



APARTHEID AND THE RECONCILIATION  
PROCESS IN POST-APARTHEID NOVELS OF  
SOUTH AFRICA

BY

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## **ABSTRACT**

The research thesis “Apartheid and The Reconciliation Process in Post-Apartheid Novels of South Africa” looks into the novels written by Nadine Gordimer, J.M Coetzee, Phaswane Mpe and Zakes Mda. Despite apartheid being abolished in 1994, Democratic South Africa is still plagued with social ills and there is still a widespread of racial discrimination between the whites and the blacks. The Truth and Reconciliation Committee was set up right after apartheid was abolished, to help facilitate a truth recovery process. Forgiveness has been forwarded yet redemption and reconciliation are somewhat elusive, as discrimination and instability still exists due to the stigma apartheid has left. In this thesis, I will examine the role of literature in looking into the past and to probe if the past has or can be buried in order for reconciliation to take place. All the novels deal with the issue of the process of reconciliation between the present and the past which plants the seeds of hope for a new beginning that allows for a future in which there is racial equality before the ‘New’ South Africa emerge.

## خلاصة البحث

تبحث هذه الدراسة في الروايات التي كتبها نادين جولدماير، وي م كوتزي، و فسوان مب، وزاكس مدا. فعلى الرغم من القضاء على سياسات الفصل العنصري في جمهورية جنوب أفريقيا عام 1994م، إلا أن جنوب أفريقيا لا تزال مبتلية بكثير من العزل الاجتماعية، ولا تزال التفرقة العنصرية واسعة الانتشار بين البيض والسود هناك. ويمكن إرجاع المشكلة العنصرية إلى فترة سياسات الفصل العنصري حيث تم تقسيم المجتمع على إثر أحداث العنف السياسي آنذاك. و تم تكوين جمعية الحقوق والإصلاح بعد إلغاء سياسات الفصل العنصري مباشرة، وذلك لتيسير عملية إنعاش حقيقية، عن طريق الاستماع للضحايا والجناة لكسر حواجز الصمت من الزمن البائد مما يمهد الطريق لإجراء مصالحة تأخذ مسارها. وبعد إعلان العفو أصبحت المصالحة بعيدة المنال لحد ما، وكذلك استرداد الحقوق، وذلك لأن التفرقة العنصرية، وعدم الاستقرار الاجتماعي ظلوا موجودين مع أن نظام الفصل العنصري البغيض قد ولى. ويُعدُّ الشروع في هذا البحث فرصة لتسليط الضوء على إسهامات الروايين، وكيف صوروا مأساة السود وخضوعهم لسياسات الفصل العنصري بإسهاب، وإبداع، كما ستسهم هذه الدراسة في توضيح حقب الظلم الغابرة، ولماذا ما زالت باقية حتى الآن! وأظهر الباحث أن فترة العنف الحالية أي ما بعد سياسة الفصل العنصري، لها علاقة بسنوات الظلم الماضية. وستنظر الدراسة كذلك في دور الأدب في النظر إلى الماضي، فاحصة ما إذا كان الماضي قد قُبِرَ أو هل يمكن أن يُقبر من أجل بناء مصالحة حقيقية؟ وسيقيم هذا البحث نموذجاً فعالاً لفهم الأسباب التي جعلت جميع الأدباء يتحدثون عن الماضي، لأن أحداث ذلك الماضي تُعدُّ أمراً أساسياً في فتح آفاق المستقبل لرحاب العفو، والمصالحة. ولا شك أن الدراسة المتعمقة لهذه الروايات تُظهر أن جميع هذه الروايات تسرد قصة مصالحة بين الماضي والحاضر، مما يبذر بذور الأمل في بداية جديدة تسمح بمساواة عرقية في المستقبل، وتؤذن بظهور جديد لجنوب أفريقيا.

## APPROVAL PAGE

The thesis of Hardev Kaur has been approved by the following:

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

Hardev Kaur

Signature .....

