Not least indicative of this is Lurie's cast-to-come relationship with Melanie Isaacs, with whose influences he continues to grapple throughout the words of the novel. His comments centred around Melanie express equivocal feelings of remorse and justification, not without a trace of entitlement (Poyner & Poyner, 2020).

As the story advances, Lurie's travel into self-reflection becomes generally introverted; he is no longer questioning his actions but even the underlying thoughts and presumptions that shaped his identity. It is manifested through Lurie's resort to art and music as metaphors for radical inner struggle and search for meaning. Thus, even Lurie's attempts at opera on Byron, for instance, metaphorically reveal the quest for a narrative that would give meaning to his life and existence (Sidiki & Aboubacrine, 2018). But, quite on the plane of redemption, all his efforts at art, a



compensatory technique after all, remain tainted and incomplete. Using such artistic metaphors, Coetzee managed to outline just how difficult it is to have real self-understanding and redemption within periods of evolving and dynamic worlds (Lewis, 2005).

Lurie's journey matures into respectful acceptance of the ambiguity and complexity of the world around him. By the end of the novel, Lurie is not any closer to clear answers or clear solutions to the dilemmas he faces. But rather, he has been left with a bitter sense of resignation and of learning that his attempts at redemption might never quite be affected (Poyner & Poyner, 2020). This is the form that ambiguity in the novel takes, typical of themes grappling with both personal and societal transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. Therein lies the poignancy of Coetzee's representation of Lurie's journey: true transformation is a slow and often painful process, full of setbacks, contradictions, and tension left unresolved (Stobie, 2009).

#### 4.5.2 Strategies in *The House Gun*

In *The House Gun* by Gordimer, the allowance of a criminal son by Harald and Claudia Lindgard is at one and the same time based and plagued by serious conviction with regard to the moral and ethical implications of actions. It is an excruciating position that pitches them headfirst, not only into the legal and judicial implications of their son's crime but also into the greater political and social debate into which post-apartheid new South Africa has embroiled itself (Gordimer, 1998). Gordimer powerfully conveys the internal struggle of parents labouring to reconcile their long-held liberal ideals with the harsh realities thrust upon them now. This struggle is more acutely tangible in the negotiation of race, gender, and justice, all of which are central to the novel. Their dependence on Hamilton Motsamai typified a change in the balance of power right across society - such formerly de-empowered people could now exercise new potential to make a difference in the landscape of the new South Africa (Golden, 2018).

In the wake of Duncan's crime, Harald and Claudia are first incredulous and then morally disoriented. Both as liberal middle-class South Africans, they have always assumed themselves to be on the correct side of history - the enemies of apartheid, for whom justice and equality were major concerns. But the violent act of their son drives home to them the bitter realization that even in their privileged position in society, the moral greyness of human life would leave

them as vulnerable as anyone else (Golden, 2018). She uses the dissension in the Lindgards to underscore how those who hold the highest moral rank in any society are always the least equipped to deal with circumstances that only serve to pitilessly keep throwing back in their faces their moral high-mindedness. The novel deals with ways in which their liberal ideals are tested as they grapple with the implications of the crime by Duncan, not just on their family but on their comprehension of justice and morality in a society that is still suffering from its apartheid past (Mwangi, 2010).

The very decision to have this black lawyer, Motsamai, defend their son is important in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. The choice here is again a reflection, though on a broader level of how hitherto marginalised groups are now gaining prominence and authority in the new social order. Motsamai's character presents more depth in terms of the role he is playing in the film; he does not just represent a law practitioner but also an emblem of the new political dispensation of South Africa (Sougou, 2010). Harald and Claudia's dependence upon him hints at their acknowledgement of the shift in power and legitimisation, as they put their all hopes upon him, who, in other circumstances, would be deemed their unlikeliest of allies. Gordimer uses this relationship to point at the subtle dimensions of interrelations between races in post-apartheid South Africa, a place where the ghost of apartheid still prowls but new forms of partnership and confidence herein are on the rise (Gordimer, 1998). Motsamai being part of the Lindgards' life brings out another layer of subtle issues of one's perception, especially of race, as they go through a legal system that is heavily biased toward the past racial oppression of this country (Stratton, 2020).

Throughout the novel, struggling with the situation of Duncan's crime makes both Harald and Claudia get deeply involved in the ethical dilemma. Gordimer makes them figures of awareness of the moral weight of their decisions that they have to struggle to find an outlet at the same time. This is evident from their enormous disputations concerning issues such as justice and forgiveness. Particularly, Harald is presented as the more pragmatic one on the team, dealing primarily with the legal part of the defence of Duncan (Golden, 2018). Yet he, too, fails to avoid the moral questions that haunt them, considering that his son could receive something more

than a hard-sell legal defence. Claudia, however, felt far more emotionally riled about the moral implications of this case and more often than not questioned if it was because of the same, parents, that Duncan would commit a crime. In effect, Gordimer has systematically used these varying points of view to explore the complex interaction that exists between morality, justice, and matters of parental responsibility, bringing forth the different ways of internal conflict that ensue when tested by personal and ethical beliefs (Nkealah, 2016).

The intersection of race, gender, and justice is a prime focus in the novel and weaves its way intrinsically into how the Lindgards cope. For Gordimer, the legal system acts as a microcosm of the shifting structures of society at large in South Africa where tradition is being toppled and rearranged. This is not a pragmatic choice, but rather representative of how the Lindgards were going to navigate these shifting dynamics (Poyner & Poyner, 2020). Here, Motsamai represents a new kind of authority within a society grappling with its apartheid past. He thus problematises how the reader views the reconceptualisation of power and justice occurring within post-apartheid South Africa and the ways people like Harald and Claudia need to learn how to navigate these changes in order to survive. It is through this dynamic that Gordimer underlines the tensions between the Lindgards' liberal ideals and realities of a legal system that, despite the political transformation of the country, has remained riddled with inequalities and biases (Golden, 2018).

