



**FACULTY OF HUMAN SCIENCES – DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION**

**EXAMINING THE PORTRAYAL OF THE SUBALTERN IN THREE
SOUTHERN AFRICAN NOVELS**

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AND TECHNOLOGY (NUST)**

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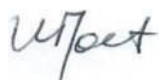
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Abstract

The research presents a decolonial critical analysis of three Southern African novels written between 1971 and 2002. The three authors namely, Bessie Head, Zakes Mda and Wally Serote provide an unflinching gaze at inferiorised characters in the heyday of apartheid and beyond. All three authors depict the different characters in the crucible of one of the most horrid systems of government known to humanity as it gave preferential treatment to certain section of society while allowing others to wallow in poverty, marginalisation and a general lack of hope for the future. The thesis employed an Afrocentric analysis of the novels emanating from decoloniality which encourages the browbeaten to question their alienation, disillusionment brought about by Western conceptualisation of reality, which in turn produced hierarchies based on race, language, culture and social standing and locality. These hierarchies created binaries which placed people from the global South at the lowest rank, hence the advocacy for an emancipatory framework that will permit the peripherised to defy the unjust world order through a commitment to sovereignty by embracing a decolonial epistemology which inter alia encourages them to abandon the West's myth of disembodied knowledge and opt for truths in parenthesis which has unmatched potential to cater for their diverse and plurally based needs. The thesis proved that it is possible to shift the traditional centre to the periphery and empower the marginalised through epistemic decolonisation, decolonisation of human reality (the blindfolded way some view existence emanating from the erroneous conception of reality paraded by the North, since they have accepted the fallaciousness of their "God's eye view" as the truth) and being able to shift the geography of reason, since western epistemology's falsehoods can no longer be tolerated. Finally, the thesis proved that the relentless quest for alternative truths has the potential to liberate these characters, which are the fictional representatives of the "wretched of the earth" and allow all people of the global South to live in harmony and gentility after their liberation from the manacles of the North's oppressive falsehoods and indoctrination has been accomplished.

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Chapter One

1.1. Introduction

Colonialism was so brutal to the indigenous people all over the world that they responded in a variety of ways to the system that not only humiliated them, but also dehumanised them. Southern Africa was no exception as the oppression created social hierarchies based on one's race, sex and social status apart from being heinous. The benefits that accrued to members of such a society were strictly patrolled and policed to ascertain that they went to the "right people". It is against this background that different members of society either rebelled against these injustices or succumbed for fear of retribution, since the system did not hesitate to respond with overwhelming force to curb any sign of discontent.

Authors as the conscience of society (Adebanwi, 2014), vigorously repudiated the evils visited on the innocent population by an overwhelmingly powerful state machinery. It was powerful in the sense that apart from being endowed with coercive power in the form of military materiel, it also controlled the various media outlets. These media outlets had the power to control what the citizens heard and saw as well as being a correcting vehicle for what they regarded as aberrant viewpoints. The three authors chosen namely Head (1971), Zakes Mda (2002) and Mogane Serote (2002), each in their own unique way wrote literary and other non-literary works to oppose the hegemonic views of the apartheid state. Each author also wrote in a different setting in terms of geography and milieu regarding the initial target audience. They were all however, united by a deep-rooted urge to voice their disquiet regarding the intractable issues apartheid racism presented.

In keeping with the topic of the thesis, which is attempting to study the way in which the subaltern is depicted in the three novels under scrutiny, it is perhaps appropriate at this juncture to trace and define the idea of the subaltern from its genesis and examine the way in which it was employed by different researchers to represent a particular group of people this research is investigating. The notion of the "subaltern" has a long and variegated history about representing a target audience. The thesis will venture to gaze at the various analysts' understanding of the "subaltern" as a theoretical construct and critically view their guidance on how one can practically apply this imaginary design to speak for the voiceless. The origin of the term which is generally ascribed to Gramsci and his prison diaries was further developed by a variety of academics, chief among which are Spivak (1988) and the Indian subaltern group which included luminaries such as Guha and Chakrabarty *inter alia*. The idea of the subaltern

was also appropriated by Latin American academics like Mignolo and Grosfoguel who while acknowledging the pioneering work of the Indian counterparts had a slightly different theoretical lens which they labelled “decoloniality”. African researchers like Mpofu and Ndlovu-Gatsheni also domesticated the “subaltern” imaginary for African purposes. Since the subaltern is a group of people who are peripherised, inferiorised and alienated from themselves in several dimensions, this thesis will undertake to detail their spiritual, socio-economic, sexist and racial subjugation at the hands of the hegemonic classes in society. The research will henceforth scrutinise different authors who rail against the discursive erasure of the discarded and the existence of the subaltern starting with Spivak’s groundbreaking treatise on the societally marginalised. Spivak’s (1988) seminal essay entitled, “Can the subaltern speak?” [reprinted in (2010)] is considered by many to be the most fruitful gaze at the plight of the marginalised in society. Her pioneering essay which introduced the concept of the “subaltern”, as a discursive imaginary enjoins subaltern scholars who sympathise with the subaltern to unlearn their privileged position when dealing with the lot of Indian women who had to perform suttee (sati) or ritual sacrifice when they have lost their husbands to, as it were, be the voice of the voiceless. But what is the subaltern? Louai (2012), sets the ambit and scope of the subaltern as follows:

The subaltern classes refer fundamentally in Gramsci’s words to any “low rank” person or group of people in a society suffering under hegemonic domination of a ruling elite class that denies them the basic rights of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation. (p. 5).

What is very lucid about the definition is the emphasis on hegemonic domination which the Britannica encyclopaedia (Rosamund, 2016))¹ defines as the “relatively dominant position of a set of ideas and their associated tendencies to become common-sense and intuitive, thereby inhibiting the dissemination or even the articulation of alternative ideas”. The quoted definition also caters for what it terms “hegemon”, which is a class or a group of people who harbours hegemonic predilections and disseminates these ideas to the populace on the fringes of society. The dissemination of hegemonic ideas appears to be at the forefront of Spivak (2010) when she further eloquently expresses the dilemma of those at the periphery when theorising: “Sati in the piece was not given as a generalisable example of the subaltern not speaking, or rather

¹ (<http://www.britannica.com> > topic > hegemony).

not being able to speak – trying to but failing in being heard” (p.153). They cannot be heard because society appears to be mute to the cacophonous screaming of the inferiorised. In order to grasp the putative importance of the subaltern and how those who are sympathetic to their plight can represent them, one needs to consider two authors who have traced the idea of the subaltern and interpreted Spivak’s essay. They are Green (2002) and Maggio ((2007). Green (2002) outlines the historical origin of Gramsci’s use of the subaltern in his *Notebooks* and illustrates how relevant the concept is for the political transformation of the marginalised. In addition, he offers an interpretation of how the Indian subaltern group employed the concept to suit their idiosyncratic situation. Their situation was peculiar because apart from being inferiorised by the dominant British system, they also had century old caste systems that subjugated the subjectivities of those who harboured at the furthest margins of society. In India one had to contend with the androcentric based discrimination evident there then, coupled with the oppressive coercive power men held over women. According to Green (2002), Gramsci’s, approach was aimed at assisting the subaltern to write their own history in a more upright and unashamed fashion without fear of retribution from the dominant group. The overall aim was the envisaged transformation of their subject positions in terms of culture, social standing, religious adherence and economical subjugation. Moreover, Green (2002) in other words, considers Gramsci as trying to comprehend the peripherised in terms of their position. In addition, Gramsci approaches the study of the subaltern in a similar way as asserted by Green (2002), as an attempt to provide a broad conceptualisation of how they are oppressed in society’s many strata. He maintains that:

[Gramsci wants to] understand the process, development, and lineage of the subaltern; how they came into existence, how some survived at the margins, and how others succeeded in their ascent from a subordinate social position to a dominant one. In short, he wants to understand how the conditions and relations of the past influence the present and future development of the subaltern’s lived experience (p.9).

Green’s (2002) view is that Gramsci’s notion of the subaltern is tied up with the arduous process of permitting them write their own history, as current history only has vague traces of their contribution and not the whole picture since history is normally written by the hegemonic triumphant. What Gramsci gives voice to according to Green (2002) is elevating the subaltern from their subject position through counterhegemonic discourses aimed at liberating them in all the areas in which they are suppressed. They must eventually win state power and replace the current hegemons. For the subaltern to eventually occupy state power they have to conduct

an all-out war at all fronts of their oppression which include cultural, religious, socio-economic, political and literary warfare since the original dominant groups had entrenched themselves through multiple tentacles in all areas of human endeavour. The tussle for power is according to Green (2002) a broad struggle aimed at altering society “from below” (p.23). Such a change has one aim in mind and that is the creation of what he terms an “ethical state” (p.23), which will administer the assets of the state in a fair fashion. To this end he envisages a situation where the “subaltern social groups do not merely seek legal protections from the state to overcome their subordination; but become the cultural leaders of society, organize a political party, become the new dominant social groups, and eventually become the state” (p.23). Maggio’s (2007) charge is against the Western subject who enunciates his views on the undesirable nature of marginalisation from an ivory tower based position as he is the recipient of western style education or being a member of the dominant group. He warns against Western discourse attempting to represent the subaltern as propounding truths that are “masquerading as disinterested history” (p. 3) while being biased in favour of the master narrative. Such western speakers or the indigenous person with foreign world view dampens the spirit and suit of the marginalised. The homegrown intellectual which Maggio (2007) calls the “native informant” (p.10) is therefore incapable of representing the inner psyche and wishes of the subaltern as he has become a hybrid due to his participation in the dominant epistemology while at the same time attempting to represent the interest of the peripherised. The situated imperial power with which he is infused makes it tricky, if not downright impossible for his advocacy in favour of the inferiorised. It is therefore instructive to note that Spivak’s seemingly benevolent depiction of the poor, rural mostly dark skinned Indian women sacrificing themselves in an act of self- immolation suffers the same fate namely, that of a “native informant”(p.10) being incapable of sensing the subaltern’s deeply felt feelings towards the dead and their suffering in the act of showing compassion to the dead. Such speaking on behalf of the other appears to jettison their agency in favour of desiring to speak for them, while being situated outside their epistemological cosmology. Spivak as a well-educated scholar makes her a classical native informant.

In order for the “native informant” to desist from being just another silencing voice which reduces the subaltern into what he (Maggio 2007) describes as a “black hole”, a blind spot or an “inaccessible blackness” (p. 14), he needs to empathetically translate the language of the subaltern, even if translation can never render the original message accurately as it is far removed from the host language and is a mere estimation of what was said. Such representation

replicates the same undesirable “dominant mode of discourse” (p.17) he intuitively signals. Writing from a decolonial as opposed to a postcolonial standpoint favoured by Spivak, this research abhors words like “representation”, but opts for “enunciation” as it intends to commit epistemic disobedience by writing from a different worldview, which takes into account the ego (the person enunciating something) and geo (the location from which one is speaking) of enunciation. Finally, the thesis while acknowledging the weight of the term postcolonial subaltern as having almost universal applicability, it notices with apprehension the inability of postcolonialism to enunciate a redemptive rubric for the downcast. It is for this reason that the thesis adopted decoloniality’s agenda of delinking from the modern and postmodern as they are all part of the same weltanschauung. Decoloniality is, to paraphrase Mignolo, (2014), migratory and nomadic in nature and a work in progress, with one aim of uniting the diverse and multi-perspectival population of the world into one crucible of cordiality.

Decoloniality is not only delinking from the modern/postmodern epistemes in terms of political representations, but is actively engaged in other fields of human endeavour like the literary, as it celebrates different spaces and manner of knowledge creation. The thesis will henceforth detail the theoretical foundations of the literary outlook of decoloniality, by examining otherworldly knowledges as epitomised by (Pu, 2013). Moreover it will examine the manner in which the female character of Caliban is portrayed employing a decolonial analytical lens as practised by Lara (2007). Mpofu’s (2014) critical analysis of *Things fall apart* will be considered as it introduces a novel literary methods dubbed “decolonial critical theory” which will be the method of choice for the exploration of the selected works. Finally, the research will proceed by putting articles by Gaztambide-fernández (2014) and Martineau and Ritskes (2014) under the spotlight as they are unashamedly decolonial in their exploration of literary works. The review of these authors is with one aim in mind, which is the justification for a decolonial approach to literary study.

Pu’s (2013) treatise is concerned with the enunciation of third world knowledge silenced by modernity’s propensity to regard every knowledge claim of such society as *mi xin* (superstition). She narrates a very strange phenomenon of toads marching in what appears to be their usual migration to other parts of the country. On their path to the other side they cross a highway, where they are trampled upon by passers-by and smashed by cars of all descriptions. The toads apparently exhibit strange characteristics bordering on cannibalism, which when coupled with the thousands of deaths might make the villagers to speculate that these unnatural behavioural patterns are in keeping with *tian zai* (act of the sky or a natural disaster). Her thesis

is aimed at providing a nuanced assessment of indigenous knowledge as the scientists provided what she terms “atheist scientific explanation” which was at odds with what the villagers’ shamans foresaw. A week thereafter a devastating earthquake hits the region which leads to millions dying from the catastrophe. She is consequently promoting the evaluation of truth claims which might appear irrational, but which has the potential to be truthful especially since these truths have allowed these communities to thrive for millennia. She is opposed to an epistemology that denies other ways of knowledge creation and the denigration of a people’s whole repertoire of world sensing. Sensing because these people might not have a rational explanation of why they believe a *tian zai* (a natural disaster) is imminent. Such derision might lead to self-loathing and a fragmented psyche. Colonial world view has done immeasurable damage to the colonial subject, including causing self-hate as their bodies were the sight of scientific analysis to prove their inhumanity and to provide ammunition for the West to continually keep people of the South under tyranny. The case of Sartje Bartman, the South African Nama woman is a case in point who was taken to Europe where and paraded for all to view her seemingly unnatural buttocks and her genitalia which they regarded as irregular and therefore consistent with the European view that she was the missing link between humans and animals. Pu (2013) is proposing a decolonial imaginary that would erase the wounded consciousness of the colonised vassal. A decolonial imaginary can only happen if the browbeaten are, “critically self-reflective, learn to unravel the alienating masks and start ‘making face’ and ‘making soul,’ in other words, reconstructing one’s identity physically and spiritually” (p.50). Lara (2007) explores the discursive erasure of the ‘Other’ who appears different from the accepted norm in terms of language, culture and other peripheral external determinants of one’s standing in society. In particular she explores the reviled feminine character in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* where the feminine character evokes that of Sartje Bartman, above who has a body that is animalised in her portrayal as savage, deformed and incapable of producing a comprehensible language. The inability is related to the plight of the subaltern whose language is viewed as incomplete for it is seen as the bearer of animalistic characteristics. Because of these perceived inadequacies, Caliban is demonised by the hegemonic discourse. Her presence is made invisible even when she is present. Lara (2007) is proposing a “counterhegemonic” language capable of upsetting the apple cart, so that dominant narratives about the “Other” can be defeated and the colonial subject given her rightful place as an equal. Lara (2007) is accordingly swaying us to show unabashed solidarity and activism in favour of the downtrodden as she asserts:

I am evoking her as a metaphor of the actual racialized, sexualized women of colo[u]r witch/healers largely made absent in discourse. Such literacy includes researching the voices and experiences of women.... Absolute accuracy of representation may not be possible, nor is it necessarily the goal. *My humble aim is to encourage us, at the very least, to imagine the possibilities of “her” missing or distorted subjectivity in the moderncolonial imaginary and the ways that making “her” present may help us to better understand the unjust legacies of similar underrepresented and misrepresented subjects* (p.3, own emphasis).

“Decolonial critical theory” popularised by Mpofu (2014), but coined by Mignolo (2009) will be utilised in this project since it allows researchers the prospect of severing ties with the hegemonic western epistemology and commit what many decolonial thinkers refer to as “epistemic disobedience” (Mpofu, 2014, p.3) The breaking of ties with the dominant western conception of the world grants analysts the opening within which they can create new worlds where unimaginable possibilities of thriving outside the dominant exegesis of the world exist. Decolonial critical theory has an avowedly anti-Eurocentric bias and views reality with lenses other than the European that employs sensing as this way of analysing the world does not simply accentuate the rational at the expense of other ways of sensing reality.

