

**THE PORTRAYAL OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN ZAKES MDA'S
THE MADONNA OF EXCELSIOR AND J. M. COETZEE'S
DISGRACE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

by

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RESEARCH DISSERTATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

ENGLISH

in the

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

(School of Languages & Communication Studies)

at the

UNIVERSITY OF LIMPOPO

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2010

Declaration

I declare that The Portrayal of Sexual Abuse in Zakes Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace: A Comparative Study* hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo, for the degree of Masters of Arts in English has not been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university; that it is my work in design and in execution, and that all material contained herein has been duly acknowledged.

K.S. Makgato (Mr)



Date

Acknowledgements

- I would like to thank my supervisors, Prof. Nettie Cloete, and Dr. Lukas Mkuti, for their immeasurable support, encouragement, patience, and guidance throughout the writing of this dissertation.
- My thanks are also due to my wife, Saibi, for her understanding and my children, Madumetja and Lerato, for their love.
- I will do myself injustice if I forget to thank my brother, Ephraim, and my cousin, Matome, for lending me their laptops throughout my research study.
- I am also grateful to my sister, Emily, and my niece, Maisha, for their support.
- I am, furthermore, indebted to Pheny Computers for their support in supplying me with the necessary electronic information throughout this study.
- My gratitude also goes to all my relatives, friends, and colleagues who played a part in the writing of this research project. Had it not been for their support I would have found it difficult to finally complete this study.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Mmamala Mumsy Annah, and my late father, Madumetja Hendrick Makgato.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the way in which two South African novelists, Zakes Mda and J.M. Coetzee, portray the sexual abuse of women during the apartheid and post-apartheid eras. The two selected novels used in this research are *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) by Mda and *Disgrace* (2000) by Coetzee. The research, furthermore, analyses the attitudes of the sexual abusers and their victims in both eras as well as examines the effects of socio-economic imbalances that might have prompted the men to sexually abuse women whom they should be offering protection against any form of violence and abuse. The study furthermore identifies and analyses the factors that hinder victims from reporting their sexual abuse to the police. Finally, this dissertation also presents a comparative study of the differences and the similarities between the way the two novelists portray sexual abuse.

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CHAPTER ONE

1 CONTEXUALISATION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of patriarchy in South Africa has resulted in the social construction of gender roles, which have led to men being viewed as superior and better than women. The superiority of men over women entails, among other factors, power and control over them. One of the mechanisms men use to subordinate women is sexual abuse. Abraham and Jeykes (2000:2) define “sexual abuse as the use of force or coercion to jeopardise the life, body or emotional integrity of women in order to perpetuate or service male power and control”. This research study investigates the different forms of sexual abuse that include, inter alia, rape, sexual harassment and sexual assault in the two selected texts, Mda’s *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) and Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (2000). For the sake of clarity, each of the three forms of sexual abuse will be investigated here. Keyser and Purdon (1995:2) view rape as “an unlawful and intentional sexual intercourse between a man and a woman without her permission and it involves penetration”. According to Byer and Shainberg (1994:620) sexual harassment entails “an unwanted, coerced and usually repeated sexual attention a person receives which makes him or her uncomfortable such as an unwanted kiss, pinch, hug, look, profanity, and pressure for a date”. Hansson (1990:184) sees sexual assault as an “unlawful and intentional applying of force directly or indirectly to a person to commit an act which is sexual in nature”.

It is obvious that these definitions only relate to males abusing females because they define the topic under discussion. The study is, however, aware of the fact that males can sexually abuse other males while females can also sexually abuse men as well as other females.

This study intends to compare the way Mda and Coetzee portray sexual abuse in two

different time frames in South Africa. *The Madonna of Excelsior* will be used in this study to show sexual abuse of women that took place during the apartheid era when black people were still under subjugation. In his text, Mda depicts the way in which a black woman, Niki, is sexually assaulted and harassed by a white Afrikaner farmer, Johannes Smit. Mda furthermore portrays partner-swapping orgies between black women of Mahlatswetsa Location and well-respected Afrikaners of Excelsior. All these people contravene the “Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950” (Bernard, Cronjé, and Olivier, 1986:115). The study goes on to evaluate various attitudes of the characters towards these forms of sexual abuse in *The Madonna of Excelsior*.

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee depicts the sexual assault of a coloured student, Melanie Isaacs, in her own flat by her white professor, David Lurie, at Cape Technical University. The setting is the new South Africa. Even David himself admits, “it is not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core” (*Disgrace*:25). Coetzee also portrays the rape of David’s lesbian daughter, Lucy Lurie, by three black men. The study identifies and analyses the attitudes of different characters towards the two forms of sexual abuse in *Disgrace* as well as other aspects of sexual abuse.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 1948 the National Party won the national elections and gained power to rule South Africa. Once in power, it introduced new Acts to consolidate and nurture the supremacy of whites over blacks. Among the Acts that it promulgated was the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. This Act prohibited sexual contact between white people and people of colour. Ross (1999) reiterates that this Act was meant to preserve the purity of the white race from being contaminated by the blood of black people. The apartheid government promoted patriarchal attributes that included, among other things, racism and sexism that intended to promote the white man’s power, in the process oppressing and exploiting both black men and women. One way in which some white men abused their power over black women, who were their employees, was to sexually abuse them, certain that the victims would be afraid to report the perpetrators to the white dominated police. The victims also suspected that if they reported the matter to the police, their grievances

would not be believed. In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda attempts to capture such a situation by depicting the attempted rape of a black woman, Niki, by her father's former white employer, Johannes Smit. When she insists on reporting her sexual assault to the police her friends, Mmampe and Maria, dissuade her by hinting that the police will not believe her because she has accepted Smit's money, and that she might even be arrested for breaking the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950 (Bernard, Cronjé, and Olivier, 1986:115). Mda is intent on showing that Smit uses his power as a wealthy Afrikaner farmer to subjugate and humiliate Niki. He seems to enjoy the violation of black women because some of his victims point out that he had been with them on a number of occasions (*The Madonna*:19).

Economic imbalances and inequality between black and white people had a huge impact on the way black people made a living. Black people were poor because they were oppressed and treated as second-class citizens. On the other hand, white people were wealthy because the government gave them all the privileges. The poverty of the black people led black women to submit and be subservient to white men, who saw an opportunity to sexually use and abuse them. The partner-swapping orgies between the Afrikaner men and black women in Smit's barn are a case in point (*The Madonna*:52). The orgies are primarily meant to satisfy the lust of the white men. Eventually, these orgies breed coloured children and the culprits are arrested for contravening the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. The irony is that the Act is broken by the very people it tries to save from the contamination of their race. In shaping the story this way, Mda satirises apartheid Acts.

This study identifies and analyses various perceptions and attitudes of the characters towards forms of sexual abuse as depicted in the novels.

Disgrace furthermore shows that it is difficult for some whites to forsake the apartheid mentality that whites are superior to people of colour. In the new South Africa, as depicted in *Disgrace*, a white professor finds it hard to control his relationship with his students. In an era where an educator is expected to treat a student with respect and

dignity the professor sexually harasses and assaults a coloured female student, Melanie Isaacs, at Cape Technical University because he still sees himself as having power over women as he was taught so during the apartheid era. Her sexual violation emanates from his belief that a woman is a man's possession because he keeps repeating: "a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone and she has a duty to share it" (*Disgrace*:16). *Disgrace* also portrays the rape of a white woman by three black men who seem to be on a raping spree to consolidate their power over women, particularly white women. This study evaluates the attitudes of various characters towards Melanie's sexual abuse and Lucy's rape.