The relationship between the Lindgards and Motsamai also works as a social commentary on how trust and cooperation function in post-apartheid South Africa. Gordimer represents this relationship as one that is initially tinged by a degree of discomfort and uncertainty, for the Lindgards are compelled to put their trust in someone who, by virtue of his race, symbolizes a challenge against their perceptions of authority and competence (Mwangi, 2010). However, it is discovered at a later point in the novel that Motsamai was not only playing a legal advisor to them but also a guide to the moral and ethical complexities they are passing through. His calm, measured approach to Duncan's defence contrasts with the Lindgards' emotional turmoil, and through their dealings with him, they come back slowly to deeper, more significant issues like race, justice, and morality at the heart of the novel (Nkealah, 2016).

She also considers the role of societal expectations in the Lindgards' ability to cope, mainly in regard to how they square their public personae with the private facts of their condition. Since Harald and Claudia represent the liberal elite, they are highly sensitive to the scrutiny, which is constant by their peers and society at large (Gordimer, 1998). This awareness shapes their decisions, as they try to reconcile the personal desire of protecting the son and upholding ethical virtues with the demands of maintaining social status. The novel represents a great balancing act riddled with contradictions - that the Lindgards are bound to face a judgmental society where actions will be judged on legal fronts but also moral and ethical grounds. Using such tension, Gordimer illustrates how hard it is to live up to one's ideals in a society where the sharp edges of right and wrong are often muted (Golden, 2018).

In addition, Gordimer develops the psychological toll in these moral and ethical dilemmas that Harald and Claudia had to face. It is portrayed in terms of psychological self-preservation mechanisms for coping, whereby the two characters seek to make some sense of the chaos that has turned their lives upside down. Gordimer depicts these inner conflicts in their dimensions of relationships with the world outside and with each other, which bring out the depth of the guilt and sense of responsibility that they bear on their son's actions (Golden, 2018). In particular, Claudia is depicted as being eaten up by a sense of moral failure, struggling to come to terms with the role of a mother over the brutal reality of the crime that her son did. While Harald seems to focus more on the legalistic aspects, even he can be markedly moved by the ethical dimensions during his interrogation, when he puts forward the question of something in their upbringing that caused the tragedy (Nkealah, 2016).

One of the important prisms in which *The House Gun* by Gordimer explores strategies for coping with a crisis that is gendered is womanhood. Indeed, Claudia is incredibly self-analytical, and her inner struggle underlines the amount of emotional labour that she undertakes to work through the trauma of her son Duncan's crime (Gordimer, 1998). Through Claudia, Gordimer expresses complex ways in which gender dynamics are at play in the responses to personal and familial crises in a society still marked by the legacies of apartheid and very deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. Claudia's inner struggle and strategies are symbolic of an attitude that speaks to greater

societal expectations placed upon women, particularly mothers, to bear the emotional and moral burdens of their families (Milazzo, 2016).

Claudia was introduced first as the character most politically aware of the societal expectations of her role concerning mother and woman. These are the prerequisites that have been imposed from without, expectations to which Claudia has been conditioned, and which condition the way in which she perceives and answers the crisis. Gordimer illustrates that Claudia had been perpetually self-analysing, related mostly to her past decisions and their consequences on the family (Gordimer, 1998). The moment spent in reflection very easily turns for focus toward whether or not she was a good enough mother and if she is guilty of some misplaced priority or the other that had propelled Duncan toward making such fateful choices. This sort of self-questioning reflects a kind of social narrative which places mothers especially responsible for the moral and psychological shaping of their children. She draws on this narrative to condemn the ideas of gendered responsibilities that unfairly burden women with guilt and responsibility, especially amidst family crises (Golden, 2018).

Claudia's emotional labour is a central feature of the novel and is inextricably tied to her ruminating about gender dynamics. Emotional labour, in this context, is what Claudia does to govern her feelings, as well as those around her - even her husband, Harald, and son, Duncan. Gordimer presents Claudia as an emotional lynchpin of the family who is supposed to hold up, even when she has developed established overwhelming feelings of guilt, fear, and sorrow (Golden, 2018). This is not a position that Claudia has willingly taken but one that has been thrust upon her by society and the societal expectation that women, and more directly mothers, are supposed to fulfil the primary leading role as caregivers and emotional caretakers for the family. Claudia demonstrates herself as being quite aware of such expectations and their impact on her life. It is the inner struggle she fights to try and marry those demands while dealing with her own emotional storm that brings the gendered nature of the burden she bears to light (Mwangi, 2010).

Gordimer goes further in exploring how these gendered expectations are now shaping Claudia's coping strategies throughout the novel. Claudia keeps off-balancing between her own need for

self-processing and the social compulsions to support and protect the family. This deal is a daily negotiation that typically forces her to abandon her interests and needs to save first those of her husband and son (Milazzo, 2016). For example, though Harald is shown to be more interested in the legal and logistical aspects of the defence of Duncan, Claudia is left to deal with the emotional cost of it for her and her family. Gordimer deconstructs this division of labour by showing how it magnifies Claudia's sense of isolation and helplessness, as she is expected to bear, almost singlehandedly, the weight of the family's emotional burden. Claudia's interiority also exposes that her being a woman is inseparable from the role of a mother. Gordimer portrays Claudia as a woman who has an inherent belief in social perception, where a woman becomes less useful if she fails as a mother (Gordimer, 1998). This, hence, mostly contributes to Claudia's self-reflection: the self-doubting of her failure to be the ideal mother according to societal expectations. Claudia is burdened with guilt and self-distrust as she is unable to equate between her actions and the actions of her son. Gordimer utilises this to condemn the social order's impositions on women as perfect mothers and asserts such unreasonable expectations are what led to women like Claudia experience an enormous amount of psychological burden in individual moments of dispute (Golden, 2018).