This thesis has a penchant for decolonial thinking as there are researchers like Mpofu (2014) that have studied decoloniality’s basic tenets and have gone further to craft a new methodology with which they successfully analysed works from what used to be referred to as the third world but which Mignolo and other decolonial thinkers call people of the global South. Mpofu (2014) regards post-colonialism as an anomaly, because it designates an arbitrary period. This is so since that which comes after colonialism has not been clearly defined as the nascent pernicious effects of colonialism affect people of the global South negatively. The whole globalisation project is according to Mpofu (2014) part and parcel of the unfinished undertaking of colonialism which perpetuates it and creates what he terms “coloniality” in the erstwhile subjects. He is instead arguing for a decolonial severing of ties from the oppressive system through glinting at issues like politics and art through an Afrocentric as opposed to a Eurocentric paradigm. Mpofu (2014) views *Things fall Apart* by Achebe with a new lens which he christens “decolonial critical theory” (although this concept has precedents in Southern America) as suitable for examining one of the finest novels written with an Afrocentric perspective. Achebe is according to him a pioneer in several instances. First, he intentionally domesticates a foreign language English, to suit his African needs. He does this by

incorporating pithy saying, proverbs and typical African ways of enunciating truths like the congregation of the whole village to listen to the elders, something which has a peculiarly African flavour as it encourages collective decision making and shuns individuality, which is the West's mode of governing. Finally, Achebe's novel locus of enunciation is clearly from the coloniality side created by modernity and colonialism. It attempts to illustrate that modernism/coloniality did not end with political independence but is clearly palpable today.

Achebe's novel also desires to catalogue the evils of colonialism through disobeying the hegemonic master narrative that depicts the West mission as civilising and therefore benevolent. Finally, Achebe's Okonkwo represents African and colonial people's desires everywhere to preserve what is rightfully theirs by committing an abomination which is suicide rather than allowing himself to become a subject of a foreign power. Achebe along the lines previously mentioned celebrates indigenous knowledges which were trampled upon by the prevailing worldview as he clearly enunciates:

I for one would not wish to be excused. I would be quite satisfied if my novels, especially the ones set in the past did no more than teach my readers that their past – with all its imperfections – was not one long night of savagery from which the first Europeans acting on God's behalf delivered them (Achebe qtd. in Mpofu 2014, p.10).

The reason for employing a “decolonial option” as described by Mignolo as opposed to the West's civilising, development and modernising missions (Gaztambide-fernández (2014) lies in the perceived potential that the decolonial option has to create new epistemologies that will create new narratives in philosophy, religion, politics and literary studies which is the aim of the thesis. Mignolo intentionally defines it as an option to denote the optional nature of this approach even if it has emancipatory potential for all who do not want to be imprisoned in the old way of doing things. It is not an easy engagement as Mignolo clearly recognises since many people have received the West's totalising epistemology which negates and inferiorises knowledges from the periphery. Our language according to Mignolo (Gaztambide-fernández, 2014) has all the hallmarks of modernity and we articulate truths using their metaphors, idioms through the “epistemic trap” (p. 8) to make sense of our sensory experiences. The West has created what Mignolo (Gaztambide-fernández, 2014) designates as the “prison house of language” (p.10) in which we are coerced to live in as people who have the colonial wound of colonisation and consequent peripherisation do not want to inhabit.

Mignolo (Gaztambide-fernández, 2014) craves for the operationalisation of a decolonial healing that will conceive of new sensory experiences of our own in appreciating art not for

the truth, beauty and style only as modernity requires, but to treat art as an entity that has emancipatory promise for those labouring at the margins of society. Such a decolonial option is different from the modernity template which preaches “truths without parenthesis” (p.4) which in practical terms denotes “universal truths” as it is not context based or situation related but is paraded as supersiding and speaking for all people in all situations. Mignolo (Gaztambide-fernández, 2014) beseeches us to explore a “truth in parenthesis” (p. 4) as it takes cognisance of our situatedness as human beings in truth formulation. Such a truth manipulates all our sensory endowments and is in stark contrast to the bossy modernist epistemology, which can only be fully actualised if we delink and commit epistemic disobedience to such an overbearing frame of mind represented by the West. It is only when we have fixed our method of viewing the world from our own subjugated positions that we will free ourselves from the imperial options and experience genial coexistence and decolonial love.

Finally, this thesis has shirked away from drawing on other literary theories like postmodernism or postcolonialism even if the researcher is a great admirer of postmodernism especially Jean François Lyotard coinage of *petit récit* (small narratives or marginalised historiographies) in his rejection of grand narratives. The main objection for not delving into the usefulness of his seemingly expedient tool lies in the embeddedness of his cosmology in the modernity fold even if he critiques it and the lack of overt political commitment. These researchers of Mignolo’s ilk regard decolonial critical analysis and the artistic enunciation of people of the global South as unmistakably political. Artists depict characters as fictional representatives of society and this is done to convey the unmistakable message that subalternity has political moorings that merit political solutions. Martineau and Ritskes (2014) are two other researchers that had a foundational influence on the thesis since they do not just accentuate the political nature of indigenous art, but want to break free from the enclosure of modernity’s entanglements. They express a wish for an inventive imaginary that will not only be oppositional to the dominant world- view, but will exhibit its “ruptural potentiality” (p.3) to deliberately speak for the subaltern. They are also campaigning for an artistic imaginary that voices the displeasure, pain, anguish and wretchedness of those at the margins of society

“unfiltered through the white gaze” (p.3). Martineau and Ritskes (2014) hence pray for sabotaging the colonial system of thought unashamedly so as to provide the unshackling of the inferiorised. This researcher accordingly concurs with Martineau and Ritskes (2014) when they assert that “[i]ndigenous art is inherently political... Art thus occupies a unique space within settler colonialism: both as a site for articulating Indigenous resistance and resurgence,

and also as a creative praxis that often re-inscribes indigeneity within aesthetic and commodity forms that circulate in the capitalist art market” (p. 1).

Martineau and Ritskes (2014) finally intend to avoid the house negro mentality and refuse integration when creating his artifact, which should abandon the burning house of Western modernism, metaphorically speaking. They state: “In order to explore the creative forms that become possible in fugitive spaces of indigeneity: in the critical ruptures where normative, colonial categories and binaries break down and are broken open. In these breaks we witness resistant voices that refuse to be silenced” (p.3). Martineau and Ritskes (2014) evoke the myth of Sisyphus who in representing the absurd had to push a boulder up the mountain defiantly and see it roll downwards again. This absurd situation is evident in the hegemonic discourses that perpetually want to silence other ways of crafting knowledge. Martineau and Ritskes (2014) quote Ngugi who explains, “[decolonial] art arms silence with voices that, even when the bodies that carry them are crushed and ground to powder, will rise again, and multiply, and sing out their presence... *art in this sense is silence that screams*” (p. 3, Ngugi, quoted in Martineau and Ritskes 2014, p.3 emphasis added).

The thesis consists of five chapters each dealing with a consideration. The first chapter is a direct rewriting of the proposal which has to include issues like the background to the study, the significance of the undertaken research, the objectives and research questions that guide and needed to be answered as well the limitations the researcher encountered while trying to conduct the research. Limitations as a topic mainly examines the issues related to handicaps experienced, especially where one would have liked to do more, but the objectives and research questions were limiting factors. The second chapter which is the literature review and theoretical framework investigates the multiplicity of writings from scholars who have reviewed the three novels employing a variety of theoretical framework in their analysis. The researcher tried to limit the reviewed works to scholars who employed decoloniality in studying the three novels but to no avail. The closest theoretical framework the reviewed researchers used was postcolonialism which is closely related to decoloniality with the only caveat being, that it has an affinity to modernity and traces colonialism from the 19th century up to the political independence of most colonised country. Decoloniality on the other hand, sees the modernity, project which created coloniality as opposed to colonialism as having a longer existence of close to five hundred years. The second chapter also outlines this thesis’ theoretical framework which is border thinking, decoloniality and transmodernity while embracing a postcolonial trope, the subaltern which many decolonial thinkers have

domesticated to suit their peculiar situation. Border thinking is part of decoloniality and resides in the crevices of thought inhabited by the modernity project which does not want to hear subaltern views as it preaches a truth without parenthesis, paraded as a truth with universal validity, forgetting to acknowledge the situatedness of every truth claim in terms of locality and the “ego”(the person enunciating such truths) of the enunciation. Chapter three explores the design used in selecting the novels to be analysed, collection of codes to analyse the three novels and reasons for employing praxis like desk top analysis as opposed to other methods of study of a particular phenomenon. Chapter four deals with the actual analysis of the three novels which is preceded by a cursory overview of South African literature and the sociopolitical landscape to place the three novels in a familiar setting. The analysis is guided by the three identified objectives as well as research questions which will be posited at an appropriate juncture. Finally, the analysis also takes cognisance of the international nature of decoloniality where concepts like “pluriversality” and “diversality” are the mainstay of the adopted approach and this is reflected in the scrutiny. The final chapter is a summary of the findings and brings all the loose ends together in proving that “decolonial ‘critical theory’” is appropriate to scrutinise these novels and chart the way forward for the possibility of probing similar works through the same prism.

1.2. Background to the study

The literary portrayal of the subaltern or the socially marginalised has always intrigued this researcher, and the three authors namely, Bessie Head, Zakes Mda and Mogane Serote are notable Southern African writers who have depicted the subaltern in its truest manifestations. There are many reasons for this curiosity, but the most important one, which is in line with the thesis’ avowed embrace of decoloniality as guiding tools in studying their fiction is the fact that they selected their protagonists and all other characters from those at the margins of society. *Maru* by Head (1971) was selected because the researcher considered her a prime candidate for exploring the subjugation of the peripherised since the main character Magret, was given foreign education which is modernity’s attempt to alienate her from her own people. This means that she was inferiorised in terms of her education and even her cultural being was downgraded to a different person since her name is not a Basarwa but the name of her benefactor. She subsequently rebels against these dehumanising attempts when she clearly and unambiguously declares her lineage and rejects the assumed false identity of being a coloured. Magret manipulates “silence” strategically to oppose the dominant discourse about her ability, hence her choice. She was further demeaned both by the children and her colleagues even while

she is endowed with the best education imaginable by enduring ostracism in a number of societal areas. She was psychologically tormented by children who teased her as a Basarwa and made her feel less than the ably qualified teacher she was. Dominant Batswana society denigrated her socially as she had difficulty having a bed on which to sleep as a new teacher. Head appears to illustrate that despite her inferiorisation in the psychological and educational spheres she showed nonconformist tendencies which proved decisive in the end as she would be married to someone who would ascend the throne.

Mda's (2002) novel *The Madonna of Excelsior*, was chosen for its brilliant depiction of women in post-apartheid South Africa. While the main narrative was based on an earlier period where white people would go on "hunting expeditions" to enjoy the forbidden fruits which was having sex with black women and the shame that ensued when they were detected. Mda's novel appears to thematise the commodification and objectification of women's bodies. The novel additionally, narrates spatial, religious, and socio-economic marginalisation of black residents of Mahlatswetsa. The novel equally manipulates "silence" to seditiously oppose the master narratives. There are clearly delineated oppositional strategies that the different characters adopts to fight for their debased humanity. Serote's novel, *To every birth its blood* (1981), was chosen because it brazenly depicts the black people of South Africa who, experienced repression, killings, disappearances and other unpalatable cruelties. The word "Silence" appears on many pages in the novel on its own without anyone uttering it except the narrator writing it down. There are close to forty places where the word is mentioned, and it was instructive for the thesis as it attempted to gauge its significance in view of the unspeakable evils perpetrated. It appeared as if the disregarded were indistinctly screaming out their discontent to the hegemonic group who were deaf to their plight or it could possibly be linked to the idea that the language of the subaltern was inherently inaudible to the powerful. Serote's novel also has a clearly defined strategy to overcome the seemingly difficult situation they are facing. Towards the end the novel accentuates what appears to be the writers conviction that there is no new beginning without sweat and blood-letting when it closes with words that are reminiscent of the pain and agony that goes with giving birth, which includes blood that is shed for this beautiful new creation, which is liberation to emerge.

The three novels depict aberrant society's penchant for creating borders based on race, class and social status, that are patrolled with panoptic efficiency like a big open air prison as propounded by Foucault (Lianos & Wood, 2003) to keep people in a docile subject position. These novelists provide a view of humanity in which the different characters as fictional

representatives of the oppressed revolt against the injustices perpetrated by the ruling elite. Oppression and the resultant rebellion demonstrate the brutality such a society furnishes its citizenry with, since these borders, patrolled with efficient brutality are inherently unnatural for the repressed and discarded (Serote, 1994). Colonised people have been denied their basic rights to participate in the creation of their local histories as their voices are silenced through imposed illiteracy, cultural exclusion and being looked down upon by the hegemonic group (Head, 1971, Mda, 2002 and Serote, 1994). Colonised writers attempt to develop techniques employed by the different characters, which include outright rebellion, and strategic use of silence of the “silenced majority” to effectively respond to their marginalisation and subjugation and defeat the oppressor(s) machinations. Subalternity or marginality as it is portrayed in the three novels is “the decision to by those in power to classify and evaluate the degree of humanness of vast sections of the population in order to control and dominate” (Mignolo, 2005, p.395). The thesis therefore examines the practical steps that the silenced majority can seize to regain their lost humanity by rebelling and rejecting the inferiority epithet given to them by their current or erstwhile oppressors.

1.3 Significance of the thesis.

Oppression and the subjugation of people from the periphery is not an isolated or haphazard incident but is the result of close to five centuries of planning and execution from the global North. Various authors (Mignolo, 2013, Grosfoguel, 2011 and Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013) have traced with a surgeon’s scalpel this unfortunate calamity to the rest of humanity to conscientise those at the receiving end of these global designs. These malevolent deceptions do not only dehumanise those at the periphery but the perpetrators as well, since we are bound by a common human identity and destiny. The approach to the thesis is significant as it has attempted to open an angle that has not been satisfactorily explored to the researcher’s knowledge, in the analysis of the three authors’ works namely, a comparative study employing subalternity, border thinking and decoloniality. It did this with a considerable degree of success as it has presented a nuanced treatment of subalternity and the “armoury” needed to not only present a multi-perspectival (or what Grosfoguel (2011) terms ‘pluriversal’) point of view, which will be in constant dialogue with the monologic “God-eyed view knowledge” (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 6), of the dominant class. The “pluriversal” point of view will establish the common humanity of the oppressed and oppressors. These issues will be clarified later in the findings section of the thesis. The advantage of employing subalternity, border thinking,

decoloniality and transmodernity is the freedom or leeway it can provide to view other works from the region and possibly beyond through the same angle, especially works that try to narrate the struggle of the oppressed against those subjugating them.

1.4 Research questions

In order to conform to universally acceptable procedures as pronounced by various researcher including Cresswell (2014) the researcher formulated research questions based on the overall objective of the research. In order to link the three research questions that the thesis needed, the researcher had to have an overall objective, together with three sub-objectives that were yoked to the three research questions.

The main objective of the thesis was to examine the degrading portrayal of the subaltern in the three identified novels.

The sub-objectives linked to this overarching objective were:

- to critically analyse the different spaces of their marginalisation
- to examine the coping mechanisms, they employ to agitate against their subjugation.
- to lay bare the authors' depiction of "silence" as a subversive trope displaying hostility and a dislike of the dominant elite.

The research questions linked to the above-mentioned objectives were:

- How were the marginalised characters depicted in the three novels under scrutiny?
- What coping mechanisms did they bring to bear on softening their marginalisation in the different spaces within which they were marginalised?
- How did the authors depict "silence" of the characters to illustrate their displeasure and non-cooperation with the oppressive elite?

1.5 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the three selected novels as well as the depiction of the subaltern and decoloniality which was employed to analyse the selected novels. Nevertheless, this limitation enabled the researcher to carry out an in-depth analysis of the three selected works on how the subaltern characters were depicted. Such a limitation was helpful as it prevented the thesis from gazing at these novelists and their work without a guiding angle. Another limitation was that while there are other novels by the same authors that fit the adopted approach, they were not considered in depth due to the limitation placed on the researcher by the project's guiding lens.

Chapter Two

Literature Review/Theoretical Framework

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Introduction...

The introductory paragraph will now give a cursory look at a few researchers who have reviewed the works of the three novelists. It will do so by taking on board the thesis' main objective and sub-objectives read with the three research questions. The thesis will also view the findings of these analysts with subalternity decoloniality and transmodernity as prime angles. It will in other words, glance through their works to tease out ways in which they depict the subalternisation and peripherisation of the downtrodden and the method open to the latter in resisting this othering and the resultant silencing.

Various scholars have advanced different lenses to analyse the three novels. Odhiabo (2013) for example puts forward a postcolonial theory as the most appropriate, as it portrays Head as someone who inhabits the "in-between space" since her characters move form inclusion and exclusion in the "dominant discourse of oppressed/oppressor" (p. 41). Barris (2014) views Mda's (2002) novel in terms of the invocation of the binary "civilised"/"savage" to understand the subjugation of the blacks in South Africa. He declares: "our relationship to the space of the savage" is marked by the tensions between desire and prohibition intrinsic to the notion of taboo" ((Barris, 2014, p.93). Sole ((1991) regards "the normality of a country under white minority rule...as masking an intense experience of disorder for black South Africans, a profound dislocation of black selfhood and nationhood" (p.16). Additionally, Serote wants to depict a country which as per Sole's (1991) analysis is reminiscent of despotism as it is "typified as inverting normal standards and values, controlled as it is by 'mad men' whose statements about the 'lawlessness and disorder' and 'crazy' nature of black aspirations are always deployed ironically by Serote" (p.16).