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*This work is dedicated to all the 'Others ' and a special message to everyone around  
the world:*

*First God created the Light: by His power He created all people equal.*

*From One Light came the entire universe. So who is good, and who is bad?*

*Bhagat Kabir.page 1349*

*Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

At the present moment in history, there is a renewed interest in defining and redefining nationhood in the processes of dealing with past and reconciliation. Discourses of past and reconciliation have emerged in recent years in nations struggling with the legacies of colonialism. There is now a sizeable literature which considers the way in which countries previously split by civil war or whose people have been the victims of brutal regimes or discrimination have attempted to settle the past through the process of reconciliation in order to secure a better future.

The notions of Truth and Reconciliation commissions to restore and heal society through forgiveness have become counterparts or substitutes to criminal trials. It is through forgiveness that, “[w]e are saying here is a chance to make a new beginning” (Tutu, 1999, p. 220). I would discuss the past and reconciliation as they have unfolded in South Africa, a country which is engaged in the process of reconciliation after being inflicted by a brutal past.

South Africa gained independence in 1994 after forty-six years of atrocious colonization known as apartheid or racial segregation where the blacks and coloured were suppressed by the white colonial rulers. With democracy, came the national reconciliation, South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This Commission was set up in order for the perpetrators and the victims to tell their stories in order to break the silence of the past and to pave way for the process of reconciliation to take place.

Despite the democracy and TRC's effort to stabilize South Africa, the country is still in a state of chaos, where violence, social inequalities, and other social ills are most glaring. My thesis, titled "Apartheid and the reconciliation process in post-apartheid novels of South Africa" intends to contribute to the understanding of the reasons behind the chaotic state of the present South Africa by focusing on the past, in which she suffered in the hands of apartheid.

The novels I have chosen for critical analysis in this research are *The House Gun* (1999) by Nadine Gordimer, *Disgrace* (2000) by J.M Coetzee, Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow* (2001), Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (2002) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2004). All the novels selected for the purpose of this study engage in rethinking the effects of apartheid, question the past as a justification for present injustice and critically examines how forgiveness is conceivable and can nourish hopes for the achievement of reconciliation.

Across the globe, there are injustices and oppression inflicted on those natives who could not defend their motherland from oppressors. These countries would include South Africa, East Timor and Rwanda, just to name a few. In addition, the efforts of minority groups to seek amends for past injustices have become an important area of study. The Australian Aborigines are a good example.

Studying the past in the creative works of the South African writers is not without reason. History should be studied to learn from the injustices of the past and the past should be removed from the present in order for the process of reconciliation to take place. Dorothy Driver (1997) argues that, "if we are to understand one another-and ourselves-in the vaunted 'new South Africa' we need to know one another's stories and to tell our own" (p.102). Johan Degenaar maintains that the historical past in novels could be written in an artistic way, as "[e]vents in the past have to be

interpreted in an imaginative way. Storytelling is the most appropriate way of doing this. Stories about the past enable us to create and share a common future” (Gallagher, 1997, p. 385).

South African literature of the post-apartheid era has been dominated with the past, and the frequent interruption of history or the past on the present fulfils two functions, one, the reconstruction of identity and the other, reconciliation. In South Africa, the phrase “dealing with the past” (Boraine, 2001, p. 13) can be traced to the apartheid era where societies were divided by the memory of political violence. Thus, the South Africa’s problem with the past has been variously called apartheid, racial segregation, separate development and racial discrimination.

This apartheid era would be defined as a time when certain legislative measures to segregate the blacks from the whites came into being and legitimized with the victory of the National Party in 1948. It is important to note here that the blacks and the coloured were not allowed to vote in this election. This suppression of blacks could be traced back to the Slave Trade where the blacks were forcefully taken as slaves and were oppressed, as far back as the sixteenth century. After the 1948 elections, the world saw one of the most brutal attacks on blacks in the modern era where blacks were segregated from the whites and they were treated like slaves in their own land.

‘Throughout the twentieth century in South Africa, Black Nationalist movements attempted to challenge the minority rule of the whites, but this led to a long chain of martyrs and to establish even further, the white minority. The government controlled the movement of the blacks by the system of ‘pass law’, whereby, a black person could not live in a town unless he had a pass showing he was working in a white-owned business.

An African could not leave the farm where he worked without a pass from his employer. The living and working conditions for blacks were primitive. For example, in the gold mining industry, Africans had to live in single-sex compounds with sometimes as many as ninety men sharing a dormitory. After the Second World War, there were important changes in the way black Africans were treated. Under Prime Minister Malan (1948-1954), a new policy called apartheid (separateness) was introduced.