1.3 AIM OF STUDY

The aim of this study is to compare the way in which Mda in *The Madonna of Excelsior* and Coetzee in *Disgrace* portray various forms of the sexual abuse of women in South Africa in two different periods of history.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

- To analyse the perceptions and the attitudes of both black and white people concerning sexual abuse in the apartheid and post-apartheid eras.
- To examine the effects of socio-economic imbalances between black and white people in the two eras which might have prompted men to commit sexual abuse of women.

1.5 RATIONALE FOR STUDY

Since sexual abuse is centuries old, it seemed that with the advent of democratic principles, the cases of sexual abuse would decline but instead statistics show that they have increased. According to People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA, 2008), "at least one in every three women will be beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her life time and one in four women is in an abusive relationship". However, it would seem that

the novels depict only a few forms of sexual abuse. The reason why the researcher intends to compare the portrayal of sexual abuse in the two texts, namely *Disgrace* and *The Madonna of Excelsior*, is to show how serious, demeaning, and traumatic this crime has always been to women, and to evaluate whether there has been a paradigm shift with regard to attitudes and perceptions during the apartheid as well as the post-apartheid eras. In *Disgrace* Mda explores the theme of hypocrisy and double standards exercised by the white Afrikaners who are stout supporters of apartheid laws such as the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, which guards against contaminating whites' purity yet they are the ones who contravene it by committing sexual abuse of black women. Their action is a testimony that even highly respected, wealthy, and married men in the community are liable to commit sexual abuse and this confirms the assertion that men who are known to the victims commit many forms of sexual abuse.

In *Disgrace* Coetzee grapples with the sexual abuse of women in the new South Africa which seems to be caused by the inability of men to accept the new era of equality. David Lurie sexually assaults his student, Melanie Isaacs, and all he tells the newspaper reporters is that "he does not regret what he did because he was enriched by the experience" (*Disgrace*:56). David does not see a woman as his equal but as someone incomplete without a man and justifies the abuse he is accused of as "an impulse he couldn't resist" (*Disgrace*:53). Coincidentally, three black men rape David's daughter, Lucy Lurie, and she refuses to report the case to the police even when her father insists that she should do so. What is striking is that the principles that he has applied to Melanie when he abused her do not seem to apply to his daughter and his hypocrisy and double standards are what Coetzee satirises.

The researcher has chosen *Disgrace* because with it Coetzee, the winner of the 2003 Nobel Prize for Literature, won the 1999 Booker Prize as it masterly depicts the new South African situation. Additionally, *Scrutiny*² has published numerous articles of the symposium on this novel in 2002. Like Coetzee, Mda is a prolific writer who has won several prizes such as the *Sunday Times* Fiction Award in 2001, the Commonwealth Writers Prize in 2001 and the M-Net Book Prize in 1997. The Library and Information

Association of South Africa (LIASA) (2004) chose *The Madonna of Excelsior* as “one of the top ten books of the first decade of democracy” because in this novel Mda clearly demonstrates the negative effects of dichotomising white people as good and black people as bad.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The value of this study is to make the readers aware of the traumatic effects of the sexual abuse of women, particularly rape. Since it has been shown that most forms of sexual abuse of women are caused by men, it is imperative that men be educated to see themselves as equal to women because this will make them stop regarding women as their property. The advent of democracy in South Africa has witnessed numerous women becoming economically independent and this trend seems to frustrate many men who resort to sexual abuse as a form of validating their superiority over women. The present study thus highlights that strangers do not commit most incidents of sexual abuse as people used to believe but they are usually committed by men who are known to the victims. This tendency effectively dissuades the victims from reporting their abusers to the police for fear of second victimisation. It is crucial that the victims be properly counselled and emotionally supported to encourage the influx of reports of incidents of sexual abuse so that more perpetrators can be brought to book and severe punishment be meted out to deter other potential sexual abusers. This research will also contribute to the body of knowledge of literature on sexual abuse of women by men in South Africa.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Walliman (2001:227) asserts that “in the field of literature the researcher uses qualitative research that does not involve statistical analysis, but comparison, analyses and interpretation”. He furthermore notes that “qualitative research is used to construe the attitudes, beliefs and motivations within the subject”. In this study qualitative research has been used because a comparison of the portrayal of sexual abuse in the two selected texts is done. The study uses both primary and secondary texts. The two primary texts

that are used whose setting is South Africa are Coetzee's *Disgrace* which focuses on sexual abuse in the post-apartheid period and Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior*. Mda's novel concentrates on the sexual abuse in the apartheid period. Secondary texts and sources that were used in this study include books, journals, articles, and Internet information. The researcher analysed and interpreted a variety of attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, myths, and misconceptions pertaining to sexual abuse in the apartheid and post-apartheid eras.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

Swift and Ryan-Finn (1995:14) point out that:

Sexual abuse is not a modern phenomenon. It crosses historical eras, geographic boundaries, and demographics of race, class and education. One demographic factor that sexual abuse rarely crosses is that of the gender of the abuser. Over 90% of sexual abusers are males.

Mda and Coetzee have succeeded in showing that sexual abuse indeed crosses historical eras because *The Madonna of Excelsior* depicts sexual abuse in the apartheid era while *Disgrace* portrays it in the post-apartheid era. The study attempts to show that in these two selected texts the sexual abusers are males who are influenced by many factors to commit sexual violation of women. The study furthermore confirms the assertion that sexual abuse crosses geographical boundaries.

Robertson (1998:1) argues that “South Africa is traditionally a male dominated and patriarchal society. Women hold limited power and authority and are frequently exploited”. During the apartheid era men were taught to play male roles that entailed seeing themselves as wielding power over and dominance against women who were perceived as the weaker sex. These attitudes were nurtured in men and it is difficult to eradicate them now. The sexual abuse of black women by white Afrikaners in Smit’s barn during the partner-swapping orgies is about validating that belief. With the dawn of the democratic South Africa men were expected to undergo radical change so that they should regard patriarchy as exploitative of women. However, many men have been frustrated by the gender equity transformation. To confirm their power and superiority they tend to commit various forms of sexual abuse of women out of frustration. Lurie, for instance, sexually harasses and assaults Melanie, his student, and he eventually disgraces himself by failing to acknowledge that what he has done is wrong. The patriarchal mentality that he is a man in charge still exists. Farodia Rassool states:

“Yes, he says, he is guilty; but when we try to get specificity, all of a sudden it is not abuse he is confessing, just an impulse he could not resist, with no mention of the pain he has caused, no mention of the long history of which this is part” (*Disgrace*:53).

The study thus attempts to show that attitudes such as those of David Lurie which include his inability to control his impulse must be condemned and that every abuser should be punished.

Goodman (2004:63) states that:

The Immorality Act indicated how much whites projected their own felt inferiority onto black people and how crucial it was to the state to maintain the binary system it had established, attempting to naturalize it by labeling any breach of the system as abhorrent.

When the apartheid government came to power it introduced the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, to forbid interracial sex between black and white people. The Act prevented black people from contaminating the purity of the white race. But the irony was that it was the white people who contravened the Act in *Excelsior* in the 1970s (*The Madonna*:93). Shaw (2002:50) notes that “whites were seen as victims and blacks as perpetrators of crime”. The two novels under discussion here do not take such a stand.