Also, Gordimer outlines the bigger societal implications of Claudia's gendered mechanisms in response to her son's crime. The novel suggests that the emotional labour and self-sacrifice Claudia enters into are not only painstakingly personal choices but inherently aged within the deep-seated patriarchal structures defining gender roles within society (Mwangi, 2010). Claudia often reflects on her case, thus proving the unfairness of all these structures and more specifically the expectation for a woman to always put the family before herself. This is the type of subtle resistance against those societal norms in whose moulds she has been cast and to which she maintains formality adherence (Golden, 2018). Gordimer's description of Claudia's present tense perspective reveals that her working solutions are due to the angst and confusion surrounding the prescribed societal role for women versus the individual desire for self-determination that Claudia's gender-specific coping strategies suggest that women's response to crisis is predetermined by the attributes such as limitedness and desperation available in a patriarchal society (Stratton, 2020).

Claudia's internal conflict is also circumstances-driven as easily interpreted that much of her anxiety-driven resolution is dictated by the fact that she is the mother of a criminal and society will continue to judge her. This consciousness is something that Gordimer easily reflects on, and it becomes a determinant of her decisions in Claudia, who is all the time plagued with worries about being blamed or judged for Duncan's wrongs (Milazzo, 2016). This fear is then spurred on by a societal tendency to hold mothers accountable for their children's behaviour—a tendency deeply gendered and rooted in traditional motherhood. Claudia's inner self thus betrays her fear of what others might think about her and her family, and most of the decisions regarding the crisis are guided by this anxiety. Gordimer has used this factor in Claudia's personality to comment on the pressures exerted by society, which put an inordinate amount of burden on women to keep up the pretension of strength and calm composure in front of overwhelming tragedy (Gordimer, 1998).

In addition to exploring Claudia's character with these interactions through these highly gendered coping mechanisms, Gordimer also investigates what it means to Claudia emotionally and psychologically. In the course of the novel, Claudia is depicted as a character constantly on the edge of emotional breakdown yet has to put a state of faux control across to her family for their sake (Gordimer, 1998). The emotional labour that Claudia performs can be costly and the cumulative effect of this is to leave the person little time or resources to attend to their own needs. The unhealthy, mentally damaging, unrealistic expectations that existence places on her behaviour are seen. Claudia's introspection discloses her deep sense of fatigue and despair as she labours to fulfil such expectations, for she cannot balance her distress with the demands put on her (Epprecht, 2001).

#### 4.6 Challenges in negotiating racial and gender dynamics

Much as they are more graphic, the novels of both Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Gordimer's *The House Gun* are a revelation of how people in post-apartheid South Africa are still involved in negotiating their way around racial and gender relations that had been made so complicated through the years of apartheid. They follow storylines that are indicative of how the vestiges of apartheid continue to frame life, especially in the ways the characters confront problems of power,

violence, and identity (Martins, 2015). In *Disgrace*, such struggles are vividly personified in the role that Lucy takes, a choice to keep her rape silent. Such a choice vividly brings to the fore not just the pervasive threat of violence against women but also exposes the weaknesses and failures of the justice system in helping and offering protection to vulnerable people, in particular to women, in a society still grappling with its past violent injustices. It is through Lucy's silence that Coetzee critiques the legal system, which has not yet found a way to fully adapt to the pressures of an aggressively transforming society (Mwangi, 2010). In post-apartheid South Africa, the unwillingness of David Lurie to adapt to the new social order further epitomises the struggles of negotiating racial tensions in a society that becomes, in some aspects, more united and, in others, more divided, despite having done away with formalised racial segregation (Sidiki & Aboubacrine, 2018).

This is expressed in one of the most poignant ways through Lucy's decision to remain reticent about her rape - a challenge faced by many but mostly women while navigating through post-apartheid social and legal landscapes in South Africa. It is a very deeply grasped understanding of the limitations of the justice system and the realities of one's situation (Poyner, & Poyner, 2020). Lucy's silence can be read as a mode of survival, an acknowledgement that legal redress may not only be impossible but also dangerous. Coetzee shows through this decision how flawed the legal and social structures are in their protection of victims of violence. All this illustrates only the fact that a white woman in a rural setting does not report an assault - such is her loss of faith in the system. It reflects a larger social malaise in which the legal system - despite all its reforms - has failed with respect to gender-based violence, leaving women almost entirely to their own devices in hostile and dangerous environments (Salami-Boukari, 2012).

Coetzee further uses Lucy's silence to comment on the ever-present threat of violence against women in post-apartheid South Africa. Her choice to remain silent is a rather gentle foreshadowing of the evil that still lurks, for all women, in the so-called new and democratic society. On one level, then, the novel seems to presume that for most women, the end of apartheid did little to help realise an equivalent end to the violence and terror they endure (Martins, 2015). In reality, though, this power dynamic has only been transformed into new



forms associated with the apartheid regime, most of the time bearing heavy consequences for women. Therefore, Lucy's silence stops being a personal choice to become instead a reflection of the general problems of women living in a country where the burden of history is still part and parcel of daily life. Except that Coetzee would portray the experience of Lucy - how there was a gendered dimension of violence in South Africa, and women's bodies were still falling to be sites of conflict and control in a society grappling with its past (Nkealah, 2016).

Another instance of how arduous it is to negotiate tension in a society still firmly divided between black and white can be found in David Lurie's failure to fit into the new social order ordained by the changing political order in post-apartheid South Africa. Lurie, the epitome of the old, white, male apartheid privilege, para-dramatically becomes progressively more displaced in the new dispensation of South Africa (Mwangi, 2010). This is representative of the broader challenges facing people like Lurie, who have benefited from the structures that supported apartheid but must now find a way to exist in a society that is breaking down those structures. This is the psychological and emotional adjustment that Coetzee uses Lurie's character to grapple with, his sense of displacement and irrelevance in a world that no longer caters to a white man's sense of entitlement. The relations of Lurie with the black characters of the novel, especially Petrus, expose his deep-rooted prejudice and his struggle to come to terms with the new power relations developing in post-apartheid South Africa (Epprecht, 2001).