Raditlhalo (2011) is probably one of the prominent black academics writing on the issue of race today, especially if this relates to the different creative outputs in South Africa. He regards the issue of racial identity as one of the major considerations facing post-apartheid South Africa. The challenge with this issue is the perception that apartheid created artificial races based on “surface appearance” which needs to be debunked in a new dispensation. The challenge facing the new South Africa relates to the urge of belonging to the bigger South African nation, which is not predicated on one’s vernacular, but which encompasses the whole polity. People are currently struggling to grapple with belonging to the bigger nation and trying to reconcile that to their different vernaculars, which in some instances are artificial creations which might jeopardize the bigger nationality issue. Concentrating on one’s race/tribe might in some instances hamper national cohesion as tribal affiliations might thwart the bigger project of belonging to a nation.

The creation and maintenance of races and tribal affiliations comes from people’s urge to define themselves in relation to others, especially when they regard themselves as having distinct characteristics that separate them from the rest of society. When that happens, people start to create a distinct identity. Identity according to Raditlhalo (2011) is a “primary concept for understanding the relationship between the personal and the social realms; the individual and the group; the cultural and the political, the relations between social groups, and the influence of the media on social relations” (p.4). Incidentally, identity in relation to South Africa where some races were elevated above others, especially the white race, identity is an important concept as it determined one’s place in the greater scheme of things as it regulated availability or lack of availability of benefits that accrued to an individual or group. He argues further: “Identity incorporates the emotional attachments or bonds that individuals often have as a result of their shared membership in social groups. *Group membership influences the way in which individuals see themselves, especially if the group is reviled or esteemed*” (italics added, Zegeye & Harris quoted in Raditlhalo (2011, p. 4). There is according to him a fluidity in identity formation and maintenance over the long term as they are not fixed “essences” (p.4)

Raditlhalo (2011), further elaborates on the creation of what is commonly known in Southern Africa as the coloured population. He does so by quoting André Brink a renowned South African novelist and a liberal who vehemently argued that the existence of a pure white race in South Africa is a myth as there were many cases of interracial copulations making it impossible

for one to assert racial purity as most people claiming to be white today have mixed blood of black, Malaysian and Nama people of the Cape. Brink unashamedly provides an alternative narrative about the impurity of not only the coloured people but the whites as well as there was much interracial mixing in the Cape and elsewhere. The colonised had their women taken away from them by the strong colonisers who bore children of mixed parentage. He continues in the following vein: “Slave women were not the preserve of male slaves as they were shared between masters and the slaves, and the children so produced were not anyone’s, but the property of the master and future employees” (p.7)

Interestingly, Raditlhalo (2011) considers it significant to explore racial identity and its relation to the Coloured of the Cape. Coloureds regarded themselves as people who were near the white as they shared the same fair complexion, the same texture of hair being the same as well as being able to speak the language of white people. It therefore comes as no surprise that they also regarded themselves as heir to the same middle- class social status values. Raditlhalo (2011) explores the issue of race as it relates to Coloureds because Mda’s (2002) novel deals with miscegenation and the resultant progeny in the person of Popi who had to grapple with her identity. Raditlhalo (2011) signals the importance of Coloured identity further as follows: “The prominence of white supremacist discourse about the origins of the Coloured people was that they were an unwanted and unfortunate consequence of the colonisation of southern Africa and *a source of embarrassment to the supremacist establishment as reminders of past lapses in morality*” (own italics, Adhukari quoted in Raditlhalo (2011, p. 9).

The question of Coloureds and where they belonged was a moot point, as differing perspectives about their perceived alignment or lack thereof was hotly debated. Some viewed them as closely aligned to the Afrikaners while some members of the radical far right movement called Blanke Bevrydigingsbeweging [loosely translated as White People’s Liberation Movement] placed them in the same category as blacks and Indians who according to them are part of what one member typified as “mud races” (p. 11). One such radical is quoted by Raditlhalo (2011) as saying this about sex between whites and blacks: Whites should guard against intimate relations with the lesser races. To sleep with a black is like sleeping with an animal; and we know that it is against God’s law. It is God’s will that the superior race should never mix with the inferior mud races (p. 11).

Raditlhalo’s (2011) penultimate point about Coloureds and their depiction in Mda (2002) relates to the lack of closure from Mda because as he clearly states:

Here, as elsewhere in Mda's novel, the post-colonial goal is to *redefine identity as openended, denying the existence and discursive usefulness of a stable, unitary signification and offering instead a complex of ambivalent discourses*. Above all, *The Madonna of Excelsior* is an exposé of the evils that arise in a society in which "race" is used as the primary and official marker of identity (own emphasis, p.16)

While the thesis agrees with Raditlhalo (2011), concerning the purpose behind Mda's (2002) novel of denying a stable signifier called Coloured or black, it is foolhardy not to show how the architects of apartheid brought untold sufferings to both black and coloureds through the creation of what this thesis regards as "surface differences" to perpetuate the myth of white supremacy and deny the majority economic, socio-political and spatial rights. The recognition of what he (Raditlhalo (2011), terms the "evils" that spring forth in a society where people are grouped according to the colour of their skins and the texture of their hair should have been the genesis of showing how these characters in the novels resist their marginalisation. He subserviently ends the struggle of the whole novel with: "We do not define races because biological data compels us to do so. Rather, society begins with an a priori division of humanity into different races for which it subsequently finds a rationale in certain physical characteristics (Kenan Malik quoted in Raditlhalo (2011, p.18) Finally, he argues: "The clue to the importance of race in Western thought, therefore, lies not in biology but in society" (p.18). While one agrees with the last statement in general, racism in South Africa was made into an ideology, hence the epithet given to the unique brand of apartheid as "institutionalised racism". Another study that has shaped this thesis is from Raditlhalo (2013), who appears to read contrapuntally, as Mongane Serote's *To Every Birth Its Blood* (1981) has experienced a muted response from a variety of critics, because the novel was accused of lacking coherence as it was viewed as illustrating a disjuncture between the first and second part. His main thrust appears to be the new vision that he has for the novel as he regards the perceived lack of coherence and a disjuncture as created by previous critics' myopic stance on the novel, because they did not take into account the fact that the novel deals with a tragic situation and can be classified as a traumatic novel. Novels where trauma is perceptible are bound to show characteristics of reticence and the employment of "silence" by the characters to hide the unpleasant experiences they endured. He expresses this traumatic nature of the novel thus: Through a rereading of the text, I argue that only in understanding *the significance of memory and historical trauma might one arrive at a truer reflection on the novel*. (p.2, italics mine).

He compares Serote's novel to Toni Morrison the black American essayist and novelist whose novel *Beloved* (1987) won her the Nobel prize for literature. The said novel examines the psychological effects of slavery on the main character. While Radithalo (2013) does not demean the literary merit of Morrison's novel, he is at pains to ask why an American novel can be given the title of a traumatic novel with the requisite characteristics of reticence and unexplained acts like infanticide committed by the main character. These things like reticence and employing silence in the face of overwhelming odds have apparently been extolled in the one case and repudiated or not commented upon in the other case. His approach is to attempt to read against the grain or to use a newer term "contrapuntal reading" which does not privilege any voice but attempt to disinterestedly listen to all the voices in a literary text.

2.1.2 Detailed literary review

As stated by Atkinson (1998), one should not approach Bessie Head's *oeuvre* from one perspective. One should regard her work as a montage where different colours and patterns become visible every time one visualises the artistic creation. Atkinson (1998) contends that a "varied theoretical base" (p. 16) is the most appropriate lens to explore Bessie Head's given the fact that Bessie Head's *oeuvre* is a "hybrid form which defies category(s)ation (p. 15). Atkinson (1988) adopts this "hybrid" tag to study her *oeuvre* for fear of pigeonholing her as Bessie Head had castigated people who labelled or put her in whichever category. She regards her *oeuvre* like a "kaleidoscope" in which different elements are visible anytime one visualises her work. Atkinson (1998) regards Head *oeuvre* as something which is pitted against what she describes as a "monolithic" viewpoint because she provides an account from

the margins, an account which can expose the falseness of the view from the top and can transform the margins as well as the centre ... an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges but as primary and constitutive of a different world (p. 46).

According to Atkinson (1998) Bessie Head experienced the malicious nature of power first hand in South Africa and this has led her to write fictional works where she ridicules those in positions of power for the abuse of power vested in their positions and satirises such acts.

One is reminded of Matenge's abuse of power in *When rain clouds gather* and Pete and Moleka in *Maru*. Matenge who is described as an 'evil pervert' was against the cooperative established by Gilbert and Makhanya and the love that would brew between Makhanya and a Motswana woman, while Pete and Moleka would scheme behind the scenes to scandalise and stop Maru from ascending the throne of chief because of his love for a Masarwa woman, Magret.

Atkinson (1998) sees apartheid as stemming from the perceived notion of the powerlessness of the white believers to deserve salvation on their own. They believed in an omnipotent God who would eventually save them from their sins including the mistreatment of the blacks as they are the chosen folk while the blacks are destined for eternal damnation. The fact that whites were regarded as predestined to receive God's grace echoes in the missionary depictions of their faith which preached God's grace and purity of the white race since they were regarded as the bearer of God's salvation to humanity, whereas black Africa was depicted as the devil incarnate. Atkinson (1998) argues further: Much missionary image-building in Africa compounded this with stories about the African people swarming with satanic butcheries and perversities.... The witch doctor's domain was depicted as that of the devil, and the African interior equated with hell. (p.179-80).

While the main thrust of Atkinson's (1998) agrees with the main thrust of this thesis, namely that the marginalisation of people from the Global South was meticulously planned and executed, her thesis does not go far enough. It does not clearly enumerate the different spaces of the marginalization, nor does she clearly enunciate the role of silence from the marginalised and how this could be regarded as a powerful tool in the resistance offered by the marginalised. Her inability to offer an emancipatory view is embedded in her mistaken belief that "power is an illusion created and maintained by the powerful...in order that the powerless accept it as reality" (p.189). Elsewhere she argues: "domination is never so complete that power is experienced exclusively as a negative force" (p.198). Finally, Atkinson (1998) describes her environment as one characterised by "oppression and fear" (p.190) but does not offer a viable solution to "this living live, living death", which is part of the title of her thesis.

Odhiambo (2013) is concerned with the creation of a universal or "borderline" personality not based on black and white but by what she designates as "hybridity". This is a novel approach to erase our penchant for easy categorisation of fellow human beings because it will create a third space namely that of the hybrid, which is, the construction and reconstruction of identity, to the fluidity of space, to the space where identity is not fixed...it is where we negotiate identity and become neither this nor that but our own. (Odhiambo, 2013, p.2-3).

She also lauds Margret's marriage to Maru as a good omen as it will enable society to destroy all binary distinction in favour of a global identity that recognises people for their worth and not their races. This is only achievable by people who brave the odds to design a distinct identity for themselves by defying the inhibitions of tradition. While one lauds Odhiambo's well-written treatise, influenced as it is by Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity and the creation of a "third space", it is inevitable to question the architects of marginalisation out of which originated the need to create the 'the third space'. Until researchers like Odhiambo recognise the notion that sentient beings whose decision marginalised others, the creation of hybridity, will be idealistic at best and non-committal at worst. Odhiambo (2013) is fanciful and phantasmogoric in trying to hide the brutal reality of institutionalised discrimination in favour of ambitious projects christened "third space". Odhiambo argues further regarding the "third space" in relation to Head's perceived political commitment as an artist remarking that: "due to her multicultural background and history of displacement, her commitment as a writer reflected hybrid syncretic crossings thus revealing an interesting dimension of the African novelist's literary commitment" (p.4).

The thesis subsequent reading of *Maru* and *When rain clouds* will reveal that Bessie Head was politically caring for the marginalised and it will also show through "contrapuntal" reading and "reading against the grain" that she abhorred and rejected entrenched notions of racial, customary and sexual hierarchies and that these two novels were written with a preferential treatment for the downtrodden. While oppression of one person by another was present all over the world including Africa, the institutionalisation of slavery started in the 15th century in Europe, where it was created to loot, pillage and destroy, economically, spiritually, emotionally, psychologically the human fabric of not just the subjugated but the whole of humanity through its individualism, which abrogates all rights to the individual in his selfactualisation, which mostly happens at the expense of the greater good which is society at large. Negomane (2011) has crucial issues to address even if he examines *When Rain Clouds gather* and *Maru* as an appendage to the former novel. His project is a re-assessment of Head's contribution to African literature under the banner of doubtful terms like "Africanism", "feminism" or "womanism". He is thus grappling with the unenviable task of elevating an unworthy author to the African literary hall of fame. The view he finally adopts is that Head is "Afrocentric" even if she engages in "eccentric ways". He defines Afrocentrism as an "outlook that directly combats European hegemonic discourse in order to negate its inherent Eurocentricism as a pole diametrically opposed to that associated with Africanists" (p.2).

Negomane (2011) further finds fault with Head's supposed consciousness of being coloured and which makes her to not become sympathetic to the plight of her fellow female characters. In analyzing *When Rain Clouds Gather* he regards Head as condescending towards the female characters by giving derogatory and debasing descriptions to her female characters. While these might be true to some extent, one notices that she clearly and unambiguously tries to give voice to the downtrodden and marginalised characters in the two novels, namely *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *Maru*.

While Negomane (2011) is against degrading treatment of the predominantly black female characters by Head, Garret (1999) is preoccupied with the importance of political dedication as an author to the plight of the oppressed majority. He clearly enunciates the widely held view at the time that one had two groups of authors namely those that were committed to the struggle for liberation and the ones that were not committed to that cause. He elucidates this situation clearly by quoting Lewis Nkosi who sees the situation in black and white as follows: In particular, if South African literature seems unable to contemplate any kind of human action without first attempting to locate it within a precise social framework of racial conflict it is merely because very often colour differences provide the ultimate symbols which stand for those larger antagonisms which Southern African writers have always considered it their proper business to explain. (Lewis Nkosi quoted in Garret, 1999, p.2). He however gives what sounds like a plausible explanation for Head's apparent non-committal, which is bound up with the differentiation he creates between the "pastoral" and the "utopian" version of authorial preoccupation. Some authors are concerned with the utopian or future bliss, while others are involved with the dirty day to day struggle of the peasant through their pastoral existence. We should therefore not judge her unfavourably because she has turned her visor on another equally important part of human existence as maintained by Garret (1999).

While Garret's (1999), assessment is cursory and therefore incomplete, Ogwude's (1998), treatise is much more comprehensive and therefore desirous of a longer appraisal. Both researchers are engrossed in the whole notion of what constitutes utopian literary concerns and the importance of such literary output for the liberation of society from the evils of oppression. As has been clearly stated at the beginning Garret's (1999) is rather cursory, since he had to compare "pastoral" and "utopian" literature. Ogwude (1998), however is singularly interested in utopian literature, because of its emancipatory nature. This is so in part because utopian literature envisions brighter futures unblemished by current limiting straightjackets. He sets

the tone of the preferability of the utopian in the case of Bessie Head by expressing an idea from a renowned literary scholar Charles Nolinm who said:

unless "African writers who should be her bearers of utopia . . . effect a turn-about in their vision and challenge all of us by facing the future rather than dwelling in the past; *by writing futuristic literature to re-direct our vision and make all of us forward looking, " our economic, developmental, and technological incompetencies and inadequacies may linger much longer than need be.* (own italics, Nolinm quoted in Ogwude, 1998, p.2).

He thus regards Maru as offering Magret an escape from the mundane humdrum world of oppression that the Basarwa were exposed to, into another world full of unimaginable riches. These riches might not necessarily denote material wealth, but more importantly, spiritual, emotional and self-actualizing potentials, things that her current education (albeit admirable) cannot make her realise. He succinctly describes utopia in the following elevated language: Scholarly interest in utopian writing as a literary genre readily reveals that it is a *genre rooted in social and political issues. The starting point for the utopian writer is usually his present sociopolitical reality aspects of which he must find unacceptable, and so satirize.* (own italics, p.4)

Ogwude (1998) regards Head as the creator of a utopian world where all the old vices would have disappeared and happiness and untold bliss rules the new utopian world which is almost celestial in the description from the passages he chooses to quote. Apart from his own review of the novel, *Maru*, Ogwude (1998), quotes selected passages from the novel to bring home the message of this celestial home in this mundane world we inhabit with its cruelty and other vices. Maru is quoted as verbalising this utopian vision thus: "Maru demands...a compassionate world. His place, ... "is to pull down the old structure," which is... "a betrayal of all the good in mankind," and create the new in which "everyone would be free and none the slave of another" (*Maru* quoted in Ogwude, 1998, p 6). Elsewhere he is railing against the destruction of the artificially created boundaries that separate people and the attendant suffering of the dehumanised by such man-made barriers. He is made to suggest:

.... "They stretched across every barrier and taboo and lovingly embraced the impossible. There was no such thing as a slave or any man as an object of pity" (*Maru* quoted in Ogwude, p. 6). The pleasant world that Bessie Head creates in *Maru* is challenging for people who are used to accepting the mundane reality as the only possible world, but Bessie Head wants us according to Ogwude (1998) to not only imagine such a world, but implores us to work tirelessly to attain it. We owe the attainment of such a world to the racially, socially, and sexually marginalised.