Brownmiller (1975:146) argues that “rape is not necessary a crime of irrational, impulsive and uncontrollable lust but a deliberate, hostile, violent act of degradation which inspires fear and intimidation”. She believes that the patriarchal society itself is responsible for formulating the misconceptions that all women want to be raped and that they enjoy it. She responds to some claims that shift the blame from the rapist to the victim of the rape. This study confirms the assertion that rape is about power by alluding to Lucy’s rape by three black men in *Disgrace* who use their power as men to subdue and humiliate her.

Allison and Wrightsman (1993:5) claim that “People tend to simplify rape, forgetting that there are multiple motivations for rape, many different situations and settings in which it

occurs, and many different kinds of rape victims, including men”. They vehemently react to the old school of thought that tends to homogenise a variety of rape, particularly the myths that the rapist is a stranger, his motivation is entirely sexual, and the victim is always female, young and physically desirable. The rape of Lucy Lurie in *Disgrace* serves as a case in point to show that rapists indeed have different motivations. This study indicates that the motives of the rapists are to degrade and punish her and to validate their power over her.

Marais (2001:32) asserts that “Roodt has coined the word ‘Lucy-syndrome’ to signify the notion that white South Africans should be prepared to abase themselves for the collective responsibility for apartheid”. It is left to the reader to decide why Lucy refuses to report her rape to the police because nowhere in the text does Coetzee provide the reader with a clear reason. Even Lucy's father fails to understand her unwillingness to report the matter. She proclaims that “the reason why she does not lay a charge of rape is that, as far as she is concerned, what happened to her is a purely private matter and that in another time, in another place, it might be held to be a public matter” (*Disgrace*:112). Hoffman and Zeffert (1988) proclaim that many victims of sexual abuse do not report their cases to the police for fear of second victimisation. This study associates Lucy's refusal to report her rape to this claim as well as that of expiating the wrongs of apartheid.

Krog (1999:217) argues that “women's bodies are, in time of social conflict and disjuncture, sites for struggle or pages upon which the narrative of guilt may be written”. This study shows that Lucy's body is used as a site for the struggle against power and dominance between black and white people in the new South Africa, that is, her abuse seems to be politically motivated.

Azoulay (2002:39) claims that “Lucy's body turns into a battlefield while her father is left behind”. The relationship between black and white people in *Disgrace* is explored in this study to see whether it warrants Lucy's body to be sexually violated.

Bower (2003:17) “confesses to being ambivalent with Coetzee's creation of Lucy and that

what she represents seems to him to be extreme, unrealistic and an unlikely option outside of the pages of a work of fiction and that there are survival strategies alternative to expiation through rape”. The researcher has interrogated this assertion to prove that every writer of fiction has the right to portray his or her characters the way he or she deems fit. If a writer wants to depict characters in the way the critics want them the assertion that art be for art's sake becomes farcical and hence reading fiction will no longer yield any pleasure. People such as Niehaus have appealed for humility on the part of white South Africans (Marais, 2001) and this indicates that some whites associate themselves with Roodt's Lucy-syndrome.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux (2004:1) state that “Niki cannot forget the trauma of being raped by white men”. Molakeng (2001:12) furthermore proclaims that “the same sentiment is echoed by one journalist who claims that the novel is about the rape of black women by whites in the Free State in the 1970s”. It is the intention of this study to show that in their first encounter Smit fails to rape Niki as there is no penetration, and that Stephanus Cronjé never rapes Niki because nowhere in *The Madonna of Excelsior* does Mda clearly state that he has had sexual intercourse with her without her permission. It is the intention of this study to show that only Johannes Smit sexually assaults Niki on several occasions and to highlight the misreading of intimating that Cronjé too rapes her. Niki succumbs to Cronjé's sexual advances to take revenge for the humiliation his wife has inflicted upon her in their butchery and their illicit affair is unlawful and is not based on passionate love.

Modisane (1986:213) states that “all in South Africa are struggling with a sex complex, since sex apartheid is fundamental to South African social and political thinking”. It cannot be denied that the legacy of apartheid including sexism will not be easily eradicated. There are still incidents that indicate that men keep on believing that they are superior to women as they were taught by apartheid education. The sexual assaults of Melanie by her white professor and Niki by Smit serve as good examples which this study intends to explore in detail to prove that apartheid indeed supported sexism and patriarchy.

Goodman (2004:67) asserts that “Mda's focus is on the complexity of South African society, reflecting and challenging both current and past discourses”. Mda destabilises some of the apartheid misconceptions that dichotomised black people as perpetrators of crimes and white people as victims. The white lawyer, Adam de Vries, believes that his white clients who are charged with breaking the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, have been framed, and Smit knows that if Niki reports him as her abuser no white policeman will ever believe her. Instead, she might be charged with contravening the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. This study proves that, to a certain extent, the empowerment of the white people by apartheid laws might have prompted some whites to sexually abuse the black women whom they employed.

Hunter (2003:2) suggests that “Mda focuses on two main periods, that is, from 1965 when a white farmer first raped Niki who was eighteen years old to the trial in 1971 and then from 1994 when apartheid was reaching an end in about 2000”. This study therefore proves that in their first sexual encounter Smit fails to rape Niki because he cannot penetrate her due to his impotence. Rather than calling their first sexual encounter rape per se, the study terms it attempted rape or sexual assault. This study thus reveals the various forms of sexual abuse that a number of female characters are exposed to in the two selected novels.

The Feminist theorists argue that sexual abuse results from long and deep-rooted social traditions in which males have dominated nearly all important political and economic activities (Ellis, 1989:10). This is confirmed by the way some male characters in the two novels ill-treat their female counterparts. Clark and Lewis (1977) claim that women are viewed as little more than property and they are, therefore, prone to numerous types of sexual abuse. Dworkin (1981) has written that all men benefit from rape because all men benefit from the fact that women are not free in this society. Feminist approaches do not consider sexual gratification to be a prime motive for rape; rather rape is seen as the use of sexuality to establish or maintain dominance and control of women by men (Brownmiller, 1975). Factors such as desire for power and domination, sexual

aggression, and sex disparities in social status that might have prompted men to abuse women are discussed, using the two selected texts to test the truth of this theory.

The social learning theory states that aggression is learnt primarily through imitation and thereafter sustained largely through various forms of intermittent reinforcements (Bandura, 1978). The social learning theory regards sexual abuse as an aggressive behaviour that was learned from observing acts in real life or through the mass media. Social learning theorists see sexual abuse as resulting from the joint influences of cultural and experiential factors mediated as well as attitudes, sex role scripts, and other thought processes that link physical aggression and sexuality in the minds of males (Ellis, 1989:14). Prostitution and pornography permit a portrayal of women in subservient and degrading ways, hence contributing to the incidence of crime (Allison & Wrightsman, 1993). *The Madonna of Excelsior* shows that the Afrikaner boys want to imitate their fathers who bed their black maids while *Disgrace* depicts that among the three black rapists, one is a boy who is being taught how to rape. The cultural backgrounds of the sexual abusers in the two selected novels are highlighted to prove that what a person sees and hears can influence his or her behaviour in a negative or positive way.