What is more, his problems in adjusting himself to the newly emerging social changes make it hard for him to accept himself. Conscious of the moral change all over the country, Lurie throughout the novel does nothing but avoid his deeds of mistake, especially his vicious exploitation of the fiery young black student, Melanie Isaacs (Martins, 2015). His dismissive stance toward Melanie's autonomy and his refusal to recognise the racial and gendered implications of his behaviour is indicative of broader problems faced by characters such as Lurie: their absolute inability or refusal to face the reality of the new South Africa. Coetzee uses Lurie's character to make readers question the persisting impacts of apartheid in the white South African psyche. His is a journey of pure if reluctant, inner reflection as he is forced to confront his attitude and behaviour against a social order that he sees is evolving in conflict with it (Mwangi, 2010).

The struggles of both Lucy and Lurie in coming to terms with racial and gender power dynamics in post-apartheid South Africa symbolize many wider societal struggles with genuine reconciliation and equality. Indeed, through the silence of Lucy regarding the rape, and Lurie's struggle to adapt himself to the new social order, tell the testimonies of how the spectres of apartheid continue to craft the lives of those former whites trying to change themselves while the country is striving forward (Nkealah, 2016). Coetzee's portrayal of these two characters emphasises the complex nature of change - both personal and societal - in a world where old wounds have yet to heal while new tensions constantly arise. The novel suggests that the path to a more just and fair society is strongly contested by the most at-risk part of a society's population (Sidiki & Aboubacrine, 2018).

Moreover, in these two characters, experiences are graphically shown regarding how constricting the legal and social framework was in post-apartheid South Africa. The silence of Lucy about her rape is a jarring indictment of the justice system that is still not able to offer protection and support adequately to the victims of violence (Poyner & Poyner, 2020). Likewise, the misfits of Lurie serve in negotiating the new social institutions that legitimise the unending issues of racial conciliation in a country where fundamental prejudices and imbalances in power still cease to exist. Coetzee criticises such a poor rate of change in South Africa to the experiences of his main characters and points out the ways that apartheid still sneaks its way into the lives of all people (Martins, 2015).

In *The House Gun*, the attempt by Harald and Claudia to furnish moral and ethical answers to a legal system that is tainted with racial bias in South Africa post-apartheid presents a moving quest. The novel examines the avenues in which the Lindgards' demands for fairness for their son who has committed a violent crime, are even more awfully complicated by these biased systems (Mwangi, 2010). As they come into contact with the legal system, they are forced to make sense of the sobering revelation that in a post-apartheid world, the legacy of racial injustice seeps into the very fibres of the institutions meant to protect justice's cause. Shifting her focus to the Lindgards' experiences, Gordimer criticises the running racial prejudices of the legal system while also trying to show how tough it could be to attain real justice in a state barely

trying to break into a divided past. Exploring the collective personal challenges that the Lindgards undergo in trying to deal with guilt, shame and responsibility in a setting where social normalcies commonly accepted appear in transitioning only made their quest much more complex (Poyner & Poyner, 2020).

It will be by default that one will be able to determine how far racial prejudices are still enforced up to the present day, post-apartheid, in South Africa, though the Lindgards, being white, middle class, show that Harald and Claudia are at the mercy of a gross miscarriage of justice, portrayed in the legal system, at times almost apathetic to their situation (Nkealah, 2016). The choice to have representation for their son as a black lawyer, Hamilton Motsamai, galvanises issues of far-reaching consequence; it marks broader shifts in the power relations within society and bears various contradictions and ambiguities in their position. While this dependence of the Lindgards on Motsamai can be seen as acknowledgement on their part of the change in racial dynamics in South Africa, it also underlines their desperation within a system where race continues to play a significant role in legal determination (Milazzo, 2016). Through this relationship, Gordimer operates with the tensions between the Lindgards' ideals of liberalism and the legal system's incompatibility at that time with all of the principles espoused as necessary to a system based on equality and justice for each person (Sougou, 2010).

While in the process of entering the legal system, the Lindgards are put into a situation in which they have to reckon with the moral and ethical decisions this will cause. Harald especially grapples with the thought that his son would not be given a fair trial, considering that a lot of racial judgment is still part of the legal system (Epprecht, 2001). This fact is aggravated by the knowledge that, even though apartheid has been done away with, the same people and structures are there, giving a bearing on how justice would be provided. Gordimer brings out Harald's dilemmas as a reinforcement of the moral ambiguities of a quest for justice in a system still very much rooted in old habits and mindsets. His inner war reflects the greater societal struggle to somehow find a balance between the ideals of the new South Africa and the reality of a legal system that still has to fully cleanse itself from the biases bred in apartheid times (Martins, 2015).

In contrast, Claudia trudges with a weight of guilt and responsibility for her son's actions and, further, for what their actions mean in terms of a divided racial society. Claudia is portrayed as a sensitive and intuitive woman who feels that there is much race in her son's trial, which further complicates her already complex emotions of guilt and shame (Milazzo, 2016). Claudia can't help but continue wondering if she and Harald are just another pair of white-guilt-ridden parents, perpetuating racial inequality plaguing South Africa. In a large sense, this kind of self-reflexivity exemplifies greater moral and ethical dilemmas faced by people like the Lindgards, who could no longer look away from the ugly truth about their contribution to sustaining systemic injustice (Poyner & Poyner, 2020). This novel by Gordimer tries to bring out the emotional and psychological cost of such challenges through the character of Claudia as she tries to grapple with the burdens weighty of complicity on her conscience and limitation of capacity to change a very flawed and decrepit system (Mwangi, 2010).