We need to become activists for such a noble cause and should debunk the myth of the naysayers that such a world is impossible, by making them realise that the challenges in implementing the seemingly impossible is dependent on our lack of imagination. We are however, summoned to work for the realisation of an utopian world, which Ogwude acknowledges as residing in every honourable person and “thrives on the brotherhood of humankind. And so, because the social principle for the author is human life, she constructs her ideal worlds in which love and human generosity assume the greatest prominence” (p.6). When we have become activists for the attainment of this human noble human feat, we do not only celebrate veritably great achievement, but we would free fellow human beings from the shackles of a dehumanising world order. We would probably regain our humanity, because our umbilical cords are indissolubly tied to our fellow human beings. This is what would follow according to Ogwude (1998), when we have liberated the least amongst us:

When people of the Masarwa tribe heard about Maru's marriage to one of their own, a door silently opened on the small, dark airless room in which their souls had been shut for a long time. *The wind of freedom, which was blowing throughout the world for all people, turned and flowed into the room.* As they breathed in the fresh, clear air their humanity awakened (own italics, *Maru* quoted in Ogwude, 1998, p.6).

While Head might not conform to the traditional notion of political commitment as enunciated by Lewis Nkosi in Garret (1999) one notices that Ogwude (1998) frees her from the limiting epithet of committed as opposed to not committed then in vogue as far as South African writing in the heat of the brutal apartheid system was concerned. With Ogwude (1998) we can imagine a soothing alternative assessment of literary figures. He also quotes Heads elsewhere in *A Question of Power* (an autobiographical novel she wrote), that she does not have a special place for black, white or coloured but that her sympathy and equal treatment is open to all. While I am waxing lyrical about Ogwude’s (1998) novel approach to the unfair charge against Head, the thesis will argue that while one is in full agreement with the issues raised, the fundamental edifice which has caused so much harm to the rest of humanity has not been erased by creating this idealised version of reality which is the utopian world however eloquently argued. The thesis will not necessarily disagree with the world Ogwude (1998) visualises in Head’s *Maru*, but will look for deeper anchors to the malaise we are facing. He continues to laud the utopian literature as synonymous with protest as it, critiques “social reality and recommend[s] a qualitatively better one for the future.... By this contrast, the utopia exposes the shams of social reality and then provides a normative model to be imitated” (p.7).

Coundouriotis (1996) investigates three of Head's novels and does so in relation to how she uses her authority over the characters she creates to illustrate her authorship credentials. The principal reason why Head wishes to use her authority to show authorship has apparently something to do with the persistent challenge of "legitimation in postcolonial theory". The challenge of "legitimation" according to him stems from the ability of texts to, as it were, write themselves. Texts appear to have an in-built ability to parade their own identity. She wants to show through her work the power she has over those that inhabit the different spaces she describes. Coundouriotis (1996) regards Maru the young man that is about to become chief as imposing and he is described in a manner bordering on clairvoyance as he is capable of penetrating other people's minds. He continues in the following vein about the author who grabs the power from the narrator and creates this all-seeing character: We are told that the people of Dilepe "imagined that their thoughts and deeds were concealed when he could see and hear everything, even their bloodstreams and the beating of their hearts" (*Maru* quoted in Coundouriotis, p. 9).

Coundouriotis (1996) regards Head as trying at all costs to create a character that was true to live as possible. Such an analysis from Coundouriotis (1996) is helpful because the thesis' main gist is to illustrate that all the three novels under scrutiny truly reflect the vicissitudes of characters in the real sense of the word. On the other hand they are political in the narrow sense of the word. These authors wrote novels that attempt to critique the marginalisation of a section of the population by the ruling elite. Head's use of "slice of life" in the following interview quoted by Coundouriotis (1996) is helpful if we are to understand *Maru* and the other three novels as reflective of the travails of these characters. Head is quoted as saying this in creating an authentic novel which bears greater resemblance to her view of reality in the village of Dilepe. She also acknowledges her openness to be fallible in her autobiographical writing. She says: "There's no way in which I can deny that was a completely autobiographical novel *taking a slice of my life, my experience*, and transcribing it verbatim into novel form. It was maybe the way in which I interpreted experience" (Head's "Interview", quoted in Coundouriotis (1996), own italics, p.13).

Raditlhalo (2013) considers Mogane's (1981) novel as showing lack of exuberant speech from the characters especially where traumatic events occur. He puts it succinctly: "A key feature of Serote's novel that undergirds the narrative is the consistent *appearance of silence* to denote the levels at which trauma is a functioning metaphor highlighting the figurative language of traumatic experiences" (p.5). This form of writing which is described as "perpetual

troping”(p.5), denotes the repeated usage of tropes in the light of the fact that no other rendition of the traumatic event is possible as it constitutes a “separate world, because it is outside of *everyday experience and thus outside of ordinary language*” (Bast , quoted in Raditlhalo (2013, p. 5). Silence is then employed as a trope to capture the characters’ inability to capture these horrendous experiences in a language that fellow human beings can understand. This is a new form of “referentiality” because words are inadequate to express the unimaginably horrible. I remember that when the leaders of Abame in *Things Apart* were released there is this quotation: “The other people were released, but even now they have not found the mouth which to tell of their suffering. The two men sat in silence afterwards” (Achebe, 1997, p. 127). Since (Raditlhalo (2013) article is gripping in its assessment and almost every detail is relevant, the review will give a brief synopsis of his evaluation of especially the “troping of silence”, which the thesis will employ. In addition, Raditlhalo (2013) places the inadequate appraisal of Mogane’s novel to the perception in vogue then to reserve the term trauma to psychological cases involving maltreatment of women and children and therefore replete with psychological undertones. The word trauma was equally employed to describe soldiers in a war situation as occurred in Vietnam, where the concept “post- traumatic stress disorder” was coined. He credits the emergence of trauma to the poststructuralist Lacan who recognises that trauma can be analysed in literary works in the way it affects people socio-historically, politically, and culturally.

(Raditlhalo (2013) quotes a few passages from the book to substantiate the troping of silence and the following quotations from him will be given below. A striking feature, therefore, in Tsi Molope’s presentation is his innate withdrawal, an inability to express himself and his feelings and an observant and questioning gaze on all around him, including his father, who is described as “strangely quiet” (Serote 1981, quoted in Raditlhalo (2013, p.9). “These old people, as Tsi observes, tried to build a future for their children but everything was against it, hence the bent shoulders, the ever present silence signalling defeat”(Serote, 1981 quoted in Raditlhalo (2013, p. 9). While Raditlhalo (2013) regards Serote (1981) as the only artist troping silence, the essay will prove that Mda (2002) and Head (1971) employ the same technique. Finally, While Raditlhalo (2013) gives a very long description of how traumatic experiences influence people in a variety situations including the survivors who suffer from what he calls “intergenerational anxiety and survivor guilt” (p.8). The same situation is observable among the Ovaherero after the 1904-08 genocide. He puts the situation aptly:

[a]ttempts to document the consequences of historical trauma on future generations have been extensive. Specifically, across multiple cultural groups, researchers and clinicians, using an array of methods, have observed characteristics such as higher levels of depression, withdrawal, various forms of anxiety, suicidal ideation and behavior, substance abuse, anger, violence, guilt behavior and a victim identity. Researchers have also noted that descendants may have difficulty in interpersonal relationships, reduced energy, pathological expression of isolation, exaggerated dependency or independence, *concerns over betraying ancestors for being excluded from the suffering (a sort of intergenerational survivor guilt), an obligation to share ancestral pain* and a collection of other problems that are often classified as simply various other psychological or mental disorders (own emphasis, p.8).

Crous (2010) views Mda's novel as depicting female characters' bodies for gain. Female characters like Niki specifically use their femininity as a bargaining ship to get leverage from the whites who use their "services". He cogently describes her situation as someone who uses her body as "a weapon and the only tool she has with which to resist being rendered powerless and mistreated by men" (p.1). While Fanon has stated that white men do not want to marry black women but desires her body as a "toy" for instant satisfaction, black women marry white men to obfuscate their inferiority. In the case of Mda's (2002) novel however, white men cannot marry their nannies, but would surreptitiously enjoy their bodies for immediate amusement. He recounts the situation of Niki in the following manner:

The black woman knows that her forbidden body bodes threatening pleasures of the future and she capitalises on this in her favour. In pre-1994 South African society the white man epitomised political and economic power and control, *but it is ironic that these men are powerless when confronted by black female sexuality* (p.13, emphasis added). Zullie (2009) is searching for the correlation between what she considers new sites and the ability this has in forming people's political consciousness. She does this since she believes that sites created by the apartheid regime can form people's personality and their outlook on the world. She is comparing and contrasting Nadine Gordimer and Mda in the ways they imaginatively construct mind maps through their creative outputs. According to Zullie, Gordimer urges writers to "cross boundaries and avoid 'cultural exclusivity' and work towards embracing adjacent neighboring realities" (Gordimer, quoted in Zulli, p.189). She is quoted as counseling authors to avoid cultural exclusivity and become open to its neighbouring veracities.

Writers should furthermore, “seek exchanges of the creative imagination, ways of thinking and writing and address to a vital mixture of individuals and peoples re-creating themselves” (Gordimer qtd, in Zulli, p. 189). Mda on the other hand is credited with seeking a compromise between past traditions and present-day realities which should show a great level of flexibility. She regards the two novels of Gordimer, namely *The Pickup* and Mda’s (2002) as creating spaces that in turn shape the characters or what she calls the “interiorization” (p.190) of people’s perceptions of themselves in view of peculiar spaces: She contends: “The idealization of place also leads to its interiorization on the part of the characters; this means that any “geographical” setting is not only part of one’s own conscience, but also works in changing one’s own individuality” (p.190).

She further regards postcolonial lands as places of compromise as they were not the desired locations of especially the marginalised. In this regards she employs a biological term, namely “interstitial” which relates to diseases in the spaces between organs. Interstitial can therefore be likened to border thinking because the latter is the silenced voice of those that labour on the margins of accepted orthodoxies or epistemologies. She is influenced by Bhabha who argued from a postcolonial background earlier that: “[t]he social articulation of difference, *from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation*” (Bhabha qtd. In Zulli, p. 190, own emphasis). Finally, she makes a surprising though exciting and ironic comparison between Father Claerhout’s painting of Popi and Niki as reminiscent of Plato static idealistic Forms while the novel deals with the mundane ugly reality of apartheid South Africa. The question then remains as to how readers can reconcile the unmovable idealistic beautiful Forms to the degraded humanity, that is post-apartheid South Africa, where the residue of the ugly past is rearing its ugly head. Zulli’s (2009) reading is a powerfully optimistic one since she advocates for a calm assessment as she argues:

The shift from apartheid to post-apartheid is presented through an interrelation of events and characters, to suggest that life in a country free from the laws of apartheid is at any rate influenced by years of institutionalized racial discriminations (p.193, emphasis added).

Nkondo investigates the works of Serote from a stylistic angle which allows him to distinguish three literary forms that serve one another very well. These three forms are prose, verse and his oratory skills as a liberation fighter. All these three forms allowed him to, explore the complex dynamics of the South African experience without violating his passionate dedication

to narrative as a fundamental agency for exploring the human condition as it plays itself out in modern South African history. *Indeed, his Alexandra becomes a place inhabited by people who have in fact been resurrected, re-created by the lyrical narrative, a place where the sublime and the trivial, reality and dream are ambiguously mingled* (Nkondo, W, 2015, p. 6, emphasis added).

Trump in analysing Serote's *To every birth its blood* (1994) is close to border thinking when he regards the role of the author as presenting a view of history as significantly different from that disseminated by the ruling hegemony. He argues: "Within resistance fiction one sees racial capitalism challenged by a history of the oppressed class, which frequently draws upon oral tradition and records of collective struggle against oppression" (Trump, 1990, p.2). Mda's novel on the other hand is seen by Tanaji & Vijay as representing both black and white masculinity in the novel and shows that both races and their gender are imperfect and can be implicated in each other's impurities. He suggests that despite past harm there is the possibility for the "next generation to progress beyond the flaws of the past and reconcile as members of a new society. It was uncommon for black people to be found in significant management posts, let alone women" (Tanaji, Sunada & Vijay, 2016, p.5). Another critic who appears to be close to border thinking from the dominant elite and a penchant for the black body even if they subjugate it through legislation is Barris (2014). Barris (2014) analysis sees something tantalizingly delicious in the black body even if the hegemons created laws that forbid sexual relations between the two races:

it was the self-declared mission of apartheid to police 'civilized' and 'Christian' values of social order, maintaining the boundaries of whiteness in all conceivable spheres. This mission of policing the boundaries of whiteness led to the imposition of what was, at least on the surface, a harsh form of order. However, in its obsessive and savage application, and in its fascination with taboo objects, it showed as much disorder, as much unreason, as the putative unreason of the dark Other it was designed to suppress (p.6)

Another critic who theorises Mda's novel previous novel, entitled *Ways of dying* is Barker who sees it as written with "magic realism" as the appropriate style. He defines this form of style as one in which "myth and history are combined, linear time is made malleable and frequently interrupted by flashbacks and anticipated, future events (Barker, 2008, p.7). The advantage of "magic realism" as per his estimation is the notion of "spiritual reconstruction by reconciling mankind's devotion to the world of dreams and adherence to the world of reality" (p.10). Mda

manages according Barker to fuse the two styles in addressing the complexities of the South African skewed human landscape. Grzęda (2013) on the other hand while agreeing with Barker (2008) considers the use of magic realism in Mda's earlier novels as symptomatic of the honeymoon period at the end of apartheid where black authors wanted to visualise and interrogate the history of the country in light of the reconciliation and reconstruction projects under way then. Most black South Africans did not want to follow the example of J.M Coetzee who employed obscurantist postmodernism which they regard as mystifying and obscuring reality, something that the ordinary people consider elitist and not in keeping with their daily struggles. Zulu (2006) considers the use of "we" as an aggregation of the collective voice which is aimed at crossing borders thereby enabling real transformation of society to take place. (Zulu, 2006). This is so since he argues: The voice offers corrective but de-totalizing post-apartheid alternatives that break down past social and ideological categories, and foster nation building. The collective voice is therefore transformative in nature (Zulu, 2006, p.4).

The researchers reviewed above touched relevant issues about the three authors with differing success in view of what this thesis intends to investigate. The main shortcoming in their analysis according to this thesis is the inability to ground the subjugation of the subaltern within a broader Western hegemonic epistemology which intentionally created vassal subjects in the Global South. These studies do not mention the facts as propounded by Grosfoguel (2011) that the West created dichotomies when they privileged global racial/ethnic hierarchies that advantaged Europeans over Non-Europeans. The second is the haphazard or scant consideration of the "global gender hierarchy" (p.9) from the Judeo- Christian patriarchal perspective that regard males as superior to females. The third one is an "epistemic hierarchy" (p. 9) that gives advantage to Western knowledge and their idea of the universe over nonwestern ones. The fourth one is a "linguistic hierarchy" (p.9) that regards Western languages as bearers of abstract knowledge and high art and the subaltern languages as only capable of producing orature and other orally based artifacts. The other issue that was not considered except for Raditlhalo (2013) is the use of silence as a rebellious act or what he appropriately dubs "troping silence" to suggest rebellion from those marginalised by the hegemonic west. Finally, all the studies consulted do not seem to offer an emancipatory route to the characters who find themselves within this sticky conundrum. It is the respectful submission of this thesis that all three novels offer such a solution, and this will be presented at an opportune time.

2.2. Theoretical framework

Cresswell (2014) reminds us that human beings are born within a cultural and historical milieu which determines their world-outlook. When people are conducting research, they need to enunciate their cultural and socio-political baggage especially when eliciting information from the marginalised in society. This research embraces what Cresswell (2014) terms a “transformative worldview (p. 38), which according to him is suitable for investigating intractable political issues involving the oppressed in society. These issues revolve around a sense of not belonging, disillusionment with the status quo and lack of vertical political mobility. Such a transformative worldview can be fruitfully employed to overhaul societal superstructure and hopefully liberate the marginalised people from the shackles of their subjugation. Transformative research provides according to Cresswell “a voice to these participants, raising their consciousness or advancing an agenda for change to improve their lives” (p.38).

The subsequent consideration that a well-versed research should conform to is according to Cresswell (2014) the selection and adoption of what he calls a “theoretical lens or perspective” (p. 98). This theoretical lens assists the researcher by offering “an overall orienting lens for the study of questions of gender, class, and race This lens becomes a transformative perspective that shapes the types of questions asked, informs how data are collected and analyzed, and provides a call for action or change” (p.98).