The evolutionary theory claims that “social behaviour evolves because it is adaptive to propagating the species” (Ellis, 1989:15). Evolutionary theorists believe that males have a stronger tendency for evolving traits that increase their chances of inseminating large numbers of females, rather than fastidiously taking care of a few offspring (*ibid.*). This theory claims that women are likely to be more selective than men in their choosing of sexual partners (*ibid.*). The men who lack socially favoured characteristics are less likely to be selected by the opposite sex to produce offspring. The evolutionary theorists claim that males who have not been selected by females are likely to be sexually coercive towards females in an effort to produce their genetic make up (Ellis, 1989:70). If this theory is true it remains questionable as to why men who do not have female partners are not sexual abusers and why married men such as Barend Jacobus Nolan, Stephanus Cronjé, Groot-Jan Lombard and Reverend François Bornman in *The Madonna of Excelsior* abuse women. This study has attempted to show some truth and flaws

pertaining to this theory by using the two selected texts.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Both Mda and Coetzee intend to show that each period of history has its own factors that may prompt men to commit sexual abuse of women and that society itself plays a crucial role either by preventing or promoting sexual abuse. The apartheid government seemed to promote sexual abuse because it encouraged gender power imbalances and racial discrimination, hence Niki's sexual violation by Smit. If the secondary victimisation of survivors is completely done away with numerous incidents of sexual abuse will be reported to the police and punishment will be meted out. In the new South Africa men need to be taught that women are their equals who must be treated with dignity and that there is no need to be threatened by the gender equity that the present government has introduced to address the past oppression of women. The media need to do away with those productions that promote sexual violence against women and boys need to be kept away from an environment with a high risk of developing sexually abusive behaviours. In this way sexual abuse of women will probably be reduced in the new South Africa and the world at large.

CHAPTER TWO

2 MDA'S PORTRAYAL OF VARIOUS FORMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN *THE MADONNA OF EXCELSIOR*

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter shows the various forms of sexual abuse such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, and rape of black women by white Afrikaners. Moreover, it evaluates, in detail, the attitudes of the various characters towards the sexual abuses and the effects these sexual abuses have on the victims as well as the perpetrators. In addition, this chapter focuses on how white people sexually abused young black women who, at times, worked for them as servants. It also analyses the role of the police and the judiciary system in validating the impunity of the white people who committed such sexual abuses. In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda grapples with various forms of sexual abuse of black women by white men in the Free State town of Excelsior during the apartheid epoch. He furthermore explores the way in which the government regarded the contravention of the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950 (Bernard, Cronjé & Olivier, 1986:115) as a hideous crime.

2.2 FORMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

2.2.1 Johannes Smit's sexual assault of Niki

In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda portrays how Johannes Smit regards black women as his chattel, something he should have. Mda depicts Smit as an Afrikaner who is a slave to his own secret desire for black women of Mahlatswetsa Township. Smit's intention is to satisfy his sexual lust by trying to seduce black girls by giving them money. One of the girls he seduces is Niki, Mda's protagonist, who is eighteen years old and stays with her father in a single corrugated-iron shack, the floor of which is made of cow-dung. Lawyeraau (2004:10) states that "Niki is under-educated, lives a life that apartheid

regulates, and lives in a substandard house.” Her poverty makes her an easy prey for Afrikaner men who seem to have a prurient interest in black women. Her mother has died and her father does not have a steady job. She decides to go to the field with her two friends, Mmampe and Maria, to collect dung to make fire to cook the family meal and to warm her room, as she cannot afford to buy paraffin, let alone electricity. While the three girls are collecting the dung and putting it in their sisal sacks, Johannes Smit, a farmer for whom Niki’s father has sometimes worked for as his handyman, approaches.

On his arrival he cracks his whip to fill them with terror and Niki feels scared and wants to run away but he blocks her way. The scaring of Niki with his whip and barring her from going home are both parts of sexual assault. The fact that her two friends giggle demonstrates that they have played this game with him before. His action of cracking his whip does not frighten them. It is the first time that Niki witnesses this game because she is still a virgin, hence the name “Madonna” as the title of the novel indicates. Mda likens her to the Virgin Mary in the Bible because unlike her two friends she has never slept with a man. Mda depicts her as having heard of the white farmers who waylay black girls in the fields but she has not experienced it. While she is still terrified, Smit starts giving each girl a one-rand note. She hesitates to take it, but when her two friends accept it she eventually takes hers too. He gives her another one-rand note and after that, he gives her the third one-rand note. Realising that she has accepted his three one-rand notes, Smit commands her to follow him into the sunflower field. In the words of Amir (1982:115), “Niki has put herself in a vulnerable situation by accepting his money.” Her two friends insist that Niki should go because he has chosen her by giving her more money than them. When he sees that she is unwilling to go he grabs her and drags her into the sunflower field against her will. Mda recounts:

Deep in the sunflower field, Johannes Smit pulled off Niki’s Terylene skirt. She tried to hold on to it, but he had the strength of ten demons. He threw her on the damp ground. Then he pulled down her panties and took them off. He sniffed them, which seemed to raise more demons in his quivering body. He stuffed the panties into his pocket.

Yellowness ran amok. Yellowness dripped down with her screams. He slapped her and ordered her to shut up. Her screams were now muffled with his hand on her mouth. His pants were at his ankles. He lay on top of her and pleaded, "I am sorry, I didn't mean to hurt you. But if you make noise, people will come and spoil our fun" (*The Madonna*:16).

This incident reveals that Smit is a sexual pervert. He uses his physical power to assault her. He finally overpowers her and manages to lie on top of her. However, he ejaculates before he penetrates her and, therefore, this is not rape per se but sexual assault. He curses his penis for failing him but still "he just lies on top of her like a plastic full of decaying tripe" (*The Madonna*:16). This act illustrates that his mind is willing to commit sexual abuse upon her but his manhood fails him. Finally, Niki manages to push him away. She pulls up her skirt, and runs home frightened and angered. When her two friends attempt to stop her she does not heed their call. Mda describes her predicament:

At home she got under the blankets and cried for a long time, until she fell asleep. She woke up when her father arrived in the evening, drunk as usual. He was fuming because she had not cooked any food. She tried to explain that she was not feeling well. And in any case, there was no food to cook because he had not left her any money. But he was not prepared to listen to any lame excuses. He was going to beat the laziness out of her. He was going to lash her buttocks with a belt until they were sour. To placate him, she ran to the tuck shop and used Johannes Smit's money to buy her father a loaf of bread and a big can of pilchards in tomato sauce (*The Madonna*:16-17).

Mda attempts to show how depressed Niki feels after her assault but the irony is that she uses Smit's money to buy food for her drunken father when he threatens to beat her for not cooking him supper. It is ironic because the money she uses is what she got from her sexual abuser. This event is crucial in this novel because it reflects the reason why many black women succumb to being sexually abused by men. Her father's conduct does, in a way, make her vulnerable to sexual abusers such as Johannes Smit. It is thus no wonder that many women such as Mmampe and Maria become prostitutes for the mere reason of obtaining money to sustain their poor families. The reader is, therefore, not surprised that Niki eventually joins the two in their escapades with the white men.

2.2.2 Stephanus Cronjé's sexual assault of Niki

Compelling Niki to strip in front of a number of men as an exercise of power and control over her has had a tremendous sexual impact on Madam Cornelia's husband, Stephanus Cronjé. Farah (2004:2) relates that "the act of shame and disrespect sows the seeds of the affair between Niki and Cornelia's husband" because he increasingly lusts for her. He "has ogled Niki's pubes with short entangled hair, her breast, lips and buttocks" (*The Madonna*:42). Since that day, fantasies have filled him because he no longer sees her as a whole person but as body parts. This leads to an urgent lust of sleeping with her. His chance to have her avails itself during the cherry festival at the Free State town of Ficksburg. When Johannes Smit insists on telling Stephanus Cronjé that Niki is "[his] provision for the road" (*The Madonna*:49), Stephanus becomes agitated and his jealousy emerges. Stephanus tells Niki that it is he that she should be having sex with rather than Smit. Stephanus is sure to win Niki from Smit because she works for Stephanus and he is, therefore, in a better position to control her, unlike Smit who has sexually abused her before. Eventually she accedes to Cronjé's sexual advances to punish her Madam. When night falls, Stephanus and Niki become intimate in the outskirts of the town. For Niki this is an act of vengeance against Stephanus' wife for having humiliated her in the butchery while simultaneously subverting Stephanus' power over her:

He was deep inside her. Under the stars. She looked into his eyes in the light of the moon. She did not see Stephanus Cronjé, owner of Excelsior Slaghuis. She did not see a boss or a lover. She saw Madam Cornelia's husband. And he inside her. She was gobbling up Madam Cornelia's husband, with emphasis on Madam. And she had him entirely in her power. Chewing him to pieces. She felt him inside her, pumping in and out. Raising a sweat. Squealing like a pig being slaughtered. Heaving like a pig (*The Madonna*:50).