The novel also depicts personal challenges that the Lindgards face as a result of guilty feelings, shame, and responsibility for their son's crime. These feelings are compounded by the need to negotiate a legal system still in process and with which traditional social structures are being challenged and redefined (Nkealah, 2016). The guilt is not just personal on the Lindgards, who are responsible for Duncan, but collective in terms of previous injustices. How this collective guilt affects their relationship with the law and their sense of justice is something she explores. In the case of the Lindgards, a microcosm of the ongoing struggle in society to come to terms with its past and move forward on the road to greater justice and equality is built (Milazzo, 2016).

The individual problems of the Lindgards are also heightened by Gordimer in light of how their personal issues have been aggravated by the fact that uncertainty and instability of the social structures surrounding them make it very difficult for individuals to know what to do amidst all the ruin, which entails the actual destruction of the old order—social structures that provided security and predictability, leaving the Lindgards in a changed landscape where the old rules no longer apply and new ones are not yet fully formulated (Martins, 2015). This is mirrored in the unpredictability of their transactions with the legal system, where the results are uncertain and full of ambiguity. The fate of the Lindgards simply shows more than enough of the difficulty of

arriving at any clearness of morals or ethics in a society itself still in the throes of extremely radical change. In the case of Gordimer, through their experience, one wonders what psychological effects living amidst social upheaval might have on a person when, as in this instance, the solid ground of the past is swept away, leaving individuals to face the dangers that an uncertain future may hold (Stratton, 2020).

The struggle of the Lindgards to come to terms with their son's crime and their own complicity in it is a struggle that Gordimer creates very personally so that the lines between individual responsibility and collective responsibility overlap with each other. The Lindgards' sense of responsibility does not lie only in regard to their immediate family but also within a society shaped by racial injustice and inequality (Epprecht, 2001). This second major aspect of their responsibility further complicates their journey, as they try to make their way through a legal system that very much is a part of the specific injustices they face. The author takes up this thematic strand to demonstrate how Gordimer intertwines personal and social dimensions of transformation in post-apartheid South Africa, where the past continues into the present in ways deep and lasting (Nkealah, 2016).

A deep critique against the legal system at the end of apartheid, which was so deeply flawed and remained riddled with the biases of the regime, is what Gordimer's retelling of the story of the Lindgards is cast in terms of. The novel underscores, therefore, that the legal system, much like the society for which it is intended, is incomplete and still in becoming (Epprecht, 2001). It is committed, within the context of a very deeply divided society, to the pursuit of ideals of justice tempered by the reality of tremendously difficult circumstances. The experience of the Lindgards inside the system is akin to the broader transitional challenges faced by South Africa, not only to move beyond apartheid but forward to a much more just and more equitable future. Through their journey, Gordimer explores how such a system of the past has birthed the present, full of ongoing struggle for justice and equality (Milazzo, 2016).

#### 4.7 Chapter summary

Hybridity and ambivalence are some of the themes that give a core element to the exploration of post-colonial identities in *Disgrace* and *The House Gun*. Coetzee and Gordimer use their other characters to articulate just how hard it is to be able to develop these identities within the post-apartheid setup, where the colonial past - with all its apartheid legacies - is still stretching out into the lives of so very many individuals and communities. The hybridity of their characters' identities reflects larger social and cultural changes going on in South Africa, while their ambivalence underlines the difficulties and contradictions intrinsic to the postcolonial condition (Tomar, 2024). This certainly is a complex critique of the identity formation process within the postcolonial condition that is characteristic of both novels, which continuously put forth the struggle for power, identity, and belonging in a society still grappling with its colonial past.

This chapter has gone great distances to interrogate *Disgrace* and *The House Gun* in terms of their racial and gender dynamics. This has been done using critical race theory and gender role theory. Through such analysis, the chapter has shown how these two dynamics take place in terms of character interactions and the bigger societal context. Further, this chapter has expressed ways the characters use to overcome these dynamics and the challenges that emanate while doing this. These findings bring to light the broken promises of a holistic transformation in post-apartheid South Africa and demonstrate that race and gender are still a hard nut to crack, calling for critical exploration in more literature and social life.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

The researcher sums up in this last chapter the findings of the study undertaken, draws conclusions, and makes recommendations based on the analysis made in Chapter Four of the work. The chapter goes back to the research objectives and indicates how they were met or otherwise, from the analysis of *The House Gun* and *Disgrace*, and discusses the implications of the findings for future research, and postcolonial literary analysis. This will, in turn, be guidelines toward a positive encouragement of further explorations concerning the intersection of race, gender, and historical power structures in South African literature and other postcolonial contexts.

### 5.2 Summary of findings

This section summarises the findings related to each research objective, highlighting the key insights gained from the analysis of Nadine Gordimer's *The House Gun* and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*.

#### 5.2.1 Objective 1: To examine the intersectionality and portrayal of race and gender in *The House Gun* and *Disgrace*

The analysis here has shown that both *The House Gun* and *Disgrace* speak on behalf of race and gender in the post-apartheid South African setting with eloquence, interrelated, and interdependent structures of power. Both novels explore ways in which the legacies of apartheid and colonialism continued to develop each other in terms of societal structures, personal identities, and power relations a long time after the formal end of apartheid. Through the work of their characters, Gordimer and Coetzee leverage precisely how racial and gender hierarchies have worked their way into people's experiences of justice, power, and autonomy today. In *The House Gun*, Gordimer uses characters such as Claudia and Hamilton Motsamai to drive home the fact that these hierarchies remain insistent in the legal system; even though the laws of apartheid have been demolished, its social and psychological effects remain part of institutional life and personal relationships. It is expected from Claudia, based on her character, to assume the position of a mother and a white, still dictated by the gendered and racial dynamics of the past.

This emotion and guilt, coupled with emotional labour, comes from the sense of responsibility inculcated through identity and shows how expectations of race and gender still prescribe behaviour and self-perception in post-apartheid South Africa.