Another source the thesis relied upon in defining a theoretical framework comes from a report drafted by the Education department of Wits (2007) which inter alia defines a theoretical framework as a “collection of interrelated concepts that can be used to direct research with the purpose of predicting and explaining the results of the research. Simply put, a theoretical framework is used to provide the rationale for conducting the research” (p.10). Apart from the useful definition, the report also gives reasons or purposes for which researchers need theoretical frameworks. The report gives seven reasons which might not all be relevant for my research, but will be included for the sake of completeness. The paraphrased reasons for theoretical frameworks are: First, Theoretical frameworks helps the researcher provide linkages to current literature, second, they provide intellectual guesses that guide current research, third, they assist the researcher in selecting the most appropriate questions for the current study, fourth, they convince the reader about the rationale for the specific research questions posed, fifth, they provide guidance to the adopted research design, sixth, they give guidance to the suitable data collection approaches and seventh, they can assist the researcher

make predictions concerning the envisaged outcomes and to interpret and analyse the results of the research based on the existing literature. These results can be used to “test and critically appraise a theory” (p. 11).

It is important at this juncture to explicitly state the theoretical frameworks this thesis adopted. The importance of a theoretical framework lies in the fact that racism and the subjugation of one person by another was not an isolated incident. Neither was it unavoidable, but something that was planned from the highest fora of the Western World in their attempt to classify and give a theoretical basis for such domination. Kant the German philosopher was, among the first to give a rational justification for colonization, even if unwittingly, when he is quoted as saying: This race, which is too weak for hard labour and too indifferent for industrious work, and which is incapable of any culture...*stands far below even the Negro, who occupies the lowest of all other levels which we have mentioned as racial difference* (Mignolo, 2000, p.15). Here he is comparing Amerindians with the newly arrive black slaves. Elsewhere he gives the highest rational thinking ability to the white when he says: “Humanity is at its greatest perfection in the race of the whites” (p.15). The thesis adopted border thinking with the adjunct concept of decoloniality and transmodernity. Those at the periphery are socially, culturally and economically silenced and uprooted from their land as is evident in the three novels under consideration. While postcoloniality is different from border thinking and decoloniality, there is a single convergence of the three approaches namely the conscious decision by the designers of global systems to marginalise people of the South, which led to border thinking and decoloniality, which are defiant acts from the wretched of the earth who labored under the oppressive yoke of colonialism. The study will specifically lean towards border thinking as amply argued by Mignolo in many of his writings. He distinguishes between the global designers and cosmopolitanism which for our purposes are the marginalised. He opines: “There are then, local histories that plan and project global designs and others that must live with them” (Mignolo & Madina, 2000, p.5). Other authors to be used are Grosfoguel (2009) who combines decoloniality, transmodernity and border thinking as well as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) who concurs with the former theorists but adopts a purely African approach to resist the modernity project while advocating for African border thinking and decoloniality.

Mignolo’s border theory postulates that there are two groups, one that creates the laws and the other that must live with these unjust laws. He distinguishes between two entities namely global designers and cosmopolitanism which, for our purposes, are the marginalised. He opines: “There are, then, local histories that plan and project global designs and others that

must live with them. Let's assume then that globalization is a set of designs to manage the world while cosmopolitanism is a set of projects toward planetary conviviality" ((Mignolo, Walter and Madina, 2000, p. 4). There is according to him another category which he calls "critical cosmopolitanism" (p. 4) which represents the third way or the voice from the marginalised who have realised that they cannot simply be subjects of an unjust world order. He posits this third option as representing something beyond the nation and above it as well. He regards it as a "necessary project of an increasingly transnational (and postnational) world. "By exteriority I do not mean something lying untouched beyond capitalism and modernity, but the outside that is needed by the inside. Thus, exteriority is indeed the borderland seen from the perspective of those to be included, as they have no other option" (p. 6). Current capitalist and oppressive modernity do not want to include this third way of thinking, hence his call for intellectuals representing the oppressed to gate crush the unjust world order. This is so because the current situation of subjugation cannot be articulated from one point of view even if such view appears compassionate. He opines further: "the new situation we are facing...is that cosmopolitanism (and democracy) can no longer be articulated from one point of view, within a single logic, a mono-logic (if benevolent) discourse from the political right or left" (p.7). Other than the condescending monologic ordering from above, he is proposing a "cosmopolitanism, critical and dialogic, emerging from the various spatial and historical locations of the colonial difference" (Mignolo 2000, p 9). The thesis also adopted Spivak's (1988) subaltern trope which is a suitable epithet for all the marginalised people. The thesis however leant specifically toward decoloniality with border thinking theory the emblematic constituent part as amply argued by Mignolo in most of his writings.

Mignolo (2000) when discussing globalism at the beginning of the 21st century distinguishes between what he labels "local histories" that create "global designs" that consign others into subject positions. Mignolo rallies against Kant's classification of the world into two poles namely North and South. The North is according to Kant the originator of all knowledge while the South is characterised by laziness and an inability to grasp theoretical concepts, let alone the creation of such knowledge. Since Southern people are at the exterior side of these global designers, Mignolo advocates for a border thinking which is "dialogic" as opposed to the monologic God's eye point of view of the global designing North. He also advocates for a world that recognises the diversity in terms of culture, politics, religion and even the norms that should govern such a world. He calls such a diverse world as one governed by "diversality" and "pluriversality". He points a guilty finger towards what he terms "cosmopolitanism" as

the engineer of the degrading situation of the subaltern, even if they regarded their project as suitable for the whole of humanity. He continues in the following vein:

For that reason, cosmopolitanism today has to become border thinking, critical and dialogic, from the perspective of those local histories that had to deal all along with global designs. Diversality should be the relentless practice of critical and dialogical cosmopolitanism rather than a blueprint of a future and ideal society projected from a single point of view. (p.25).

Mignolo locates his epistemology or the science of what is morally correct and worthy of pursuit within what he refers to as a “subaltern perspective” from below which according to him include “diversality” “pluriversal” and is dialogic with a multiplicity of centres or what he refers to as a “pluricentric” world “built on the ruins of ancient, non-Western cultures and civilizations with the debris of Western civilization” (p.26). Additionally, Mignolo (2007) intends to delink epistemically from Western hegemonic and dehumanising epistemology when he argues that the current subaltern position requires the marginalised to have a “relentless critical exercise of awareness of the moments when the guiding principle at work is liberation/decoloniality” (p. 12) and when, those at the periphery “directs social actors in their projects for political, economic and spiritual (epistemic, philosophical, religious) decolonisation” (p.12). It is only when the marginalised work toward removing the yoke of oppression that one can discuss decoloniality. Decoloniality according to Mignolo (2007) is: working toward a *vision of human life that is not dependent upon or structured by the forced imposition of one ideal of society over those that differ*, which is what modernity/ coloniality does and, hence, where decolonization of the mind should begin. The struggle is for changing the terms in addition to the content of the conversation (p.12 own emphasis).

Henceforth, Mignolo (2007), argues for envisioning a world beyond modernity, because it intends to employ tools that will be liberating and that are conscious of the diverse visions from the colonised South. This project is called “transmodernity” (p.52) which is different from postmodernity, since it intends to construct an epistemic break from the shackles of modernity. His project thus argues for a world beyond modernity, hence “transmodernity”. Mignolo’s (2011) rejection of modernity goes hand in hand with the rejection of Marxism and capitalism as the only means of ordering society. He intends to campaign for a world that will include “communalism” as an alternative to the two modernist views of structuring society.

Mignolo (2011) is principally opposed to the modern project that preaches the inability of other languages to express abstract thought and which places them at the bottom of the human ladder as modernity marginalises other languages beyond Latin and Greek as proper vehicles to express modern thought. Such a project also establishes binaries of civilized/savages, men/women, Occidental/Oriental. The lower part of the binary is reserved for people of the Global South and he wants to demolish such hierarchies. The only alternative open to people whose humanity is not only questioned but categorised as inherently inferior according to false premises, is to “delink” from such an epistemology. He argues this issue thus:

So once you realize that your inferiority is a fiction created to dominate you, and you do not want to either assimilate or accept in resignation the bad luck of having been born equal to all human beings but losing your equality shortly after being born because of the place you have been born, then you delink. Delinking means that you do not accept the options that are available to you” (p.5).

In another vein Mignolo distinguishes between global designers from the powerful North who created two classes of people which he terms the “humanitas” and the “anthropos”. These “two species” are mutually unintelligible in the eyes of those who design these categories. The “anthropos” are the marginalised and they do not have any other option but to denounce such categorisation. The oppressors regard their epistemologies as “knowledge” while they assign the less attractive epithet of “sensing”, to the “anthropos” since it involves the body and not the brain. This dehumanising epithet leaves him no option but to argue that:

Border thinking is, in other words, the thinking of us the anthropos who do not aspire to become humanitas because it is the enunciation of the humanitas that made us anthropos. We delink from the humanitas, we become epistemically disobedient, and think and do decolonially, dwelling and thinking in the borders of local histories confronting global designs (p.6).

He thus argues for the “anthropos” to think decolonially. Decolonial thinking requires what he terms “epistemic disobedience”, “for border thinking is by definition thinking in exteriority, in the spaces and time that the self-narrative of modernity invented as its outside to legitimize its own logic of coloniality” (p.11).

Grosfoguel (2011), on the other hand traces what he terms “hegemonic Eurocentric paradigms” as ideas that have influenced the world for the past five hundred years. He further reminds us that everyone speaks from a particular perspective influenced by “class, sexual, gender,

spiritual, linguistic, geographical and racial hierarchies of the modern /colonial capitalist/patriarchal hierarchies of the modern/colonial patriarchal world system” (p.1). The notion of a disembodied knowledge claims should therefore be regarded as a myth. He thus discloses the need to decolonise what he dubs “Western canon and epistemology” (p.3

In addition, he adumbrates three issues that an alternative epistemology from the subaltern paradigm should emphasise. It should embrace a broader principle than the traditional Western standard. Second, for such a perspective to have universal appeal it should not be based on an “abstract universal” (p. 4)) that regards itself as a global design but needs to be the consequence of critical dialogue that should occur in order to deliver something that is the result of negotiation between the parties to achieve what will culminate in a “pluriversal”(p. 4) as opposed to a universal worldview. The second issue he raises is that a truly universal decolonial perspective cannot be based on an abstract universal (one particular perspective) that raises itself as universal global design), but would have to be the result of the critical dialogue between diverse critical epistemic/ethical/political projects towards a pluriversal as opposed to a universal world. The third issue that needs to be addressed is the decolonisation of knowledge as one needs to seriously appreciate what he calls the “epistemic perspectives/cosmologies/insights of critical thinkers from the Global South” (p.4) who think in a subaltern fashion. Such a new paradigm should realise that these people think within a “racial/ethnic/ sexual spaces and bodies” (p. 4). This new paradigm should reject poststructuralism and postmodernism as these ideological formations are caught within the Eurocentric power structures thereby reproducing the subjugation of the subaltern.

Grosfoguel (2011) also debunks the Western notion of a non-situated person as a myth as we all speak from the different locations within the hierarchical power structures, whether these relate to our race, sexuality, social status, religio-political convictions or geographical locations. The separation of the speaking subject from his milieu is thus a myth that should be discredited. Every truth claim is therefore tainted by all these determinants and we should stop treating Western epistemology as universal, as the only truth claim. He is thus in agreement with Mignolo’s (2009) “anthropos” who need to carve out a universe that will include all the various sensibilities. Since all knowledge claims are partial and spoken from a locality, Grosfoguel (2011) argues for a different conceptualisation of subaltern knowledge as something that should not be seen as superior, simply because they have been silenced for ages and therefore needs to replace Eurocentric views of the world. Such an approach would amount to what he terms “third worldist fundamentalism”. Therefore:

What I am claiming is that all knowledges are epistemically located in the dominant or the subaltern side of the power relations and that this is related to the geo- and bodypolitics of knowledge. The disembodied and unlocated neutrality and objectivity of the ego-politics of knowledge is a Western myth. (p. 6).

In addition, he enumerates fifteen hierarchies produced by the Eurocentric paradigm in its attempt to subalternise people from the Global south. The thesis will only mention four since the others are not relevant for the analysis of the three novels that specifically dramatise a society that subjugates others based on race, sex, gender, social status and political conviction or one's epistemology. The first one is a "global racial/ethnic hierarchy" (p.9) that gives prominence to Europeans over Non-Europeans. The second one is a "global gender hierarchy" (p. 9) from the Judeo- Christian patriarchal perspective that regards males as superior to females. The third one is an "epistemic hierarchy" (p.9) that gives advantage to Western knowledge and the idea of the universe over non-western ones. The fourth one is a "linguistic hierarchy" (p.9) that views Western languages as bearers of abstract knowledge and high art and the subaltern languages as only capable of producing orature and other orally based artifacts.

Grosfoguel (2011) does not just abhor capitalism alone but also rallies against Eurocentric conceptions of the world in presenting their world view as the only perfect one. He calls for an "anti-systemic decolonial liberation" (p.13). Such an anti-systemic decolonial liberation is crucially important, but its realisation requires: "a broader transformation of the sexual, gender, spiritual, epistemic, economic, political, linguistic, aesthetic, pedagogical and racial hierarchies of the "modern/colonial western-centric Christian-centric capitalist/patriarchal world-system" (p.13).

Finally, Grosfoguel does not call for the total eradication of the Western edifice but wants to bring to the fore the silenced and excluded knowledge from the G/lobal South. In addition, he is not arguing for "third world fundamentalism" which should be viewed as superior to the hegemonic Eurocentric ordering of the world. On the contrary, he conscientises people about the incalculable harm that was committed against the other half of humanity by the hegemonic Eurocentric world view. He contends:

The ascribed superiority of European knowledge in many areas of life was an important aspect of the coloniality of power in the modern/colonial world-system. *Subaltern*

knowledges were excluded, omitted, silenced, and/or ignored. This is not a call for a fundamentalist or an essentialist rescue mission for authenticity. (own italics, p.24).

Ndlovu –Gatsheni ‘s (2012) intervention is more practical as opposed to the other two thinkers. He is speaking as an African from Zimbabwe, but living in South Africa. He is basically concerned about unpacking the coloniality of the African subject in a variety of areas especially developmental assistance. The European encounter of the African led to violence, “politics of alterity and epistemicides” (p. 1). Alterity refers to the perceived otherness of the African subjectivity as well the Europeans conscious attempt to kill the African world view. The current article relates to the myth perpetrated by Europeans for centuries about the inherent inability of the African to feed and clothe himself. He typifies the Eurocentric view of the developing world as: “inhabited by a people whose being was constituted by a series of ‘lacks’ and a catalogue of ‘deficits’ that justified various forms of external intervention into Africa including the notorious structural adjustment programmes” (p.3.).

Chapter 3 Research Design

3.1 Introduction

The third chapter that deals with research design or the methodology adopted generally creates a window of opportunity for readers of the research to view the processes employed which led the researcher to arrive at certain conclusions later in the finding section. This is done to enable fellow researchers gauge the methods, their effectiveness for use and the ensuing findings which should be beyond reproach. If the methods employed are appropriate and above board it will make it easier for fellow researchers judge their effectiveness at arriving at distinct findings. Properly articulated designs also enable the replication of the same findings by different researchers if they were to pursue the same methodology specifically if they ask the same questions the previous researcher asked. Finally, the third chapter helps fellow researchers judge the validity and reliability of the findings, mainly when these findings must be used by other researchers in applied research. The following outline is a condensed version of the design the thesis conducted guided by accepted research design methods used by other researchers in what needs to occur in designing such a process which culminates in the findings section later in the penultimate chapter.

3.2. Research Design

The thesis is indebted to Cresswell's (2014) book about research design. It therefore has a world view which is the all-encompassing outlook of the thesis, Second, it adopted grounded theory to analyse the novels under scrutiny. The thesis is qualitative in nature and will pursue, Cresswell's (2014) detailed exposition of research design which includes the role of the researcher in investigating the three novels, the kinds of data collection techniques, recording, analysis procedures as well as the validity and reliability criteria of the findings the research arrived at.

Cresswell (2014) regards a world-view crucial to any research project as it does not only determine the type of research method, but affects the research questions and a whole host of other issues like validity and reliability of the research's findings. He defines worldview as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action" (p.35). The worldview adopted by this thesis is the "transformative worldview", which according to Cresswell (2014) is a research enquiry that has an unashamedly political programme as it aims to change society for the better. He asserts further:

research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever levels it occurs.... Thus, the research contains an action agenda for reform that may change lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals work or live, and the researcher's life. *Moreover, specific issues need to be addressed that speak to important social issues of the day, issues such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, and alienation.* (p.38, emphasis added)

The next issue he touches is the selection of a theoretical lens, alternatively called theoretical framework. The thesis amply touched on the chosen theoretical framework earlier and it will not repeat what has been discussed earlier. Suffice to say, that apart from a theoretical framework, one needs a theory through which one investigates data from the individuals (characters in a novel, or the different novels) under study, and grounded theory appears to be the most appropriate one. Grounded theory is a design of inquiry..."in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants. This process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information" (p.42).