Their act is a triumph to both of them. It is, on one hand, taking revenge on Stephanus' wife for debasing Niki in public. Stephanus' power as a white man remains subverted as the event reduces him to a pig that is helpless when faced with death. Mda uses the image of a pig to show the animal behaviour of Stephanus because he is squealing and heaving.

She has power over him now because “she is gobbling him up and chewing him to pieces” (*The Madonna*:50). Breaking him into pieces connotes that he is powerless on top of her. Nevertheless, on the other hand, Stephanus has defeated Smit who is Cronjé’s rival because Smit too has wanted to have Niki to himself.

The fact that Stephanus is white and Niki is black makes their relationship unlawful because the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, forbids sexual intercourse between white and black people. Goodman (2004:63) suggests: “The whites believe that such contact would diminish and pollute the purity of the white race” because whites see blacks, according to Duncan (2002:135), as “the mud race”. Stephanus abuses Niki sexually because their relationship is not based on love but on vengeance, on the one hand, and retaliation against Smit for breaking away from the National Party to join the *Herstigte Nasionale Party*, on the other hand. Furthermore, Stephanus has also abused his power as Niki’s employer. However, his illicit affair with Niki does not end at the cherry festival but blossoms thereafter. They have sex on several occasions in Madam Cornelia’s bedroom when she has gone to visit her parents in *Zastron*. Niki revels at the idea of sleeping on her Madam’s double bed which serves as a space of sanctity. It should be borne in mind that in those days women still gave birth to their children on their main beds with the help of a midwife. Niki thus destroys the seed of life in the Cronjé’s marriage, so to speak.

Furthermore, Stephanus and Niki are among the participants of the partner-swapping orgies that take place in Smit’s barn. These actions restore pride in Niki because she feels that she has taken revenge against Madam Cornelia. Niki succeeds in using her body to attain power over Stephanus. She revels in having power over him when he finally persuades her to resign from the butchery to evade the discovery of their affair by Madam. Subsequently, Cronjé gives Niki more money once a week than she has acquired when she has been working for him in the butchery. Mda subverts Madam’s power by reducing her to the position of a servant while Niki stays at home. She can be regarded as Niki’s servant because some of the money that Stephanus gives Niki is taken from Madam’s till in the butchery. Eventually, a coloured child is born from the illicit

relationship. She is named Popi, who, according to Flockemann (2004:253), “embodies the structural violence and violations of apartheid, as well as its own transgressive desires”. Popi is a racially mixed child who serves as evidence of the contravention of the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. She is an indelible mark because through her, Madam Cornelia, according to Zulu (2006:11), “hates black people in general as if they took away her husband and she infects her son, Tjaart, with her resentment of blacks”. Furthermore, Popi will always remain Tjaart’s sister because they share a father, Stephanus Cronjé. Mda also states that “Cornelia hated the bastard (Popi) for being a smoother, delicate, and more beautiful version of Tjaart” (*The Madonna*:150) because Popi reminds her of her husband’s infidelity by cheating on her with a black woman.

The predicament of Popi whom they regard as neither white nor black brings to mind Eilersen’s *Bessie Head, Thunder Behind Her Ears: Her life and Writing* (1995) which chronicles Bessie Head’s biography. Bessie’s father was black and her mother white. After her birth, they registered her as a coloured according to the Population Registration Act, No. 20 of 1950 (Bernard, Cronjé & Olivier, 1986:115). She could not stay with either her mother or her father because the Group Areas Act, No. 22 of 1950 (*ibid.*), did not allow her to live either in a white area or in a black area. The failure to accept her by either whites or blacks eventually forced her to exile herself in Botswana where she found herself alienated further because she could not speak Tswana. Bessie’s life resembles that of Popi because Popi is given numerous insulting names such as “Boesman, bald-headed girl, hotnot girl, bushman girl, and coloured girl” (*The Madonna*:111;113) to illustrate her alienation and hybridity. They call her the bald-headed girl because her mother regularly shaves her head to hide the straight texture of her hair that prompt other black children name her “the one whose head looks like a white woman’s buttock” (*The Madonna*:111) and her mother is bothered by the attitudes of her community towards her daughter.

2.2.3 Barend Jacobus Nolan’s sexual assault of Cecilia Mapeta

It is not only Niki whom the white men sexually abuse in *The Madonna of Excelsior*.

Cecilia Mapeta, a school teacher, on the Valbankspoort farm in the Rouxville district, also experiences sexual abuse by an Afrikaner farmer. One evening a white man named Barend Jacobus Nolan, a former traffic inspector, visits Cecilia. He instructs her to tell her pupils that they should not play on the road. After the delivery of the message, he orders her to get into his car so that she can close the gate after he has passed through. However, he does not stop at the gate as he promised but instead drives in the direction of Aliwal North. While driving he suggests that they should have a love affair but she refuses. Mda states:

For the second time she refused him. He grabbed her arm and twisted it. She started crying and he hit her. Nolan undid the shorts he was wearing and made an indecent suggestion to her. He put his hand up her dress. After she pushed him away and told him to stop it, he offered her R5 to have intercourse with him (*The Madonna*:52).

All his indecent actions of assaulting her indicate the power he has over her. He cannot accept her refusal because the apartheid mentality has taught him that as a white man he can always have his way with black people. Though frightened, she manages to jump out of the car and runs away when the lights of another car appear.

The actions of Nolan towards Cecilia demonstrate sexual assault because he tries to force himself on her even though she has turned down his sexual advances. According to Vogelmann and Lewis (1993:3), “patriarchy has taught men to define their power in terms of their capacity to effect their will without the consent of those involved, especially women”. Nolan does not accept her refusal and does not care that he is demeaning her as a human being because of the laws and policies that categorise whites as superior and blacks as inferior. Nolan automatically expects her to accept his proposal without questioning. It would seem that her turning him down comes as a shock to him and hence he takes out his anger and frustration by harassing her. He twists her arm and hits her.

However, when Nolan realises that his physical power may not suffice to achieve his objective of subjugating her, he resorts to using his economic power. He tries to give her

a five-rand note to woo her to sleep with him but she refuses. She seems to be a very determined and principled woman because she does not allow his small amount of money to compromise her dignity as a person. The argument is that had it not been for the arrival of Constable Nel after the tip-off, Nolan could have forced himself on her to degrade her. With the refusal of Cecilia Mapeta, Mda attempts to show that even though the apartheid mentality succeeded in making a black woman inferior to a white person, in this instance, it cannot take away her dignity. She seems very assertive and proud of herself. She is adamant that she does not want to have a loose affair with a white man.