Most of the whites, especially those of Dutch origin, were against racial equality. But the most extreme were the Afrikaner Nationalist Party led by Malan. They claimed that the whites were a master race, and the non-whites were the inferior beings. The Dutch Reformed Church supported this view and quoted passages from the Bible which, they claimed, proved their theory (Posel, 1991, p. 13). This would mean that “[w]hites were chosen as the conveyors of Christian faith and Western civilization,[thus] [a]partheid was essential to maintain white domination, and those who resisted this scheme of things could not be tolerated” (Boraine, 2001, p. 220).

Opposition to the menace of apartheid soon began and the African National Congress (ANC) led by Chief Albert Luthuli was thus formed. Protests were held at small scales but reached its climax in 1960 when a huge demonstration took place against the pass laws at Sharpeville where sixty-seven people were killed and hundreds more injured. Thousands were arrested which included Nelson Mandela, an ANC member who later became the first democratically elected South African president. Mandela was arrested and imprisoned due to his involvement in a ploy to overthrow the ruling white government.

Another massacre took place in Soweto in 1976 when the Transvaal authorities announced that the Afrikaans language was to be used in all African schools. Police

fired at the crowd killing two hundred people, mostly school children. Stephen Biko, a black leader was caught and brutally tortured in the prison in 1976. Political changes only started taking place when a lesser radical leader, F.W. de Klerk was elected and when the United Nations placed an economic boycott on South Africa. The United Nations, in 1973 declared “apartheid as a crime against humanity” (Deegan, 2001, p. 137).

In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison after twenty-seven years in jail. The apartheid regime had kept the majority of its people, blacks and coloured-separate. When they protested, they were often tortured. Death was frequently so gruesome as to defy even the most active imagination. And for a variety of reasons, those who suffered at the hands of the apartheid state usually suffered in silence. The April 1994 elections formally brought the apartheid era to an end. In that year, millions of black Africans turned out to vote for the first time.

Those who were involved in setting this election felt that in order to sustain a democracy, the victims’ voices had to be heard and that, “it was time for issues of memory, forgetfulness and history to enter the public sphere” (Deegan, 2001, p. 136). All South Africans would have to learn as much as possible about the causes, nature and extent of the human-rights violations under apartheid. In order to forge a better future, the nation would have to honestly confront its past. Subsequently, the first independent body established in the post-apartheid era was the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC). Reconciliation can be defined as:

[a]n effort to establish a new and constructive relationship between the perpetrators and the victims based on shared principles of justice, equity and mutual respect. Without reconciliation, conflicting parties may come to some sort of accommodation, perhaps an uneasy truce, but seldom an enduring peace. In reconciliation, the parties involved take steps to ensure that justice be served. They then work to remove the

residues of mistrust, which, if unaddressed, would linger as latent sources for future conflicts. (Rose, 2005, p. 20)

The TRC, as it came to be known, was designed to help facilitate a truth recovery process. The deal was to hold out the promise of amnesty in exchange for the full truth about the past and demand for apology in order to heal those who were wronged in such a brutal ordeal, and to ensure a better future of the new South Africa. The apology is considered significant since it provided international recognition of the victims' own memory and suffering and an admission of guilt by the perpetrators and thus helps the healing process.

Forgiveness must be given in order to start the process of reconciliation. It is through forgiveness that, "we are declaring our faith in the future of a relationship and in the capacity of the wrongdoer to make a new beginning on a course that will be different from the one that caused us the wrong" (Tutu, 1999, p. 220).

Sixteen years have passed by since apartheid was established in 1948 and South Africa's democracy can be considered to have consolidated itself. But being a country that suffered so much of atrocities and struggling to move on from the days of apartheid, South Africa is now burdened by a new set of turmoil, that of violence where the respect for law and life is missing. Despite achieving democracy, one may ask, what is the point of democracy when South Africa is still plagued with social ills, social inequalities, and corruption?