One is hesitant to employ grounded theory for the study of literature because one is not dealing with individuals, but personified characters representing society and its vicissitudes. In addition, the research will be in concert with Cresswell (2014) for having purposefully sampled the three novels as they appear to address the same themes. It will further code the different themes to arrive at a theory that will best describe, categorise or lump them together. The penultimate concern for research design would be the analysis of the three novels. These will involve the researcher's personal interpretation taking my peculiar historical, socio-political consideration as well as laying bare one's possible biases. The thesis will abide by the reliability criteria which is about "consistency" throughout the research project while reliability which according to Cresswell (2014) is concerned with whether the "findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account or project" (p. 251). The thesis will also embrace hallowed concepts employed by Cresswell (2014) like 'trustworthiness', 'authenticity', and 'credibility' (p. 251) as measurements of how fittingly trustworthy the research is.

The researcher carried out a stringent reading of the primary texts to tease out the overarching major themes. The researcher then applied the relevant theoretical framework which is

“decolonial critical theory” as espoused by Mpofu (2014) with special emphasis on how the subaltern is portrayed in these novels. Decolonial critical theory is unapologetically antiEurocentric, defiant as far as the hegemonic epistemology of the West goes and harbours emancipatory significance for the downtrodden. The researcher further used the identified literary approach to contextualise and analyse the identified works. The study employed a qualitative desktop research where both primary as well as secondary works of all three authors (where possible) was examined to provide context and cross referencing. Qualitative research is an investigative method which is useful in understanding a central phenomenon (McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, 2001). It the belief of this researcher that human beings write from diverse cultural, religious and political stances and an understanding of an author n his/her multiplicity of background information is crucial in deciphering the presented work.

Chapter Four. Findings/ Recommendations

4.1 Introduction

In line with the objectives, which seeks to investigate the depiction of the subaltern in three Southern African novels, the thesis will detail such depiction. It is, however, necessary that prior to the textual evidence of such portrayal, we pause for a while and locate the three Southern African novels within a mode of writing developed in South Africa over many years. In this regard the thesis will give a brief overview of the political situation that necessitated the form of writing. It goes without saying that the introduction of the apartheid system in its dehumanising and peripherising policies decentred whole populations from the centre of their lived existence whether spatially, socio-economically, and in other areas in which apartheid doctrine operated. The authors as the conscience of the people reacted angrily to this abnormality and embarked on a process of recentring and rehumanising the peripherised. In light of the above the thesis will provide a survey of Southern African literature in order to provide the milieu within which these authors produced their artistic outputs. The main emphasis, however, would be South African literature in the period between the epochal Sharpeville massacre to the student revolt of 1976 and the torture and death of Steve Biko while incarcerated. These occurrences left an indelible mark on the South African psyche and could in all earnest be considered the pinnacle of the injustices apartheid racism yielded. The final contemplation would be the actual analysis of how the subaltern were marginalised employing the thesis' objectives and research questions or being guided by them.

4.2. Review of South African literature

Adebanwi (2014) does not analyse the works of the selected novelists, but his insights are worth quoting for the advancement of the downtrodden in society. Quoting Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o he declares; "The novel, like the myth and the parable, gives a view of society from its contemplation of social life, reflecting it, mirror-like, but also reflecting upon it, simultaneously" (Adebanwi, 2014, p.5). He further considers literature as providing a different emancipatory contemplation of reality compared to the conventionally oppressive thinking: He articulates the issue thus: "The teller of a story can become a powerful force in shaping the way a people think about their social and political order, and the nature, desirability and direction of change" (Achebe quoted in Adebanwi, 2014 p.6).

Southern African literature as the umbrella term within which these three novelists operated is an unwieldy beast spanning many countries and many periods as well. The purpose of the survey is to provide the milieu within which these authors produced their artistic outputs. There are four literary historians whose works will form the backbone of this survey and they are: Vaughan(1982), Hawley (1996), Reckwitz(1999), and Chapman (2003). Both Chapman and Hawley regard Southern African literature as a literature that spans different climes, languages, socio-political dispensations and even cultural milieus. Literature in the main is considered as a broad field which includes different practices, like oral tradition related to mourning, rites of passage, and war chants as well as different stories of legends and myths created to foster uniformity and a sense of cultural oneness. As far as the South African literary landscape is concerned, the first written text is considered to be Olive Schreiner's *The story of an African farm* which apart from having prelapsarian pastoral elements depicted the "savages" as noble, who needed to be brought to the European enlightenment fold, while in other instances the novel can be said to promote racism as the black characters hardly speak and when they speak, they do so in monologues. In addition some like the handmaid is described as "malicious and vindictive", while the other is said to "stare stupidly" and described as "half naked". Sol Plaatje's novel *Mhudi* (1916) was written against the dispossessioning Native Land Act of 1913, which proposes an alternative narrative about land dispossession, apartheid and a counter narrative to the notion that certain races are superior to others.

According to Hawley (1996) black South African writers have been influenced by the brutal South African system of apartheid to make their writing professedly didactic. In South African parlance one was described as either "committed" or "non-committed". What was meant by committed related to whether one wrote a literary work condemning the brutal dehumanising system or one was lukewarm in one's condemnation. For our purpose the period that influenced the kind of literature we are investigating relates to the 1976 killing of black students who rebelled against the use of Afrikaans in schools as well as the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 forming the backdrop as over seventy protestors were killed in the Sharpeville massacre. The other incident that had a lasting impression on race relations between blacks and white was the assassination of Steve Biko in prison which did not just open the world's focus on South Africa, but led to major strikes especially in the 1980 where the youth of that country wanted to make the country "ungovernable". Our two major works namely Head's *Maru* and Serote's novel were written in this period. It is only Mda's novel, which was written in post-apartheid South Africa, even though incidents narrated in that book hark back to the 1970's.

Vaughan's (1982) treatise traces the landscape of South Africa in the 1970's to the 80's which was probably the most turbulent time in that country's history as one had mass imprisonment, disappearances, people falling from the tenth floor of the notorious John Vorster Square interrogation prison, counter revolutionary tendencies of backbiting by the oppressed and the formation of different organisations both for and against the oppressive regime. The first point he makes is to define the two usages of "political" after which he provides his views of literary activities as avowedly political in whatever form the writer constructs his artefact. Finally, he defines certain terms, like "populist", "realist" and "liberal" aesthetics and apply these concepts on two opposing views of art namely J. M. Coetzee's and Mtutuzeli Matshoba's. Coetzee is the quintessential upright postmodernist philosopher cum novelist who in his rejection of grand narratives and the postmodern inertia in the ability of language to provide a stance on issues affecting society is pitted against Mtutuzeli Matshoba, whose African background, had griots in West Africa and other names for the same figure in Bantu languages to fall back on. Griots were figures who could foretell the future as they had preferential access to the gods. His background hence provides him enough material to be the voice of the marginalised as he was prepared through aetiological narrations to warn the race against impending doom.

Vaughan (1982) provides what he labels politics in a wider and narrower sense. Politics in a "narrow" or precise sense relates to the "deployment of certain specifically and recognisably 'political' procedures, by social groupings constituted in terms of these procedures (eg., Parties), in a struggle for control of the organisational principles of the social order as a whole - as a struggle for control of the 'State" (p.2). Politics in a wider sense identifies with the unremitting struggle for the control of resources which he aptly states as the "ceaseless and more informal struggle between social groupings and classes to advance their own interests, ideas and values and to resist their domination by the interests, ideas and values of other groupings and classes, or to impose them upon those of other groupings and classes" (p.2).

Vaughan (1982) is in perfect harmony with this thesis contention that literary productions are within the purview of the political because literary characters are modelled on archetypal human beings and what they utter are reflective of the broader society's view of an enigmatic situation. He submits:

Literary activity is always concerned with the dissemination of human, and therefore social values, and hence with issues that are of their very nature contentious: in the wider

sense, political. *I say this in order to make it clear from the outset that I reject a traditional view of literature as outside or above political contention.* (p.2 italics added).

The next point he makes is about the development of new modes of viewing the world from what he designates with the term “aesthetics of realism” (p.6) which is the individual’s “ontological perception of the world as incomplete and his pursuit of happiness in the midst of this incoherent world to two modes that are antithetical to each other”(p.7). These are the “modernist” and “populist realist” (p.7). Coetzee and Matshoba fit according to him into these categories, even though he would later characterise Coetzee’s fiction as poststructuralist. Coetzee according to Vaughan (1982) considers himself as an individual who while accepting the rottenness of the system does not have the voice to criticise the hegemonic power base because words are inadequate and contradictory when condemning evil. That is why his novel *Duskland* is written as a monologue within the broad modernist nomenclature that seems to condemn colonialism on the surface while being incapable of providing solutions. The novel is according to Vaughan (1982) pessimistic as it narrates the irremediably inevitable subjugation of the subaltern. Coetzee is attempting to depict the evil of colonialism within the petty bourgeois world view which is characterised by alienation and the inability of anyone to ameliorate the rabbit hole, society is enmeshed with. He resorts to nuances and the painfully racist in this novel. His nuances which might be interpreted as marginalising include:

Savages do not have guns. This is the effective meaning of savagery, which we may define as enslavement to space, as one speaks obversely of the explorer's mastery of space.... I command his life. Across this annulus I behold him approach bearing the wilderness in his heart. On the far side he is nothing to me and I probably nothing to him. On the near side mutual fear will drive us to our little comedies of man and man, prospector and guide, benefactor and beneficiary, victim and assassin, teacher and pupil, father and child (p.8, emphasis added).

In the works of Matshoba which according Vaughan (1982) consist of short stories another picture emerges. The reason why he wrote short stories are according to this review (Vaughan’s) is the ease and the crispness of a short story to hit the nail on its head as he states that the short story requires little time to draft as it is a fragment compared to a novel which requires more time and is expansive. The story Vaughan (1982) reviews is about a traveller by train, because he cannot afford any other means like a car because of the limited means at his disposal. The lack of space in a train ride is according to Vaughan (1982) symptomatic of the constrained nature of blacks in crevices of space wherever they are. Their houses are like

matchboxes and they live in overcrowded surroundings as those who wielded the sword created miniscule spaces which made even breathing impossible. Apart from Matshoba becoming a dissident who had to speak truth to power, he and others of his ilk introduced another form of writing called “populist realist”, since its aims was to conscientise the citizenry regarding the nature of the predicament they were facing. In populist literature the omniscient narrator represents the collective voice of the marginalised and not the predominantly first person narrator of the modernist cum poststructuralist writer like J. M. Coetzee. Matshoba according to Vaughan desires the “democratisation of literary culture” and fought for what he terms “social antagonism” as he viewed the oppressive situation in black and white without any shades of grey. These points led him to typify his works in the following way:

In Matshoba's work, writing is conceptualised as a practical tool of the struggle of the (black) people. The art and practice of writing is related to this political conceptualisation. There is much less of a mystique surrounding the (individualist) creativity of the writer, and the special texture of literary expression, than is characteristic within liberal aesthetics. *Writers of the populist realist school make less of their individuality. They emphasize their identity as that of a school, a collectivity, a movement. It would seem that these writers want to break down the privileged status accorded to literature within liberal aesthetics - a status appropriate to a practice for minority production and reception - and give it a more 'popular' character* (p. 18, emphasis added).

Reckwitz (1999) while deriding Njabulo Ndebele who views literature of protest as stunted and myopic in its overemphasis on political commitment as opposed to stressing the aesthetic component appears to hit the bull’s eye with regard to the literature of South Africa during the period differently named as the “struggle period” by Reckwitz and “the interregnum” or the intervening period by Chapman (2003). This period from the 1977 up to the mid-eighties was a tempestuous period in South African literary topography metaphorically speaking. Literary figures were pitted against each other in the countless battles that raged between the so-called committed artist and those that were considered antipathetic to the cause of the marginalised. Reckwitz quotes Ndebele as jeering at the politically minded writers as people who hijacked aestheticism for political expediency. He submits:

The roles of oppressor and oppressed are assigned on the basis of the all-too-well known political circumstances, where the divide between justice and injustice, right or wrong is

demarcated, purely along racial lines, between Black and White, and where the actors in a narrative are a priori defined in terms of their assumed political orientation. Thus, they can be used as so many pawns in the novelistic game of chess, the inevitable result of which is predetermined from the outset. All of this, of course, happens with the avowed purpose of 'bearing witness to, and telling about, South Africa' (Ndebele qtd. in Reckwitz, 1999, p. 1, own italics).

The penultimate point that Reckwitz (1999) raises and that has a bearing on consigning the works of the three identified authors with the realist paint brush is Reckwitz's depiction of most black authors writing during this periods taking realist motifs to fashion their literary landscapes. The second point is the shibboleth of labels like realism and magic realism. For purposes of this thesis they are both sides of the same coin. One author might use magic realism in one novel and a purely realist mode in another. The distinguishing factor in this thesis frame of reference is the extent to which the plight of the downtrodden is advanced. It is only when this has been accomplished that we can sing in unison with Bhabha that "the margins of the nation displace the centre; the people of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis 'Magical realism'...becomes the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world" (Bhabha qtd. in Reckwitz, p. 12).

This thesis while advocating for border thinking, decoloniality and transmodernity agrees with the three phase schemata of Fanon which consist of assimilation, rejection and revolution. This is so because as much as we desire to go back to our original state of development which was arrested by colonialism, we have to assimilate by using foreign languages and cultures, which is followed by rejection and the final step which is revolution. It also concurs with Bhabha's depiction of the final product as a hybrid.

Chapman's (2003) book is very detailed and considers the literary outputs of many Southern African countries including the Chimurenga, (liberation) songs and jingles or dirges from the different countries that comprise Southern Africa. Regarding the literary history of South Africa this thesis is interested in the period typified as the interregnum where two principal characters namely Nadine Gordimer are pitted against each other namely; J. M. Coetzee and the Soweto artists which include Zakes Mda, and Serote. There is also a special space created for one of South Africa's most radical novelist; André Brink. He together with Breyten Breytenbach were the two most radical white authors to have emerged out of South Africa, barring Ingrid Jonker who committed suicide while very young as she could not fathom living

in a despotic country like South Africa. About Coetzee he (Chapman, 2003) like Reckwitz (1999) characterises his work as elitist, philosophical and not easily accessible to the common man. He adumbrates the situation thus:

when we consider the claustrophobic atmosphere of Coetzee's confessional approach, we are reminded that he himself has an Afrikaans upbringing, and that his attenuated liberalism sometimes seems to have close affinities to the Afrikaans Calvinist conscience than to the social conscience of South African English fictional responses: *sympathy for the victim, for example, may be swiftly even savagely curtailed in monologues of narcissistic self-flagellation spoken by characters who often sound like Coetzee himself, the post structurally aware but tormented individual* (Chapman, p. 388, emphasis added).

Chapman regards Coetzee *Waiting for the Barbarians* to be written in the poststructuralist mode which places his text in psycho-analytical relation to previous texts so as to read into lies, silences and slippages of what has been repressed in histories that are assumed to be authoritative. The danger in the poststructuralist approach of course, *is an endless deferral of moral consequence which, in the agonised society, can merely provoke the impatience of those for whom reality is less an elusive signifier, more a crack on the head by a police truncheon* (p.389, emphasis added).

Gordimer on the other hand as suggested by Chapman (2003) lauds the energy and commitment of black people for life and this has given her the "inner compulsion to write" (395), something she feels missing in Coetzee. Gordimer would convert from the liberal mode in vogue then to a radical form which according to her was the most suitable way to respond to the overwhelming despotic situation in the country. She qualifies this positive energy as encompassing "tortuous inner qualities of "prescience and perception" (p.395) which would not have satisfied Coetzee whose view of art was non-utilitarian as he to a certain extent professed "art for art's sake". Gordimer regards art in the interregnum as a "kit of emotive phrases an unwritten index of subjects" (Gordimer, qtd in Chapman, 2003, p.396). Moreover,

[f]or instead of pursuing truth as an individual matter in the particularities of time and consciousness, the novels of Serote, Tlali, Sepamla and Mzamane permit typicalities to predominate: individuals exist as members of imagined communities and the concerns are the organisational ones of leadership with the top usually instructing the masses, and education as a counter to *the fact that the dissemination of information has been systematically denied to the oppressed* (p. 396, emphasis added).

Compositions of fictional work were no longer written in the old form which hid the real-life facts about the literary work behind the fable but were conscious attempts aimed at bringing the message clearly into the open. This was necessary since as Mzamane points out,

“the events were so remarkable that the need to fictionalise did not arise...my simulated reports came from real newspapers.... *My book is a record of the attempt to create a new collective consciousness for which Black Consciousness in South Africa stands.... I have hardly bothered to disguise the didactic purpose of my tale, which is what I imagine the traditional tale was meant to achieve.* [incidentally, Serote’s novel is replete with reference to the Black Consciousness movement to which he personally belonged after which he joined the ANC] (Mzamane qtd, in Chapman, 2003, p.396, emphasis and parenthesis added).