2.2.4 Johannes Smit's sexual harassment of Niki

Subsequent to her rape, Niki secures a job at Excelsior Butchery to work as a labourer after her marriage to Pule. Smit, however, continues dogging her and waving bank notes at her to lure her but she ignores them. Smit pretends to go to Mahlatswetsa Location to catch her attention when he realises that she, together with her colleagues, have knocked off. However, Niki finds his pursuits quite irritating because she is pregnant with her husband's baby. Pursuing her at work and on the way home against her will is pure sexual harassment by Smit. She could have reported the matter to the police had the judicial system of the country permitted such a charge.

Despite her indifference, he persists with sexually harassing her during the cherry festival at the Free State town of Ficksburg after the birth her son, Viliki. Smit, furthermore, harasses Niki with the intention of having sex with her when he discovers that she and other servants from far away towns sleep in a primary school in the black township of Marallaneng. During the festival Smit tells her that he wants to bed her at the place where she sleeps. He also reminds her that she has been his "sleeping partner" (*The Madonna*:48) from the first futile attempt in the sunflower fields as well as "[his] padkos-[his] provision for the road" (*The Madonna*:49). His threat unsettles and scares her and she wishes that he does not find out where she stays. Threatening to bed her at her place without her permission is sexual harassment but fortunately, he never finds her because Stephanus Cronjé has taken her away.

2.2.5 Johannes Smit's rape of Niki

Smit's sexual abuse of Niki does not end on their first sexual encounter. The influence and assurance of her two friends that his manhood will never penetrate her let her allow herself to be sexually violated there in the sunflower field over and over again. She lets him masturbate on her thighs to receive more cash from him to support her poverty-stricken family. Although Smit does not enter her on many occasions due to his persistent impotence, he once manages to enter her and this penal penetration destroys her virginity. From this day onwards, she vows that she will never allow Smit to abuse her again even though she needs money to sustain her family. Keyser and Purdon (1995:2) assert that "it is rape when the man penetrates a woman without her permission" and as such, Smit has finally raped her. The impact of this rape is unbearable to her because "for many days she tries to vomit him out but cannot because only the last meal and the bitter bile comes out" (*The Madonna*:19). Her actions here clearly illustrate how traumatic the rape is to her and that she needs counselling to help her stop punishing herself. She cannot confide in anyone because there are no black counsellors to help her to deal with her situation in a positive way. The lack of counselling for blacks brings to memory Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988:206) when Nyasha tells her father that "she begs to see an African psychiatrist". His answer is that there are no black psychiatrists and she is persuaded to see a white one against her will. This indicates that blacks were denied the rights to some careers because the white people saw them as inferior. Seleti, Dyer, Naidoo, Delius, Nisbet, and Saunders (1999:300) state that "the Bantu Education Act, No. 47 of 1953, provided the apartheid government with more power to control the education for black people and many church schools were forced into the state sectors or forced to close down".

2.2.6 Raping Niki with their eyes

Niki seems to be getting over the trauma after Smit has raped her when another incident happens that once again plunges her into a state of depression. While Niki works at Excelsior Butchery that is owned by Madam Cornelia and Stephanus Cronjé "she gets

subsistence wages but she is at the beck and call of her employers” (Lawyeraau, 2004:10). Her employers may ask her to do any other work in the butchery to show that they have power over her. One afternoon, however, Madam Cornelia forces Niki to undress in front of the other employers to ensure that she has not stolen meat. After Madam Cornelia has introduced a new system of weighing her workers twice a day to ensure that they do not steal her meat, the rule is that the morning weight should tally with the afternoon weight. Niki’s morning weight is 61 kilograms but in the afternoon, she weighs 62 kilograms. Eating her lunch very late at four, an hour before she knocks off from work, has caused this discrepancy. She could not have her lunch at the usual time because it is month-end and the butchery is busy with customers. The difference in Niki’s weight makes Madam Cornelia to suspect that Niki has hidden meat under her clothes and Madam thus orders her to undress in front of the other workers and customers. When she hesitates to carry out the order, Madam Cornelia threatens to lock her up in the cold room. Eventually Niki succumbs to Madam’s unreasonable and degrading demand. Madam Cornelia orders Niki to strip naked in front of her colleagues to teach her a lesson and to deter them from stealing in her butchery. This unreasonable and humiliating order is clearly meant to show the abuse of power by whites who regarded black people as objects to be abused and degraded, as the following passage reveals:

She stood there like the day she was born. Except that when she was born, there was no shame in her. No hurt. No embarrassment. She raised her eyes and saw among the oglers Stephanus Cronjé in his safari suit and brown sandals. And little Tjaart. Little Tjaart in his neat school uniform of grey shorts, white shirt, green tie and a grey blazer with green stripes. Grey knee-length socks and black shoes. Little Tjaart of the horsey-horsey game. His father had just fetched him from school. And here he was. Here they were. Raping her with their eyes (*The Madonna*:42).

Finally, Madam Cornelia has ‘sexually’ abused Niki by forcing her to undress completely because the Madam is aware that her husband, Stephanus Cronjé, and her son, Tjaart Cronjé, are looking at her private parts. Amir (1982:113) calls this type of sexual abuse “the rape of the mind” because here Niki has to adhere to being degraded in order to

retain her job. Moreover, Mda uses her body as a sexual arouser of the white men and hence the scene becomes a mockery of the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. Abraham and Jeykes (2000) suggest that the main aim of stripping Niki naked is to humiliate, belittle, and insult her since she has no power to retaliate.

2.2.7 The Partner-Swapping Orgies

Though black women such as Cecilia Mapeta have shown strong characters in defying the advances of white men, some black women easily give in to being sexually abused with the intention of getting money. Mda describes a scene where five black women from Mahlatswetsa Location leave their homes on the pretext that they are going to collect cow-dung in the veld while they are going to romp with a number of white men in Smit's barn. In the barn, they find five highly respected Afrikaner men of Excelsior drinking Smit's homemade cherry liquor left over the cherry festival (*The Madonna*:52). The two parties go on to indulge in partner-swapping orgies. Mda calls the five black women "the supplicants" (*The Madonna*:52) because they are there to humbly and earnestly beg the wealthy white men for money as they are too poor to feed their families. Mda does not depict the five women as the white men's lovers and equals but as chattels to satisfy their masters' lust. Flockemann (2004:253) relates that "the carnivalesque communal copulation sessions are for a small financial reward". The money that the white men give the women seems to be meagre because the women are supplicants. If the white men had not promised to give the black women any money, the women would not have come to the barn. The women are there to see that their masters are sexually satisfied so that they will eventually agree to pay them a stipend.

To dissipate their shame and embarrassment during the orgies the white men offer the black women cherry liqueur to drink. They promise the women that the drink will make them tipsy and let them regard the partner-swapping orgies as fun. The contention is that even the white men themselves are aware that what they are doing is immoral and illegal because they feel that if the women are sober they will not see the sex sessions as funny games. They urge them to get drunk first so that they can enjoy the performance. Only

Niki refuses to accept the offer of a drink. She is not prepared to play the game of swapping partners because she is aware of the power of her body. Whipple (2004:1) confirms Niki's bodily power when she states: "Niki is determined to cling on to her pride while using the only power she has, her sexual power over the men who want to control her". Niki is aware that Johannes Smit desires to sleep with her and she is not ready to sleep with him. Her sleeping partner who is not her lover, Stephanus Cronjé, is present in the barn and he does not want her to swap because he too realises that the other white men want to bed her. The four men are not satisfied with Cronjé backing up Niki when she refuses because they argue: "Cronjé has had the taste of other men's partners when Niki was not there" (*The Madonna*:53). She is only ready to stick to one partner because she is on a mission of humiliating Madam Cornelia for having degraded her in the butchery.