According to Thabo Mbeki, "[m]any South African government posts are held by people who took their jobs with the sole intention of stealing" (Vine, 1998: par 1). Corruption is then linked to a wider problem of escalating crime. Although crime is a sure feature everywhere, South Africa has one of the highest numbers of murder and rape in the world. The Institute for Security Studies reveals that in 2008, as many as

50 South Africans are murdered while on average, 150 cases of rape are reported in a day. (OSAC, 2008: para. 2).

As for AIDS/HIV, according to a 2007 statistics, South Africa is experiencing one of the most severe AIDS epidemics where there are approximately 5.7 million people living with AIDS and almost 1,000 deaths occurring every year (HIV/AIDS, 2008: para. 2). Xenophobic violence was seen recently in Johannesburg where around 30,000 African migrants were brutally attacked as mobsters accused these foreigners of taking jobs and being involved in the escalating crime. Most of these foreigners are from the neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe, Somalia and Nigeria. This violence can be considered the worst after apartheid ended where dozens were killed, some using the notorious necklacing method which was used during the apartheid violence (Anti-immigrants, 2008: para. 1-5).

While apartheid belongs to the past, its consequences remain to be dealt with as it still faces many social and political dilemmas that are far from being resolved and are recurring themes in literature published in the country. Although all the novels in this study still deal with the past, the researcher will show that all of these novels portray characters who realize that dwelling in the past cripples the process of reconciliation. The characters recognize that in order to make a better future possible, they have to reject hatred that still exist among the blacks and the whites. They also have to plant the seed of forgiveness which will allow them to coexist in order to live harmoniously. To achieve this, I will critically examine the novels, *The House Gun* (1999) by Nadine Gordimer, *Disgrace* (2000) by J.M Coetzee, Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow* (2001), Zakes Mda's *Ways of Dying* (2002) and *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2004). These contemporary writers of South Africa show in

their novels that the past still dwells in the present. Their novels also show how the characters go through the process of reconciliation in order to live in harmony.

Nadine Gordimer is a South African writer who examines the social and political realities of South Africa; Rita Barnard echoes this when she writes,

Nadine Gordimer's novels may seem straightforwardly realist-more so than then they actually are [f]or there are frequent moments in Gordimer's work when, without entirely breaking the realist frame, she engages in a self-reflexive meditation on the meaning, form and reception of fiction. (Barnard, 2007: 41)

In the pursuance of it, Nadine herself confesses, “[t]ruth isn’t always beauty, but the hunger for it is” (Gordimer, 2011: par 2). Thus, Gordimer’s writings usually expose apartheid as, “realism of a direct and polemic kind is the most logical mode of representation and of responses to apartheid and post apartheid conditions” (Attwell, 2005, p. 169).

Politics during and after apartheid has played a big role in South African writings as many writers have broken the silence to write about the atrocities committed against the people of South Africa. Gordimer has constantly acknowledged this, as mentioned by Rowland Smith: “[p]olitics affects all aspects of life in South Africa, her writing, even in its apparently most private and personal moments, deal either implicitly or explicitly with the politics of that society” (Smith, 1990).

Stephen Clingman, the author of *The Novels of Nadine Gordimer: History from the Inside*, agrees that Gordimer’s writings uncover the true face of racism: “There are to be no lies, no party line, no propaganda, for the sake of a good cause. If anything is to help a good cause, it can only be the truth, neither society nor the self is to be left immune from [Gordimer’s] uncompromising scrutiny” (Clingman, 1992, p. 5).

Being born in South Africa, apartheid has been a crucial experience of her life and this has enabled her to “capture and transform reality into fiction” (Szczurek, par 1). Her works have always given authentic portrayals of African culture and through it, one is able to have an insight of the politics of South Africa with the rise of the National Party and its countless laws of separation and suppression and the dismantling of apartheid, as Robert Green puts it: “Finally, when the history of the Nationalist governments from 1948 to the end comes to be written, Nadine Gordimer’s shelf of novels will provide the future historians with all the evidence needed to assess the price that has been paid” (Head, 1995: 2).

Her novels comment on changes in South African society and politics over the past four decades. Nadine is a writer of both apartheid and the post-apartheid period in South Africa.