Starring Hamilton Motsamai, a black lawyer representing Duncan, a white man, the tension between changing and uneven race relations has been captured quite aptly in post-apartheid society. Motsamai himself symbolises the gradual rise of blacks into influential positions in post-apartheid South Africa. Yet his character is emblematic of so many of the challenges and contradictions that have to be faced as racial boundaries are renegotiated. His interactions with the Lindgards expose the ambivalence accompanying such a shift in the balance of power: they are forced to entrust their affairs to one who, until not so long ago, was part of a racial group that had been barely recognised and whose company one rarely enjoyed socially. Their interaction with him bears marks of subtle undertones of discomfort and condescension. By doing so, Gordimer indicates that changes in law notwithstanding, the racial and gender hierarchies of the past still have a tight hold on social relations, especially in institutions such as the legal system, where inequality is perpetrated through subtle yet powerful means.

Coetzee makes a parallel in *Disgrace*. He shows through the experiences of Lucy and David Lurie that these are constructed in relational ways through race and gender, revealing deep intersections between these systems of power. Lucy's decision not to tell anybody about the rape by black men is a reflection of the complex intersection of racial and gendered violence in rural South Africa. Her silence is thus not an act of personal volition but an indictment of the larger social factors involved. Lucy is a white woman in this vast black rural setting; her position is therefore already precarious, where the history of racial violence against black South Africans converges with the sexual violence committed against her. Coetzee presents Lucy's silence as a signifier of how race and gender are allied in a way that maximises women's powerlessness and marginalisation, particularly where historical injustices create new forms of violence and control. This reluctant turn to justice through the courts bespeaks an awareness of Lucy's part in how discretion within such a limited justice system would fail to capture nuances in her story and



further complicate ambivalence in negotiating racial and gender relations in post-apartheid South Africa.

More piercing are the tensions between characters that erupt when confronted with a new social order challenging their deep-seated sense of racial and gender superiority; this is evidenced in various encounters between David Lurie and a black, land-gathering, steadily empowered Petrus. Operating under apartheid, his race and gender have accorded Lurie great privilege, and he is by no means disposed to cope well with a world where the very racial hierarchies he once depended upon crumble. His interactions with Petrus are laced with a sense of discomfort, wherein he seems to grow less and less empowered in a society slowly balancing the books in favour of black South Africa. Coetzee uses this relationship to dramatise the profound ambivalence accompanying such a shift; indeed, the difficulties of Lurie are symbolic, not personal, of a greater struggle that many white South Africans face in reconciling their past privilege with new social realities of post-apartheid life.

Both finally represent the ambivalence and tensions that occur when characters confront changing racial and gender dynamics in a society still coming to grips with the long shadow cast by its colonial and apartheid past. Gordimer and Coetzee use their characters to underscore how complex an option it is to navigate a post-apartheid world in which the legal and political changes have taken place, but deeper social, racial, and gendered structures, which governed personal and institutional power, remain. The protagonists of *The House Gun* and *Disgrace* find themselves in this ambivalence, embodying the contradictions of race and gender crossing in manners challenging traditional forms of power and control. The clear wilfulness of both authors shows that, although South Africa could have moved from the formal structures of apartheid, the struggle to dismantle its social and psychological repercussions is ongoing as yet, with race and gender remaining crucial in determining the experiences of its citizens, their relations, and ways of interaction with power in a still-fragmented society.

### 5.2.2 Objective 2: To evaluate the impact of historical context and racial power structures on the dynamics of race and gender in *The House Gun* and *Disgrace*

It is within the apartheid context, as well as in ongoing implications, that one is able to understand precisely how race and gender interplay in a number of vexed ways throughout both *The House Gun* and *Disgrace*. Gordimer gives an example in *The House Gun* of how those deeply ingrained racial power dynamics flow through, continuously sustained through apartheid, into how the characters interact and make decisions. Most poignantly reflective of the changed power relations in post-apartheid South Africa would be the fact that the Lindgards entrust the defence of their son Duncan to a black attorney, Hamilton Motsamai. The Lindgards throw in their lot with Motsamai, thus acknowledging the shifting racial landscape but being fairly ambivalent about such changes. Even as apartheid was declared to be at an end, racial hierarchies and prejudices are deeply engraved upon white South Africans like the Lindgards, who must grapple with a new legal and social order which does not extend similar privileges to them as has been. Ambivalence in Gordimer serves to point to the drastic impact of history and continuous racial oppression in which the sense of justice, responsibility, and moral accountability of the characters originate.

It is this history of racial oppression that permeates *The House Gun*, a ghostly presence lurking in the background, faintly yet insistently impelling the actions of characters. The legal and structural features of apartheid are gone, but its legacy in the form of segregation and racial inequality is still a potent force in social and legal life. It is manifest in the tension with which the Lindgards relate to Motsamai, embracing yet resisting the new racial order. Motsamai, as a black lawyer for the white man, indicates the dramatic shift in the circles of power; yet, the silent unease felt by the Lindgards stipulates an inability or unwillingness by the whitest South Africans to prepare themselves for the new reality. Gordimer presents how the past here refers to the legacy of racial oppression-keeps on informing the present and shapes individual relationships and societal norms. Ultimately, the novel creates the understanding that post-apartheid South Africa is legally and politically different, yet singularly irreconcilable from its historical embedding. It indicates that racial power structures remain at the heart of definers of justice and social dynamics.

In *Disgrace*, the ghost of apartheid similarly overshadows all manner of interrelations among characters and determines the content of character interaction and conflict to a great degree. David Lurie exhibits a sense of entitlement—a product of his privileged raising during apartheid—that regularly runs in conflict with the new realities in post-apartheid South Africa. It is through this power dynamic—one that gave him unquestioned ascendancy and control that Lurie grounds his understanding of himself as a white, educated male. These views of paramountcy are increasingly questioned in the emergent social configuration where black South Africans like Petrus are acquiring power and land. It is within this reaction of unease and an inability on Lurie's part to come to terms with such changes that the continued effects of racial hierarchies established in the apartheid era materialize. Lurie, who struggles to adapt himself to a society where his racial privilege no longer secures him the control and status that he has always taken for granted, his relations with Petrus are always tinged with some tension and ambivalence.