The other four women, who include Maria and Mmampe, seem not to care about the partner-swapping game. They succumb to becoming tipsy to regard the partner-swapping orgies as fun. They do not want to see the orgies as sexual abuse per se. Their sleeping partners are, among others, Johannes Smit, Groot-Jan Lombard and Reverend François Bornman. These Afrikaners are respected citizens among the Afrikaner community of Excelsior and they know that what they are doing in the barn is unlawful in accordance with the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. To demonstrate that the orgies are against the law Mda lets them take place in the barn and not in the house to show how the behaviour of the Afrikaners resembles that of animals. They are "squealing like pigs being slaughtered, and heaving like dying pigs" as the women chew them to pieces (*The Madonna*:50). The case of the Excelsior 19 reveals their secret of bedding these black women because racially mixed children are born and the Afrikaner community feels betrayed by the behaviour of these white men.

2.3 ATTITUDES OF CHARACTERS TOWARDS SEXUAL ABUSE

2.3.1 Attitudes of the victims towards sexual abuse

This section looks at the attitudes of the victims of sexual abuse by white men during the apartheid era in *The Madonna of Excelsior*. As has been pointed out and discussed earlier these victims include, among other women, Niki, Mmampe, Maria, and Cecilia Mapeta.

The poverty in Niki's family seems to have played a decisive role in her allowing Smit to keep on sexually abusing her in the sunflower field. After Smit has sexually abused her, Niki develops a burning hatred towards him because he has, on several occasions, shown her that he does not respect her. Had it not been for the insistence of her two friends, Mmampe and Maria, that she would have been arrested for contravening the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, she would have reported him to the police for sexual abuse. Niki's family is extremely poor. They live in a corrugated iron room with a cow-dung floor and "she owns only a Terylene skirt and a white frilly blouse both for happy and sad days" (*The Madonna*:14). Instead of paraffin or electricity, they use cow-dung to make a fire to cook food and to warm the room. Her father is unemployed and always drunk. Her two friends try to convince her that with Smit's money she is sure of "a full stomach at bedtime and new leather shoes under the bed" (*The Madonna*:18). Due to their pressure Niki eventually allows herself to be sexually abused by Smit on numerous occasions and after every abuse "she went home and secretly wept while she bathed him off her body. He was an obstinate stain" (*The Madonna*:19). Bathing herself after Smit's sexual abuse indicates the revulsion against him that she has to endure. The assertion by Amir (1982:115) that "it is sheer nonsense to believe that women put themselves in vulnerable situations on purpose so that they can be raped", is refuted by Niki because she allows herself to be sexually abused solely for the sake of getting money. Furthermore, Niki's rape traumatises her because she is not ready to forgive Smit even though he suggests at the end of the novel that "they must declare a truce" (*The Madonna*:261). Her refusal to forgive him indicates that what he has done to her has left an indelible mark on her sensitive soul.

Mmampe and Maria seem to have accepted the sexual abuse of black women by white men as a way of life during the apartheid era and they respond by accepting the money that the abusers give them. They teach Niki a mechanism of surviving Smit's sexual abuse. They reiterate that Niki should be wise and get money from Smit even though he sexually assaults her. "For sure he'll be back," added Maria, laughing. "Just take the money and let the man water your thighs" (*The Madonna*:19). Unlike Niki, Mda lets the two girls poke fun at Smit's conduct and they regard his sexual abuse as a joke as it is indicated by the nicknames they give him: Limp Stick, Sleeping Horn, Lame Horn, and Horn of Sorrow. These nicknames mock his regular impotence.

Unlike Maria, Niki, and Mmampe, Cecilia has a different attitude because she never allows a white man to seduce her for money. Nolan's sexual abuse of Cecilia is not a private thing because the Free State newspaper, *The Friend*, reports it. Her sexual abuse has led to the arrest of Nolan. The magistrate, Mr van Zyl, sentences him to six months imprisonment in the Bloemfontein Regional Court for trying to contravene the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. When the magistrate passes the verdict, he makes no reference to the sexual abuse that Cecilia has experienced and the trauma that she has suffered from Nolan's assault. This incident indicates that the apartheid government regarded the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, as more serious than the sexual abuse of black women and its impact. This shows why so many black women were unwilling to report cases of sexual abuse by white men. Cecilia's attitude seems to show that she would have reported her sexual assault to the police if they were more supportive of black victims of sexual abuse because, unlike the vengeful Niki, she is more educated.

The victims of sexual abuse in the apartheid era tend to show different approaches and responses towards their sexual abuse but the common attitude is that they hate to be sexually abused. However, the snag is that there is no one to turn to because the police are biased. To avoid their sexual abuses many women choose to be submissive and subservient to the white men's sexual demands and in this way, they are able to survive the sexual abuse.

2.3.2 Attitudes of the perpetrators of sexual abuse

This part explores the attitudes of the Afrikaner men to show that they consider their sexual abuse of black women as fun and entertainment. The Afrikaner men whose attitudes will be analysed are Barend Jacobus Nolan, Johannes Smit, Stephanus Cronjé, Groot-Jan Lombards, and Reverend Francois Bornman.

Barend Jacobus Nolan seems unrepentant of his sexual assault of Cecilia because he does not apologise to her. Instead, he blames his misdemeanour on having quarrelled with his wife, and imbibing too much alcohol. He is a man who knows the laws of the government because he is a former traffic inspector. In his mitigation he cites drunkenness as the cause of his unbecoming behaviour. He tells the court that he has had an argument with his wife, and he has tried to dissipate his frustration and despair by drinking at the local hotel. He testifies that he does not remember anything after getting drunk except that the police arrested him. It would seem that as a white man his pride does not allow him to ask for forgiveness from a black woman, hence he downplays his sexual assault of Cecilia.

Johannes Smit does not show a hint of remorse for the sexual abuse he has incurred on Niki. He spends much time “waylaying black girls in the fields” (*The Madonna*:14) and playing “the harrowing games” (*The Madonna*:15). His games are in a way meant to demean the young girls of Mahlatswetsa Location. His only power during these games is to give them money. Through Smit’s sexual abuse of Niki, Mda destabilises the apartheid belief that whites are civilized because a civilized man cannot inflict pain and humiliation on another person as Smit does. Smit’s conduct to Niki brings to mind Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1982) in which the protagonist, the Magistrate, condemns the barbaric violence of those who are considered civilized because they inflict pain upon those who are regarded as uncivilized. Smit is uncivilized because he regards black women as quarries on which to give vent to his sexual lust.

Stephanus Cronjé’s attitude towards Niki’s sexual abuse has had a huge impact on

himself because, unlike other Afrikaner men accused with him, he is unable to bear the scandal of fathering Niki's coloured child named Popi. When the renowned case of the Excelsior 19 resumes, he shoots himself after he has bailed himself out. The shame, betrayal, embarrassment, and frustration are unbearable to him. Niki and other people accuse him of being a coward who evades his own responsibility of looking after his own child. He is unaware that hybrids such as Popi may break the apartheid racial barriers between black and white people in South Africa so that new identities will emerge to destabilise the old apartheid ones. Berger (1996:410) points out that "such traumatic experiences can be both destructive and productive by creating new thoughts and new worlds". Berger thus suggests that the birth of hybrid children such as Popi is a blessing in disguise because they will close the racial gap between black and white people. Mda's narrative voice echoes the same sentiment when it states: "from the outrage of rape, our mothers gave birth to beautiful human beings" (*The Madonna*:234). According to Courau (2004:101), this comment by the narrative voice "provides a sentimental sense of redemption for the reader and offers, in a gentle tone, inhumane social and political conditions that can serve as an important affirmation of humanity".