*The House Gun* is her first novel which is set in the post-apartheid era. In this book, the causes and consequences of violence in the post-apartheid state are examined through a murder trial. It is in this book that we see a transition to post-apartheid themes and characters struggling to adjust to changing political and social realities in South Africa particularly the after effects of apartheid and the shifting dynamics of social relations. *The House Gun* is about Claudia and Harald Lindgard, a middle class professional white couple whose son, Duncan has been arrested for committing a murder of his white housemate, Carl Jaspersen over ‘a crime of passion’. Duncan uses a house gun, which is supposed to be kept for protecting oneself, yet here; the gun is used for the murder, which shows that violence remains insidiously normal in South Africa.

Thus the notion, “something terrible happened” (Gordimer, 1999, p. 1) can be read as encompassing not only the murder of Carl Jaspersen and the post-apartheid violence depicted in the novel, but also the apartheid past itself where violence was dominant. It is this reliving the past that Harald and Claudia are shocked that their son has employed a black lawyer to defend him. The dependence of privileged whites on a black lawyer doesn’t make any sense to his parents, yet it is this black lawyer who shakes them out of their racial niche and changes the sentence from death penalty to life imprisonment.

Gordimer places personal relationship in the foreground in a carefully controlled narrative, in which an authorial voice dominates. Gordimer, in this novel is optimistic about the future of South Africa to be a better one. According to Clingman, “Gordimer figures into this [optimism], her first novel set in post-apartheid world, the oscillating profusion of voices that must make South Africa’s future, transcending the past by building new relations beyond the fixed geometry of the old, offering a vision of possibility” (2000, p. 156).

In this novel, as in most of Gordimer’s works, the personal becomes political, as Bruce King puts it:

In Gordimer’s fiction, there are often tension between the personal and the political and between the traditions of the European novel and the urgencies of African politics. In both spheres, the personal and artistic, there is a strongly-felt need to overcome feelings of being alienated and isolated by the burden of colonialism and to become part of the ongoing new black-governed Africa and the political processes that are shaping her era. (1993, p. 1)

Nadine Gordimer, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1991, has always been the “defender of human rights and a declared opponent of apartheid” (Szcurek, par 1).

The second novel, *Disgrace* is written by J.M Coetzee who is also the 2003 Nobel Prize Laureate. John Maxwell Coetzee was born on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1940 in Cape Town to Vera Wehmeyer, a schoolteacher, and Zacharias, an attorney. His parents were “*bloedsappe*, Afrikaners who supported General Jan Smuts and dissociated themselves from the Afrikaner nationalist movement” (Marais, 2006: para. 1). He received his B.A in English Literature in 1960 and two years later, he received his M.A from the University of Cape Town. He completed his doctoral programme with his doctoral dissertation “The English Fiction of Samuel Beckett: An Essay in Stylistic Analysis”.

Michael Marais states that the research on Beckett “made a definite impression on [Coetzee’s] subsequent novelistic practice, as is evident in his use of minimalist scenarios and limited number of characters” (Marais, 2006: par 8). His novel *Duskland* (1974) and his novel *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983) won him a Booker Prize. Most important, however was the publication of *Disgrace* (1999) which not only won him his second Booker Prize but also heavy criticism by the ANC government, which, in an oral submission to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) of inquiry into racism in the media used *Disgrace*, “as an historical witness to the persistence of racism among white South Africans” (McDonald, 2002, p. 87).

According to David Attwell, the whole public outcry was nothing but an, “overheated discussion about what is the least complex-and, arguably, least interesting-area of the novel’s performance: its socially mimetic function” (Attwell, 2002, p. 23).

Despite of all the oppositions, Coetzee won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2003 and the ANC were among the first to congratulate Coetzee for his success. With

his exposing the truth that racism still prevails in post-apartheid South Africa, Coetzee's stand on truth telling can be likened to the character, David Lurie in *Disgrace* when Lurie remarks, "[e]xcuse me for talking in this way. I am trying to be frank" (*Disgrace*: 166).

From the novels and speeches of Coetzee, we see that he seems to have lost the desire to separate history from politics. His novels *Age of Iron* (1990), *In the Heart of the Country* (1997) are set in the apartheid era, while *Disgrace* (1999) is set in the post-apartheid era. Patricia Merivale reinstates this when she writes, "[a]ll J.M Coetzee's novels are remarkable, if oblique, parables of, among other things, the contemporary political situation in the Republic of South Africa" (1996, p. 152).