Lucy's experiences, too, of living in a rural community as a white woman amidst an overall population which is disproportionately black, become similarly entangled in the historical racial power structures that continue to define social interactions in South Africa. While Lucy is much more prepared to confront the post-apartheid realities than her father, the vulnerability of a white woman in a black-dominated rural space represents the result of sustained racial division and inequality. The violence perpetrated against her becomes a function not only of gendered power relations but also of the racial history of South Africa, in which land ownership and racial tension have long been points of contestation. Coetzee uses Lucy for an exploration of how historical racial power structures continue to impinge on personal safety, identity, and agency in post-apartheid South Africa. It is here that the novel suggests, although the formal structures of apartheid have fallen, it is within the social and cultural legacies that apartheid is deeply inwrought, touching black and white South Africans alike in their lives and interactions.

In summary, both *The House Gun* and *Disgrace* indicate that historical context remains an important element in contextualising contemporary race and gender relations. In both novels, the experiences and interactions of the protagonists remain affected by the lingering historical effects of apartheid as defined in the colonial and apartheid eras by deeply entrenched

hierarchies of race and gender. A common concern with the two works, therefore, lies in how this tension between the past and the present reveals itself when characters move through a world where the formal end of apartheid has not entirely dismantled its social and psychic ramifications. The authors demonstrate how, in South Africa, the residue of historical power structures has continued to frame personal and collective identities, social relationships, and the performance of power, despite the recent legal and political developments in the country. For Gordimer and Coetzee, this is a post-apartheid society in which the ghosts of racial and gender oppression have most definitely not been eradicated from their continual impact on power relations, justice, or personal agency.

#### 5.2.3 Objective 3: To assess the socio-political implications of the ethnic and gender dynamics depicted in *The House Gun* and *Disgrace*

The socio-political resonances of these ethnic and gender dynamics in both *The House Gun* and *Disgrace* are complex and far-reaching, bearing testimony to how the end of apartheid's legally and politically enacted structures has not meant its deep-seated social and cultural legacies. Through these novels, the continuous influence of race and gender regarding how both private experiences and social interactions in post-apartheid South Africa are formed is underlined. In *The House Gun*, Nadine Gordimer critiqued the persistence of racial bias within the legal system and the ongoing social expectations placed on women, particularly white women. Claudia Lindgard's anguish about guilt and responsibility for her son Duncan's crime goes deep right into the expectation of society concerning white women as moral authorities and nurturers. The emotional labour and sense of duty invested in her reflect how, in the post-apartheid context, white women continue to be expected to carry the moral burden of familial and social responsibility. This expectation, combined with the racial frictions that continue to frame Claudia's interactions, serves to underline and emphasise the gendered nature of post-apartheid social hierarchies.

Another aspect is the role Gordimer has given to Hamilton Motsamai, the black lawyer who represented Duncan against the charges. This, too, depicts the challenge one gets to find in regard to black empowerment within a legal and social system which is still catching up with

realities thrown up by post-apartheid realities. Motsamai's role, however, underlines the ambivalence and contradictions that people confront in attempting to negotiate a world where the formal structures of apartheid have fallen but its informal, social hierarchies continue to enforce racial inequality. The Lindgards' reliance on Motsamai for their son's defence was a recognition of the new racial relations but at the same time betrayed residual racial prejudices complicated by this interaction. Gordimer pays her respects to slow social change; blacks like Motsamai may achieve professional distinction, but the white characters resist their authority ambivalently and residually. This thus implies that the dismantling of the social and cultural legacies of apartheid remains far from complete since the racial biases inculcated into legal and social systems continuously dictate relations of power in post-apartheid South Africa.

In equal measure, in his novel *Disgrace*, J.M. Coetzee tackles the socio-political friction which sets in whenever historical racial hierarchies are disturbed. For example, David Lurie's inability to fit into the new social order epitomises the predicament of many white South Africans who find it hard to come to grips with the abolition of racial and gendered privileges they had enjoyed under apartheid. It is in the character of Lurie that ambivalence and disorientation climax, accompanying, as they do, the erosion of white superiority in a society where power is moving toward black South Africans. The tension in his interactions with Petrus, a rising black man acquiring land, underlines Lurie's discomfort with his diminished authority. Through Lurie's character, Coetzee presents his critique of the difficult transformation of inculcated racial attitudes when the political structures that had supported those attitudes have been taken away. Lurie's inability to readjust to the new social fact reflects the general problem of finding one's way out of the devastating legacy of apartheid and the continuous holding on by white South Africans to anachronistic notions of racial superiority.

The racial and gendered socio-political implications continue to manifest themselves in the forms of ethnic and gendered violence that Lucy is made to endure in *Disgrace*. An act of rape committed by black men - an act, some would argue, indicating a return of the colonial master's brutality in response to apartheid - is not personal; it is emblematic of the greater power struggles and tensions that exist in rural South Africa. Lucy, in turn, became a white woman living

in a predominantly black community, which has further spoken to continued relevance in terms of racial and gendered hierarchies in shaping socio-political interactions. The novel points out that even after the apartheid era, women-whites, in particular, remain helpless in an atmosphere of violence, while the legacy of racial conflict still yields its fruits in personal and social relationships. Lucy's decision not to speak of her rape and then to stay on the farm and marry Petrus indicates the harsh negotiations that women have to make within a society where the relations of racial and gender power are in a state of change yet not fully resolved. It is an act of survival at once empowering and problematic, in that one chooses to remain in a space that simultaneously marginalizes and offers a new form of security. Coetzee indicates the inadequacy of post-apartheid betterment through the portrayal of how women like Lucy continue to have their placement within society determined by the junction of race and gender.