Brink provides what Chapman (2003) delineates as “conscience wrenching images of life under apartheid” (p. 403). Brink moved from being a moderate novelist of the Afrikaans Sestigers (belonging to the Sixties in their periodisation) who moved from novels employing surrealist and mythologizing tendencies in his early novels to write *Kennis van die Aand* [rewritten/retranslated into *Looking on Darkness*), a novel that was politically direct and unashamedly pro-poor and for the marginalised. At the launch of the book he threw down the gauntlet to his fellow Afrikaans writers by stating: “No Afrikaans writer has yet tried to offer a serious political challenge to the system.... We have no one with enough guts, it seems to say No.” (p. 402). The book opposed the apartheid system according to Chapman (2003) through holding, “state action up to censure on several issues: racial persecution and injustice, torture by the police, and the damaging effects of apartheid including its prohibition of sex across the colour line” (p. 402).

Brink’s (1983) book on the other hand follows the trajectory of South Africa from the tumultuous uprisings and killings of the mid to late seventies to the soon to be declared state of emergency as the system’s political opponent rendered the country ungovernable. He has some acerbic yet reflective statements on the wickedness of the system and what needs to be done to overcome it. He would also provide a historical background in a very erudite fashion about how others throughout history have resisted evil. His advice after many pensive moments is:

In the final analysis there is but one basic response a writer response a written driven by his conscience can offer, which is both the simplest and the most difficult of all: and that

is the response expressed in the quality of his work. Even on the most practical level this is the most effective response in the long run. Our work if it is good enough, is the only part of us which can survive the grave. This is the sole *raison d' être* for literature in a world in which, otherwise, might easily sweep it aside. *In the truth embedded in the writer's words lies the ineffable powered feared so much by tyrants and tyrannies and other agents of death that they are prepared to stake everything they have against it. For they all know only too well that no strategy or system can ever, finally, resist the word of truth.* (194-5, emphasis added).

4.3 The marginalisation of the subaltern and their resistance.

The thesis will now proceed to view the way the characters were depicted in the novels as this will be a bulwark against the conscious decisions and planning that accompanied the West denigrations of Africans and people from the Global South. The West according to many border thinking theorists, which is part of decoloniality reviewed above conducted a thoroughgoing agenda of placing people of the Global South in subject positions based on the denigration of their races, gender, belief systems (epistemologies), and social status with the Europeans given the higher positions based on their position in extracting resources and selling these to the mother country. The thesis will treat each novel separately and illustrate the authors' blueprint in giving voice to the marginalised, especially in what is hoped to be an emancipatory depiction of the characters to negate the West's consensus of keeping the people of the Global South in subject positions. The main purpose which is in keeping with decoloniality as conceived by Mignolo, Grosfoguel, Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Mpofu amongst many is the rehumanisation and recentring of those that Western epistemology of dominance pushed aside. Of all the authors reviewed above the views of Raditlhalo (2013) will be prioritised as he in surveying the oeuvre of Serote brought the critically important issue of viewing the characters in that novel as exhibiting characteristics of trauma. While the study will not adopt classical trauma theory and study, it will accept some of the basic tenets of the traumatised especially the need to show resilience and the urge to overcome such traumatic experience(s). Resilience is key in the depiction of characters since they are archetypal personified human beings who are resilient and can overcome adversity of any kind. *Maru* which addresses the plight of a marginalised Basarwa woman by the name of Magret Cadmore has all the hallmarks of a typically subaltern novel. Her whole being is determined by others as even her name is given to her by her former benefactor Magret Cadmore the missionary's wife. She is hence a product of an epistemology that is determined by others as she is educated

according to the Western education scheme as her own was deemed inferior. She is thus dependent on the goodwill of others in whatever she does. Her language is also foreign as her own was considered inferior to create knowledges and apply these knowledges to the benefit of her own people. While she is the product of what appears to be a benevolent benefactor, she subsequently rebels against these arrangements especially when she is not treated meritoriously. This she does by employing “silence” or the author will trope “silence” as a rebellious act as Raditlhalo (2013) has explained. Otherwise she vocalises her views without fear. Magret knew discrimination at an early age as she was triply discriminated upon, first as a Basarwa, second as a woman and third as a member of the Global South. Head (1971) articulates a pattern of discrimination that was initiated by the black parents on the unsuspecting Basarwa, which is continued by the global arrangement of the world at some point in the future. The narrator of the novel sketches the situation unambiguously in favour of the degraded Basarwa’s dehumanising treatment when it is states,

They spat on you. They pinched you. They dance a wild jiggle, with their tin cans rattling: ‘Bushman! Low Breed! Bastard! Before the white man became universally disliked for his mental outlook, it was there. The white man only found too many people who looked *different*. That was all that outraged the receivers of his discrimination, that he applied the technique of the wild jiggling dance and the rattling tin cans to anyone who was not a white man (p.7.

The passage above clearly indicates that the indigenous people started the discrimination against the Basarwa in Botswana and elsewhere and the white man in his comprehensive plan of discriminating against all the people from the Global South continued the process. This is so because the ensuing passage narrates the story of how the white man denigrates Asians who in turn passes the buck to the Africans as they regarded themselves better than the Africans. The Africans in turn indicts the Bushmen as the people who should be considered the most depraved and an oddity. Bushmen are considered so beastly to a point where their internal organs are known. She argues further that

[i]f you catch a Zebra, you can walk up to it, and forcefully open its mouth and examine its teeth. The Zebra is not supposed to mind because it is an animal. Scientists do the same to Bushmen and they are not supposed to mind, because there is no one they can still turn around to and say, ‘At least I am not a Bushman – *Of all things that are said of oppressed people, the worst things are said and done to the Bushmen.* Ask the scientists.

Haven't they yet written a treatise on how Bushmen are an oddity of the human race, who are half the head of a man and half the head body of a donkey? *Because you don't go poking around into the organs of people unless they are animals or dead* (p.7, own emphasis).

One can press on and quote other passages where the Basarwa are marginalised but the passage mentioned above is at the heart of or culmination of the villainous acts meted upon Magret in the remainder of the novel. When the children of the school started to chant songs to denigrate her and the lack of cooperation from the principal who was scared of what the "totem" which in the novel represents the Batswana's fear of what they would say when they hear and see a Bushman teaching their children, all of these things are encapsulated in the passage above. The Batswana make the situation unbearable for her and she does not go without fighting. Elsewhere she reminisces on a nasty incident she experienced with the student where she was on the verge of choking up with emotion as she could handle the situation no longer. She exhales:

'I was surprised', she replied quietly. *They used to do it to me when I was a child but I never felt angry. Before you came in, I thought I had a stick in my hands and was breaking their necks.* I kept on thinking: How am I going to explain her death? I thought I had killed a little girl in the front desk who was laughing because I clearly saw myself grab her neck with a stick. It was only when you started shouting that I realised I was still standing behind the table. I kept saying, "Thank God, thank God! I haven't killed anyone" (p.42. emphasis added).

The maltreatment of Magret by young school children adds another poignancy because these young ones are supposedly uncorrupted minds by bigotry and classification of people into those that are regarded superior and "inferior" races/tribes. If they whose minds are impressionable start it with an adult, how much more will they treat younger members of the Basarwa tribe? It means that since they are receptive to new ideas, they can be led astray by demagogues whose aim is the destruction of a united people irrespective of racial/tribal extractions. When Magret replies at least twice directly in the whole novel that she is a Masarwa, she does so knowing fully well that she wants to make an unmistakeably radical statement about her origin and that she should be accepted as such. She could have hidden her identity into that of a coloured if she wanted to but refused. She probably did this because she wants to use her relative status as a teacher to speak on behalf of the silenced majority, who were toiling in the darkness both literary and metaphorically.

When she falls in love with Maru it is not because she wants to receive royalty or for any other consideration, like being coquettish or a flirt, but because it is an emotion that came gradually to her. This is so because she did not want to be hurt at the beginning because he had many concubines and could gather more as his status made it possible to be loved. So, she accepts him after many sleepless nights and a lot of soul searching to see if he could be the right person to fulfil her carnal desires. Maru reminds her that in the contest for her love she showed stubbornness at the beginning because as he remembers,

“You think my neck was not broken a thousand times over like that because you did not love me,’ he said softly. It is not an ailment you die of. Sometimes you recover in a moment, especially when the cause of it is a worthless man like Moleka. You think I don’t know everything? Moleka did not want to approach you because he is such a tribalist. *I watched everything, thinking you might see that I loved you too.* Dikeledi gave me all your pictures, except the last one (p. 118, emphasis added).

Magaret eventually falls in love to allow the oppressed people of the South merge as one in the diversity and plurality of cultures. This is exactly what Grosfoguel (2011) advocates for in favour of the marginalised people. They need to go beyond the restrictive postmodernist epistemology since it is embedded in the modernist cosmology and opt for what he terms “transmodernity” which literary means going beyond modernity as they are not part of the modernity project even if they were the intended victims of that wicked world order. Finally, Magaret manipulates “silence” as a rebellious act throughout the novel to show that she is equally human and deserving of all the niceties of life. On page 81 it is stated “Magaret kept silent and looked down” when there are doubts as to whether she should receive the bed as a new teacher or not. Often, she uses “silence” in the presence of Dikeledi the sister to Maru who would marry her afterwards. She is quoted as divining,

At some stage her hands trembled uncontrollably, and she stood up to make tea or wash with the fierceness quite out of proportion to those simple ordinary activities. *It was like all those other agonies of life which she had endured in silence,* only those agonies had been linked with everyday things. Now she had lost the link completely, like a nonswimmer suddenly thrown into deep water. She could not discipline and control the power machine of production (p.97, emphasis added).

When she is about to marry Maru we see a multitude of the oppressed, in the novel represented by the Basarwa celebrating and being enraptured by joy as two people who were not supposed to marry each other tie the knot. Blacks, in the big scheme of things, do not amount to much

because they have previously been taken to other parts of the world as slaves. This is one more opportunity for the diverse population of the world with the plurality of cultures, religions and other surface distinguishing features to join hands and celebrate their newfound freedom. Grosfoguel (2011) refers to this phenomenon of people from the Global South to unite as “pluriversal and diversal conviviality”. He further considers border thinking as an assignment aimed at the rehumanisation of the masses of the Global South. When this freedom starts the formerly subjugated will be vigorous and blissful because,

[w]hen people of the Basarwa tribe heard about Maru’s marriage to one of their own, a door silently opened on the small, dark airless room in which their souls had been shut for a long time. *The wind of freedom, which was blowing throughout the world for all people, turned and flowed into the room.* As they breathed in the fresh, clear air their humanity awakened (p.122, emphasis added).

Finally, the liberation of the Basarwa is not an isolated incident, but a culmination of process where Head as part of what Martineau (2014) lauds as the innate talent of indigenous art to speak for the decentred multitude and imagine “practical other worlds” (p.3) where the sun shines brightly and nourishes their varied aspirations. Their liberation is highly infectious as it will infect new people with emancipatory potentialities, and they will not bow before the beast of modernity and its perverted oppressive worldview anymore. Head sees the situation as:

They examined their condition. There was a fetid air, the excreta and the horror of being an oddity of the human race, with half the head of a man and half the body of a donkey. They laughed in an embarrassed way, scratching their heads. *How had they fallen into this condition when indeed they were as human as everyone else? They started to run out into the sunlight, then they turned and looked at the dark, small room. They said: We are not going back there* (p.122-3, emphasis added).

It is only when indigenous art has been able to liberate the least amongst us from the shackles of subjugation that the prophetic words of Martineau (2014) will have validity for the decolonisation of the world from the pernicious effects of modernity. Art would then have been able to “create[s] experiences of potentiality that inspire and sustain our collective struggles for freedom; Indigenous art reminds, remembers, and calls out to us to account for colonial injustice, and to realize the potential freedom found in our creative transformation of the world” (p. 5).

The Madonna of Excelsior (2002) by Mda is based on the story of a few white men who transgressed the “miscegenation” policy of the apartheid regime. This policy which had the

epithet of Immorality Act of 1927 forbade extramarital sex between whites and the other races. Mda took a real-life occurrence where nineteen whites were charged with contravening the provision of the abovementioned edict. What Mda did was to fictionalise the event and create intrigue and depict characters that question society's latent injustices which can be expressed as racial oppression, sexism and political inequality. In the fictionalised version there is Niki who was raped when she was very young by Johannes Smit and later raped by Stephen Cronje whose wife Cornelia is the owner of a butchery at which she works. While her original sexual encounters with these whites was not consensual, her later encounters would be consensual. Cornelia, who was Stephen Cronje's wife took revenge on her by making her undress in front of other workers under the pretext that she has stolen meat from the butchery. What follows is Niki's blatant disregard for Cornelia as she starts to date Stephen until she becomes pregnant. Her child Popi henceforth fights turf wars with her half-brother representing the two halves of the town as people who were brought up differently by two distinct worldviews, one white and the other black.

Mda's (2002) depicts the subaltern being marginalised in several areas, all of which make them truly remarkable. The blacks who represent the subaltern in this novel are marginalised in terms of space, religion, politics, sexuality and in terms of their social standing. Fincham (2012) captures spatial exclusion and the consequent repression in the following fashion:

Landscapes are ... ways of expressing conceptions of the world and they are also a means of referring to physical entities. The same physical landscape can be seen in many different ways by different people, often at the same time ... the term may refer both to an environment, generally one shaped by human action, and to a representation (particularly a painting) which signifies the meanings attributed to such a setting (Ucko & Layton, qtd. in Fincham, 2012, p.1).

The hegemony in Mda's novel utilises space to act as boundary between the dominant group and the subaltern. These boundaries are also linked to economical determinants as the white side termed Excelsior is characterised by abundant sources of wealth as there are shops butcheries, world class treatment centres and other entertaining amenities like superior sports grounds, theatres and many such niceties. The inferiorised multitude lives in substandard accommodation in part of the same locality called Mahlatswetsa which denotes filth and overcrowding while the filthy wealthy lives in Excelsior as previously narrated. The marginalised occasionally cross these boundaries from time to time to satisfy their material needs as their abodes are littered with want and depravity. Excelsior is also the location of

their employment where meagre salaries are paid as the physical demarcation of boundaries also went hand in hand with the provision of substandard education, which created a dispensable workforce in line with the originators of Apartheid's foundational principles of giving the native only the type of education that will perpetuate subordination as he is only capable of doing menial jobs. Hendrik Verwoerd the architect of apartheid is quoted as having said: "There is no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour.... What is the use of teaching the Bantu child when *it* cannot use *it* in practice"? ("Bantu Education act of 1953," n.d., italics added). What is insightful about Verwoerd's word is the brutalisation of blacks by referring to them collectively as "it". This further accentuates his total disregard for their humanity, something which the Whites of Excelsior do to the residents of Mahlatswesa like the incident where Niki is undressed in full view of her fellow workers under the pretence that she stole meat from Cronje's butchery by her wife in an act of revenge.

The residents of Mahlatswesa do not seem to have a place of religious worship of their own and are dependent on the well-wishers of the white congregants to allow them space in their church. Most of the times they must conduct petty jobs of looking after the children of the whites and mimic the Whites songs in their own languages from outside church. Tjaart Cronje's duty is equated with the Biblical calling of doing the civil duty towards one's country and their perverted view of the Afrikaner folk as the chosen one: It is stated in Mda (2002):

They commended him for doing his bit for his country. He was a good Afrikaner whose vision had to be shaped by Afrikaans newspapers and the Bible. *And both these publications carried gospel truths: one about the secular world that the Afrikaner was trying to shape for his children and other about the Kingdom that the Afrikaners was trying to enter and occupy in the hereafter* (p. 129, italics added).

Elsewhere Mda enunciates the justification of the apartheid system by alluding to the Bible as the overarching determinant of all the different nations of the world. There are according to these aberrant views master folks and subservient ones and the servile folks should willingly acquiesce to their enslavement. The Afrikaners are also painted in a theologically blameless fashion as the carriers of God's wish for the debased and immoral "Other", which for purposes of the novel are the blacks. The whites have been given the land to pacify, nurture and improve it in all areas of human endeavour so as to glorify God the Creator in their industriousness. When one opposes this diabolic system of apartheid one is labelled communist or terrorist. Elsewhere Mda (2002) permits the narrator to state:

It was the duty of heroes like Tjaart Cronje and his comrades in arms to destroy all the communists and terrorists who were bent on destroying the way of life for which the forebears had fought against the native tribes and...against the British. *The Afrikaner was fighting to preserve the laws of God, which were codified in South Africa into the set of laws that comprised apartheid. Apartheid was therefore prescribed by the Bible.* The future of this land to which God had led the Afrikaner of old, and the future of civilisation in Africa, were in the hands of young men like Tjaart Cronje. (p. 129, own emphasis).