Although being a white writer, Coetzee's depiction of the brutality of apartheid and the traces of it in post-apartheid South Africa clearly leans to the oppressed and the subjugated blacks or the colonized and Stephen Watson quotes the following of Coetzee: "The one fact most important for an understanding of the apparent anomalies in his work is that he is not only a colonizer who is an intellectual, but a colonized who does not want to be a colonizer" (1996, p. 23).

This Booker prize-winning novel is written after the country's first all-race elections, in 1994. It has, therefore most often been analyzed as a novel about the new South Africa, where the social problems relating binary oppositions such as black-white, powerless- powerful are stressed.

In this novel, David Lurie, a white professor in a university relives the apartheid time where he could exert his weight over any woman he desired. He ends up sleeping with his coloured student and is accused of rape. It is his daughter Lucy's rape incident by a black man and her decision to keep the baby that creates the image of a present and future that remedies past violence, as Lucy says, "I am prepared to do

anything, make any sacrifice, for the sake of peace” (Coetzee, 2001, p. 208). I will show that Coetzee, through the character Lucy, wants to tell that the way to adapt to the changes in the country is to make a fresh start, regardless of skin colour.

The third and the fourth novels are written by Zakes Mda. Zanemvula Kizito Gatyeni Mda or famously known as Zakes Mda was born on 6<sup>th</sup> October 1948 in Sterkspruit, Eastern Cape. His father who was the founding member of the Youth League of the African National Congress and later the founding member of the Pan-African Congress (PAC) was a chief opponent of the apartheid regime.

His son, Zakes Mda first started writing plays and his first play was *Dead End* which was performed in 1978 and his play *Banned* was performed in 1982. It was only in 1995 he started writing fiction with his first, *She Plays with Darkness* and then *Ways of Dying*. Both novels were awarded literary prizes.

Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying* and *The Madonna of Excelsior* are novels set in the early 1990’s, when South Africa was facing social turmoil and political instability. Both novels portray the difficulties and sufferings which were brought about by the transitional period which also conveyed an urgent need for change and the possibilities of transformation and redemption.

Mda is also the author of *Heart of Redness*, another post- apartheid novel which tackles the issues of apartheid in the post-apartheid era. Here, it is obvious that Mda’s novels “compels us to contemplate one of the most striking thresholds of recent history-the demise of the apartheid regime” (Barnard, 2004, p. 279). In his writing, Farred states about Zakes Mda: “Mda highlights the plight of the down trodden and is said to be, a writer with a strong affinity for the voiceless and the disempowered, and cautious about a black elite he has dubbed ‘the new gatekeeping class’ (Farred, 2000, p. 185).

*Ways of Dying*, the winner of the M-Net Book Prize is about Toloki, a ‘professional mourner’ who makes a living on people’s lost ability to mourn at funerals in the city as a result of violence during the transition period. In this novel, the past is relived with people using the ‘necklacing’ method during the clashes among the blacks and whites. At a Christmas day funeral for a young boy, Toloki is reunited with Noria, a woman from his village and together they help each other to heal the past which, “[is spoiling] the moment by bringing up contrary opinions about a past that is dead and buried forever” (Mda, 2002, p. 164).

*The Madonna of Excelsior*, which won the Zora Neale Hurston/Richard Wright Legacy Award, is set with the background of the notorious 1971 case in which nineteen citizens of Excelsior in the Free State were charged with breaking apartheid's Immorality Act, which forbade sex between blacks and whites. Mda highlights the issues of identity and language in his story of a family at the heart of the scandal. Niki is one of the women who is caught, the fallen Madonna, who transgresses boundaries for the sake of love and her choices have profound repercussions in the lives of her black son and her mixed-race daughter, Popi.

The treatment given to the ‘coloured’ children born out of these sexual encounters is distressing as they are not only rejected by their white fathers but also the black communities where their mothers reside. Popi who comes of age in the years after apartheid then joins the local Council politics, but is constantly reminded of her identity as the whites still consider her as the Other. She faces discrimination and finds it difficult to be respected in the council. It is Johannes Smit, a white Council member who finally realizes that, “we can’t live in the past forever. Bygones should be allowed to be bygones” (Mda, 2004, p. 252).