*The House Gun* and *Disgrace* both record the persistence into post-apartheid South African society of socio-political relevance in regard to race and gender. These novels suggest that living within a society where the formal ending of racial segregation has not managed to eradicate the power relations underpinning apartheid cannot be simplified. Instead, these power structures continue to influence the interaction of people with one another, or how they are perceived, or how they negotiate their identities vis-à-vis other persons. In this light, the experiences of the characters throughout both novels illustrate that race and gender remain important in any analysis related to dynamics of power, privilege, and vulnerability in post-apartheid South Africa. While this has indeed been a dramatic dismantling of the legal and political frameworks of apartheid, it has by no means resolved deeper social and cultural legacies that continue to shape South Africa's socio-political topography. It is in their portrayals of ethnic and gender relations that Gordimer and Coetzee point to a continuing struggle to reconcile the violent legacy of South Africa's past with the ideals of a more equal future.

## 5.4 Conclusion

While both are hauntingly poignant and subtle, *The House Gun* by Gordimer and *Disgrace* by Coetzee speak to the junctures of race, gender, and power in post-apartheid South Africa. Both novels are similarly incisive in their commentary, questioning the manner in which the historical legacies of apartheid continue to permeate and shape their characters' lives, influencing personal identity and relationships, senses of belonging, and their locations within the broader social order. These inequalities, the hierarchical structures inducted into the very fabric of the post-apartheid societal corpus, find manifestations within struggles related to racial, ethnic, or gender-based differentials of power in the characters. Working through these narratives, Gordimer and Coetzee critically reflect upon how the transition into democracy in South Africa has been momentous, but without any complete destruction of complex legacies of racial and gender inequalities that people continue to negotiate in a world of old and new forms of oppression.

Individuals in both *The House Gun* and *Disgrace* find themselves in that liminal space, where they have to work out how to live with and between the legacies of the old colonial and apartheid-era power configurations and the challenges brought about by a rapidly transformed society. This process of identity formation thus assumes the role of ambivalence and contradiction, charged with the negotiating demands of their present environments against their historical legacies. It is in this manner that characters involved in such situations, such as David Lurie from *Disgrace* and Claudia and Harald Lindgard from *The House Gun*, epitomize the internal and external conflicts that arise where historical privilege and power confront shifting dynamics in post-apartheid South Africa. This struggle reflects societal tensions through the perspective of continuity versus change, where the racial, ethnic, and gendered identities of the characters are deeply intertwined with the evolution of the socio-political landscape.

For example, in *Disgrace*, David Lurie's aversion to the new social order and his ambivalent relationship with black South Africans—mostly with Petrus—foregrounds how much entrenched colonialist attitudes of superiority perjure as if the former structures of apartheid have been removed. His failure to come to terms with his privileged past, together with the new power

relationships established in post-apartheid South Africa, testifies to the fact that that society, still suffering from its colonial heritage, has so far failed to resolve a single one of its racial problems. In *The House Gun*, too, the Lindgards' reliance on a black lawyer to defend their son bears connotations of changed racial power yet reveals, at the same time, deep-seated ambivalence about the status of their own place in the new dispensation. It is in the interest of these characters to confront the contradictions of their positions and to struggle with redefinition of identity in a society where old certainties of race and power are no longer secure.

Identity formation within a postcolonial setting in both novels points toward an ongoing process far from lineal and harmonious but rather constant with tension and struggle. The results of this study thus suggest that one views the socio-political implication of ethnic and gender dynamics entrenched within South African literature due to the centrality of such themes to South Africa's ongoing process of striving for justice and equality. Herein, the experiences of the protagonists in both novels testify that racial and gender inequalities form part of greater current social problems that continue to haunt South Africa, where the apartheid legacy underpins the operation of power in subtle but insidious ways. The modalities of race and gender represented in both novels point toward complex ways through which historical inequalities are perpetrated in contemporary social interactions, relationships, and institutional practices.

The insights developed here suggest that South African literature remains an important site for critical engagement with the ongoing challenges of post-apartheid society. Literature like *The House Gun* and *Disgrace* opens onto the socio-political realities of race and gender in South Africa in a way that relays valuable contributions into broader discussions of justice, equality, and reconciliation. As the country progresses further into the future, on its way to a future of greater justice and equity, such questioning by post-apartheid literature concerning race, gender, and power will remain relevant to an understanding of how such dynamics shape the making of individual and collective identities and the prospect for social transformation. These stories, therefore, remind one of the fact that South Africa is in a state of unfinished struggle against racial and gender oppressions, with shadows from the past stretching continuously into its present and future.



## 5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Future research should continue to explore the intersection of race and gender in postcolonial literature, with particular attention to how these dynamics shape characters' identities and experiences in different social and political contexts.
- More studies are needed that focus on the portrayal of masculinities in postcolonial South African literature, as both *The House Gun* and *Disgrace* offer insights into the ways in which traditional male identities are challenged by changing power structures.
- Scholars should investigate the role of legal and social institutions in perpetuating or challenging the legacies of apartheid, as highlighted by the role of the legal system in *The House Gun*.
- Further exploration is needed into how postcolonial literature addresses gender-based violence, particularly in relation to the intersection of race and gender, as seen in the experiences of Lucy in *Disgrace*.
- Comparative analyses between South African post-apartheid literature and other postcolonial contexts would provide a broader understanding of how race, gender, and power intersect in various postcolonial societies.
- Encourage and facilitate open dialogues that explicitly address the intersections of race and gender within contemporary social and political contexts. The novels highlight how these categories are mutually constitutive, shaping experiences of privilege, oppression, and trauma. Educational programs, community initiatives, and policy reforms should adopt an intersectional lens to dismantle systemic inequalities effectively.

- Further research should critically evaluate the effectiveness and limitations of reconciliation processes in post-conflict societies, particularly concerning gendered dimensions of justice and accountability. The novels reveal the potential for performative gestures to mask deeper racial and gender fractures.

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