One of the most horrific cruelties that the governing elite do in Mda's novel is to treat black women like objects. These objectification and commodification of women happens despite the Whites adherence to a strict Calvinistic protestant branch of religion which regards such acts as demonic if not outrightly unpalatable. The whites regard blacks as dispensable as they view their sexual bodies as commodities to be enjoyed and discarded when the sexual urge has subsided or is satisfied. This commodification of black female bodies happens in the patty fields in the form of rape and is conducted at different spaces like the workplace and so forth. The ubiquitous sexual drive of the whites knows no boundaries as they would secretly await unsuspecting women in the field to have non - consensual sex with them in most cases. Mda (2002) offers a graphic lewd description in the field which does not only leave a bitter taste in the mouth, but is morally reprehensible. The white man Johannes Smit appears to have a demented psyche which appears to border on the sexually freakish. This is how the narrator describes the scene:

Deep in the sunflower field, Johannes Smit pulled off Niki Terylene's skirt. She tried to hold on to it, but he had the strength of ten demons. He threw her on the damp ground. Then he pulled down her panties and took them off. He sniffed them, which seemed to raise more demons in his quivering body. He stuffed the panties into his pocket. Yellowness ran amok. Yellowness dripped down with her screams. He slapped and ordered her to shut up. Her screams were now muffled with his hand on her mouth. His pants were at his ankles. He lay on top of her and pleaded: *"I am sorry, I did not mean to hurt you. But if you make noise people will come and spoil our fun"* (p.16, italics mine) The consequence of these rapes was the conception of Popi who grew despised by the other children as she was teased for being a bushman like Magret in *Maru*. She goes through endless days of despising herself and this led to numerous soul searching bordering on the urge to commit suicide as society had a warped view of her body especially, but not confined to her complexion but her hairy legs that was a

constant reminder of how different, alien and worthless she was. The mirror becomes her most hated reflector as it validates what the whole town of Mahlatswetsa has been proclaiming from the rooftops as to how out of place she was in a society that did not want to accept her as one of their own. There are moments when Popi manipulates “silence” as a rebellious act and as something constitutive of the subaltern’s inability to articulate her displeasure with her treatment by the hegemonic discursive erasure of her being. Dominant ideology has a penchant to wipe away the humanity of the subaltern, be it in terms of denying him religious, political, socio-economic and literary validity, or providing him/her with a trivial place hierarchically speaking. The other motive for her silence could be related to her engineering “silence” as a seditious act to overturn the apple cart of the ruling class. Popi while reticent to attach her identity to past iniquities is nonetheless conscious of what happened by listening through the grapevine. The narrator vocalises her reminiscence as: Old people had a tendency to remember things that happened thirty years ago whenever they say Popi. And to think of people she knew nothing about. For no one had ever given her any history lessons on the events that had shaped the town of Excelsior. She knew vaguely that there had been a scandal. *Snippets of gossip about her origins had drifted her way throughout her twenty-nine years of existence. She never asked Niki about it and Niki never volunteered anything. Popi did not want to know. She was Pule’s child.* (p. 217, own italics).

Toward the end Niki, her mother, apologises to her for making her a “coloured” to which Popi retorts: “God made me coloured Niki, not you. You have no business to be guilty about anything” (p. 260). Subsequently they embrace and Popi’s acceptance of her body would have reached a pinnacle or a pivotal moment. She also finds closure within herself when Tjaart Cronje her half- brother and someone with which she had a frosty relationship through the many turf wars they had fought on the racial and political divide for many years, comes to a pleasing end. The closure lies in the ability of Tjaart Cronje to let bygones be bygones and his acceptance of the new political status and her lineage with converges with his as they are fathered by the same man. He praises her beauty and gives her a relevant gift that will rehumanise her and declare publicly that they are brother and sister and urge her to stop the previous unrewarding fights and embrace the new friendship borne out by common ancestry and a common destiny in one country. His earlier rantings against Popi and Viliki who is Popi’s brother and whose father is Pule the husband to Niki would makes no sense at all. Earlier he harangued against Popi and her ilk for trampling on the rights of the Afrikaner. “I am fighting a lonely war on many fronts”, explained Tjaart Cronje. “It is Popi on one front

who always want to take the first opportunity to annoy me. But there is a broader and bigger front, where I fight for the rights of the Afrikaner – rights which are being trampled upon every day” (p.232-3). While Popi and Tjaart fight their territorial wars, it is Viliki who is the quintessential political activist in the novel. He is imprisoned for his political beliefs and when the country gains freedom he is given the position of mayor in the merged town articulating the views of the majority. Mda’s novel appears to attempt to disrupt the normative order of the political status quo by re-inscribing the silenced indigenous presence which has been made into an absence by the hegemonic panopticon which effectively monitors and mutes the screams of the dejected masses.

Finally, Mda’s (2002) intends to recentre and rehumanise the multitude who have been decentred and dehumanised in many areas of human existence for millennia. One of the cardinal objectives Mda adheres to appears to be the welcoming gesture in his novel towards international solidarity in the fight for justice and the consequent joy that comes when one’s country is liberated and such a country becomes part of the global community in brotherhood and blissful conviviality. On page 128 the narrator states: “Then he told her about other struggles that were inspiring the youth. Frelimo in Mozambique. Swapo in Namibia. The Polisario Front in Western Sahara”. The relevance of the story for the novel as a whole is the didactic purpose it has to teach the young generation that the liberation of South Africa was not an isolated incident, but was inextricably linked to other struggles from which it learned and received sustenance in terms of political moral and material support. To elucidate the issue further, Mda is in congruent concert with Martineau (2014 who decries colonialism’s wish, “to confine Indigenous stories to multicultural frames and to domesticate, individualize and separate them from their originary communities and lands” (p.7).

Serote’s novel, *To every birth its blood*, is probably one of the most politically radical novel among the three studied. If politically committed artists are to be understood in terms of how artists advance the political agenda of the oppressed, then one can safely say that this novel does justice to that criteria. This novel appears to speak to the various areas in which the peripherised are suppressed, while it also offers rebellious ideas on how to fight and resist subjugation in its variegated forms. What is more, the novel efficaciously employs “silence” as a dissent producing method for the eventual deliverance of those who eternally labour under the yoke of tyranny. Equally noteworthy is the certainty that “silence” can also designate the inability of the novelist to appropriately capture what appears to be a muted response by the excluded from the table of the elite and socially well connected. The sensed “silence” can

probably be in the mind of the “native informant” who cannot hear what Ngugi elsewhere has described as the “silence that screams” for justice”. We are hence meant to read against the grain for the subtext to hear what ordinarily might appear to be indistinct voices. Lastly the novel contains a wealth of passages where the ostracised toil in a Sisylus-like struggle against overwhelming odds to free themselves from the fangs of a brutal monster called apartheid. To this end there are torture chambers dripping with the precious blood of the downgraded as well as disappearances and death by a variety of means, like someone ostensibly jumping from the tenth floor of the notorious John Vorster Square interrogation room and countless assassinations.

The novel elucidates and thematises the daily harassment of ordinary folk in South Africa with special emphasis on the Alexandra township which was and still is the most backward township, yet vibrant in South Africa. Alexandra is described in very negative terms as the hotbed of squalor, poverty, joblessness, abuse of liquor to while away time and ubiquitous criminality. Alexandra is probably an appropriate setting since most of the subversive activities had their genesis in “Alex” as it is popularly known. The Soweto uprising which is alluded to in the novel had its origin there as well as other seditious turmoil like the campaign to make the country ungovernable of the mid- eighties, which while not covered in the book is probably foreshadowed by what takes place in the novel proper. The first part of the novel puts heavy emphasis on Tsi a journalist by profession who is disillusioned by the lack of career opportunity in his township and has a brother whose name is Fix who gets into trouble with the police as well.

The first part generally is about a few characters languishing about the township and viewing the lack of opportunities present in the city. In the second part more characters like Nolzwe, the female character who was assassinated by the police together with Oupa, who will also die at the hands of the security establishment are introduced. We have Dikeledi whose father languishes on Robben Island as well as a policeman whose name is Mpando who is considered dangerous as he works for the government and is eliminated by Oupa who in turn is killed while in prison. The novel thus problematises loss of job opportunities, disillusionment, and internecine violence. Violence appears to breed violence and there are lots of killings which lead the characters to reflect on the meaning of life in such tortuous situations. The novel explores the suppression of the side-lined people and this includes spatial seclusion which has a bearing on one’s ability to enjoy the fruits of the country’s economy. The banished are equally secluded from the political and education landscape as they teeter on the margin of

society. They also experience educational exclusion as they are relegated to an inferior education system in the guise of Bantu education.

With regard to spatial isolation one sees Tsi lamenting his second class citizenship status in the following manner in terms of him being the offspring of two different tribes which according to Verwoerd (the inventor of apartheid) is treated like a miscarriage as he does not belong to any distinct group. Tsi claims on page 29 that since his father was born in Lesotho and his mother in Natal, this makes him an aberrant human being in the eyes of Verwoerd. Here he is ranting against the influx laws of South Africa that determined where one could live either as a Zulu (from Natal) or a Sotho (from Lesotho) in urban spaces created to separate the different tribes. On page 59 the narrator makes Tsi express hopelessness and despair when he utters the following: “You ask me if you will have grandchildren. What for? Where is the future they will take in their hands?” (p.59). He narrates about the hopeless situation their spatial location bequeaths them with as there is despair everywhere. Their economic situation which is determined by their lack of mobility as they are enclosed within a tiny space could not have been worse.

The masses are equally repressed in the economic sense seeing that they are alienated from their labour as they must hurry to places of employments even if these places do not meet their basic needs. The narrator describes their pitiable situation as:

“to get to the buses in time, to trains in time. And this haste was to satisfy those who have decided that they own everything, the stones in the gut of the land, the land itself, and everything the land including the women, men and children, controlling everything right down to decisions about where blacks will make a shit” (p. 112).

The passage quoted above represents the essence of subjugation of the masses by the dominant group, and leaves no sphere of their earthly existence untouched. Since all areas of human endeavour have been systematically filled by the ascendant group the ostracised are left with no other option but to fight. Dikeledi is muttering these thoughts when she realises that her father has been given fifteen years for sabotage:

There was no other way now that any other thing can be done with the present way of life, with this South Africa, with the South African way of life; there was nothing else that could be done to save it; there was only one way left – people had to fight. She understood now that there was no way of people being born free. She understood that there was no such thing as freedom being asked for, that freedom must be fetched, must be won, must be fought for (p. 232).

Finally, the novel effectively manipulates “silence” as a subversive tool in the hands of the disenfranchised multitudes or as a trope alluding to the elite’s inability to hear the seemingly inaudible plight of these people. Decoloniality goes a step further than postcolonialism as it has a clearly defined option for the emancipation of the demoted. In arguing for the liberation of the downgraded through imaginative strategies, Martineau and Ritskes, (2014) view the agenda of decolonial epistemology which include artists, scholars and activists as not only offering “amendments or edits to the current world, but to display the mutual sacrifice and relationality needed to sabotage colonial systems of thought and power for the purpose of liberatory alternatives” (p. 2). These “liberatory alternatives” appear to be the issues that Dikeledi is grappling with considering her father’s incarceration. Before the thesis concludes a quotation about the use of “silence” as a disruptive tool to the dominant mode of viewing the world is in order. Here “silence” is a sentient being and anthropomorphised as it describes the last moments of Oupa before he breathed his last:

The silence here is stubborn. The mountains and the hills and the trees, even the sky, persist and are stubborn. Their sizes and heights are sizes and heights of silence. The way cattle stare at you. The way sheep keep eating and eating, in the silence of the grass and the trees, in the silence of the sunlight and the sky, in the silence of the wind. The silence is stubborn here. It does not matter whether the birds sing or horses neigh. *The silence; it seems to cover everything. It seems to cloack, it wants to protect, like a womb, like a mother. It spreads itself, it covers, it spreads. In a way that it alone knows, it is there...* (p. 313,own italics).

In conclusion Mogane’s (1981) novel like the other two celebrates the internalisation of the political struggle as it unashamedly recognises the fact that unity is strength and people can only fight the oppressive regime whose policies were the extreme and explicit operationalisation of modernity in denigrating the culture, religion of the indigenes. It also created hierarchies that separated races from tribes, the colour of one’s skin where white was favoured and black discounted as inherently inferior to the white colour. It is in light of the rehumanising aim of Mogane’s novel that he explicitly alludes to countries like Cuba when he declares: “All this that is happening now happened to many other people. It happened in Guinea Bissau, Algeria, Angola, Mozambique, Vietnam, Cuba, you know the people there pitted their strength against the mighty, the strong. The struggle for political independence was therefore bitter and long and the naming of Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Angola on page 347 in connection with falling bombs from jets and the destruction of whole villages completes

the unsavoury picture of suffering which will be celebrated in a spirit of geniality by all at the end. Mogane's novel truly rejoices in the collective victory gained which is decoloniality's vindication as the diverse people of the world with differences in language, culture, religion and other invisible and artificial markers of difference revels in their newfound freedom.

Mogane's (1981) and his aesthetics concur with Martineau (2014) who declares that indigenous art disparages the "enclosures of colonial modernity and into resurgent Indigenous visions of decolonial futures" (p.3). Martineau further elaborates that indigenous art "recognises the truth that to destabilize the pervasive mythology of colonialism (and its aesthetics) is to re-constitute and re- narrate spaces beyond and elsewhere" (p.3).

Chapter 5 Conclusion

The thesis attempted to explore the inferiorisation of the subaltern by the hegemonic group which discursively exclude the voice of the subaltern group through employing a variety of methods that are made to appear rational and a suitable manner to act as a “civilised” human being. The notion as to what constitutes civility is a red herring which the masses are urged to accept as containing universal truths or truths “without brackets”. These even though whatever truth one utters, one does so from a specific position in society and the person uttering these truths comes from particular locations in the modernity/coloniality matrix of power. The socio-economically, politically, linguistically and educationally peripherised are encouraged to not only repeat these platitudes but are motivated to forget their suffering in society in favour of harmony. Modernist thinkers are good at papering over the cracks and pretend that there is no disquiet brought about by the unequal access to resources by the different sections of the body politics.

The thesis undertook to study the plight of the subaltern or marginalised groups in terms of the areas in which they are side-lined. Similarly, the thesis examined the strategies these ostracised groups employ to not only soften their oppression but to protest these alienating forces.

Ultimately the thesis in addition to the above investigated the use of “silence” as a subversive tool in the hands of the ostracised to fight back the dehumanising treatment. Conversely, “silence” could also be a sign that the representatives of the dominant groups do not have the ability to decipher the message sent to them by the subjugated groups. The thesis did prove that overall these objectives can be studied as they are visible in the three novels. One other topic which attracted attention and was proven beyond expectation was the use of decoloniality and the related decolonial critical theory to be the guiding viewpoint with which to study the novels. It was a richly rewarding experience as it does not stop at apportioning blame, but goes a step further by encouraging people with multiple identities which find expression in culture language, religion and political beliefs to unite behind one banner of “third worldism” which promotes their diversity under what Mignolo labels “diversality” and “pluriversality” These two concepts denote their multiple entities. Decoloniality’s main thrust is the development of a language free from the entanglements of modernity that will enable it to study any phenomenon under the sun and transcend modernity through what many decolonial thinkers denominate as transmodernity.

Finally, the thesis will consider three concepts that will aid the consideration of other works with decoloniality's frame of reference. Decoloniality proclaims epistemic decolonisation, decolonisation of human reality and it preaches the adoption of what many decolonial thinkers refer to as the shifting geography of reason. Epistemic decolonisation is flagrantly defiant of the oppressive Western world view which sees its views as sacrosanct and universally applicable in all climes, times and situations. Epistemic decolonisation urges people of the Global South to take the destiny in their own hands when constructing knowledges in all areas of human endeavour. Decolonisation of human reality is related to the former, but the only distinguishing characteristic is the bold view it takes towards reality as it does not regard reality piecemeal, but views reality holistically. The demarcation of reality into small constituent parts as Eurocentric ordering required is thus rejected in favour of a connected reality. The last concept that many decolonial thinkers bandy about is the shifting geography of reason, which denotes the creation of centres in countries of the Global South where places of knowledge excellence will be established. All these three concepts are defiant and transgressive of the dominant Western world view and encourage scholars from the Global South to hammer out strategies for analysing reality with tools they create to suit their peculiar circumstances. In conclusion, when researchers from the Global South have chiselled out these excellent tools fit for purpose, decolonial critical theory can be employed to analyse locally published narratives like the Namibian auto/biographical genre which narrates stories of struggle and eventual liberation. Decolonial critical theory can be suitably used to study other South African works where the subaltern is marginalised. It can also be used to examine novels tackling slavery in Africa and the diaspora because in all these instances the Global North and the Arab world have employed language that denotes reasonableness, yet degrading to justify the oppression of others, based on their perceived lack of a proper language, culture, religion and other surface determinants of human value and worth. The slave trade was not only employed by the West but the Arabs as well, since they regard people with a different religion as "kafir", which can lead to discrimination, since such a group of people seen as unbelievers can be easily targeted for derision and humiliation. Narratives from subjugated people like the bushmen can also be studied employing decoloniality, because these suppressed small people have valuable narratives that can be used to enrich the whole of humanity, because they have survived for millennia in very hostile and unforgiving environments, making their narratives particularly enlightening, invigorating and humanising to them and the ignorant who regard these people

as relics of the past with nothing substantive to offer for the survival of the human race in harmony and gentility.

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