The Afrikaner community reveres Groot-Jan Lombard because he is an elder. It is unbelievably ironic that he is one of the five white men accused of having violated the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, by taking part in the partner-swapping orgies in Smit's barn. During the trial, he, like his co-accused Afrikaners, maintains that he has been framed to be arrested with the black women although black women have given birth to racially mixed children whom he has fathered. Even when the Afrikaner men bail themselves out, they never consider bailing out their black sleeping partners. Lombard's declaration that he does not know anyone of the accused black women makes him a hypocrite and a person who has evaded his fatherly responsibility of financially fending for his own children born out of wedlock.

Reverend Francois Bornman attempts to commit suicide to evade the blame of miscegenation when the members of his church discover that he is one of the Excelsior 19. His church members feel that he has betrayed them by sleeping with black women

and impregnating one of them. The sexual abuse of black women is to him a betrayal of the Afrikaner community while it is also indicative of the weakness of an Afrikaner man in being unable to restrain his sexual desire for black women. Reverend Bornman, like the Afrikaner men, persists that he has been framed even though it is argued that one of the racially mixed children resembles him. In denouncing knowledge of the women and their children, he somehow illustrates that he, like Lombards, is a liar, not a Christian as he claims.

It would seem that during the apartheid era the government tended to downplay the sexual abuse of black women by white men and this led to the Afrikaner men taking advantage of the situation. The crime that the apartheid police were taught to prevent was the sexual contact between white and black people and hence the promotion of the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. Duncan (2002:135) reiterates the importance of this Act: “To sleep with a black is like sleeping with an animal; and ... it is against God’s law. It is God’s will that the superior race should never mix with the mud race.” This explains why white people treated black people in a demeaning manner because they viewed black people as inferior and animal-like.

2.4 POLICE INTERVENTION

Seleti, Dyer, Naidoo, Delius, Nisbet, and Saunders (1999:297) suggest that in South Africa “1948 marked the beginning of the policy of apartheid”. These authors, furthermore, assert that “the government used apartheid to preserve racial identity and white supremacy, to consolidate white privilege and power, and to exploit the cheap labour of the African people” (*ibid.*). The Nationalist government used the police as a tool to achieve these goals because they were more protective of white offenders than of black ones. In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda is intent on showing the bias of the police in treating white and black offenders. A case in point is the arrest of the Excelsior 19 (14 black women and 5 white men) after they have contravened the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, that led to cases of miscegenation:

The police had come for them in the middle of the night. Three police vans in all. Each with five heavily armed Afrikaner policemen. They kicked the door down and shone torches in the eyes of a startled Mmampe and her mother (*The Madonna*:65).

The arrest of Mmampe shows how pitiless the white police are to black offenders. They kick open the door instead of knocking at it. The brutality of the police during the apartheid era brings to mind the depiction of a similar scene in Ezekiel Mphahlele's autobiography, *Down Second Avenue* (1959:42), when he narrates how as a child the white police officer searching for locally brewed beer beats him up:

“What are you doing here, my jong?” the big white man asked in Afrikaans. He had switched off his terrible light.
“Nothing.”
“How can you stand here alone and do nothing, Kaffir?”
Silence. Even at this moment I could picture my mother running around about to dispose the remains and utensils.
“What was that I heard when I came in?”
“I was throwing a stone at a dog,” I said. I must keep them here, until my mother would have finished. But I little thought what it was going to cost me.
“Hold the bastard's arm, Jonas, and pin them behind his ass.”
The Black had hardly reached my hand when the big white hand crashed full on my cheek so that I seemed to hear my name called, and staggered and hit against a pole that was supporting a vine.

The beating of a young boy such as Ezekiel confirms the ruthlessness and cruelty of the police in general during that time. The white police officer seems to be saying to the young Ezekiel that a small snake also has venom. This implies that even a young Ezekiel is capable of telling lies. They often had to tell lies to prevent their mothers from being arrested for brewing beer meant to obtain some money to feed their families.

Another incident that shows the bias of the Afrikaner police in *The Madonna of Excelsior* is the arrest of Niki, which happens in broad daylight for everyone to see how the police demean her:

Not in the night, but in the glare of the day when the whole world could see. Two police vans stopped outside her shack. Four burly policemen walked into the house and dragged her out. Her resistance had no effect (*The Madonna*:67).

Mda uses the word **burly** to illustrate the policemen's physical strength and legal power to exercise their duty. Though she tries to resist, their burliness overpowers her and they do not even bother to close the door of her shack to protect her property. When her second child, Viliki, comes home in the evening after playing far from home, he finds the door open and waits in vain for his mother to return. Mmampe's mother fortunately saves him from hunger and loneliness because she has witnessed his mother's arrest. The black women are incarcerated in the Winburg police cells with their children who serve as the evidence in their case. They have to wait for their day to appear in the court of law. The bail for each woman is R50.00 but none can afford to pay it. On the contrary, none of the five white men accused of having impregnated the fourteen black women sleeps in a cell because their lawyer, Adam de Vries, negotiates bail of R200.00 for each. The police harass none of these white men as they have done with the co-accused black women.

Furthermore, the arrest of Nolan by Constable Nel in *The Madonna of Excelsior* indicates the humane way in which the police treat a white offender:

Const. P.W.A. Nel, of the South African Police, said in evidence that on 4 November, acting on information he had received, he drove in his private car to the spot where Nolan was parked.

He approached the car that, so far as he could see, contained only one person. He recognized Nolan as the person in the car. When he asked him what he was doing there, Nolan replied: "Leave me alone, I have a strange girlfriend with me" (*The Madonna*:93).

The most interesting thing about this arrest is that Constable Nel does not arrest Nolan for sexually assaulting Cecilia but for attempting to contravene the Immorality Act, No 23 of 1950. The police do not even consider that Cecilia has been hurt physically and psychologically by Nolan's actions when he sexually assaulted her. They are only

interested in preventing the contravention of the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, rather than the effects of the sexual abuse of a black woman by a white man. It is thus not surprising that many sexually abused black women in the past saw the police as conniving with their white sexual abusers. The police believed that there was fabrication as well as precipitation of sexual abuses by black victims.

Subsequent to the police arrest of the *Excelsior 19*, the interrogation resumes. This interrogation reinforces the victimisation of the black women by accusing them of framing the accused Afrikaners. Amir (1982:113) calls this secondary victimisation “the rape of the soul”. Amir (*ibid.*) furthermore claims that the victims go through a more painful experience, which is dangerous to their health and can have a more harmful and negative effect than the sexual abuse itself. Though it is imperative that the police should know all the facts and details, the manner in which they often obtain them from the victims is offensive. For instance, many people, particularly men, repeatedly ask the victim the same questions, which include whether the victim has given consent or has enjoyed the abuse. The actions of the police generally made black victims of sexual abuse reluctant to report their abusers to the police. The black women accused of miscegenation in *The Madonna of Excelsior* are advised not to testify against the Afrikaner men because the men will in turn support their children. But after the trial the men fail to do so. They still maintain that they were framed, and this is evading their paternal responsibility.

2.5 THE JUDICIARY SYSTEM

The duty of the judiciary system is to oversee that the law is fair in dealing with criminals and victims of crime. Swift and Ryan-Finn (1995:28) argue that “the legal system should attempt to make prosecution less intimidating to the victims to encourage them to report more sexual crimes against women”. During the apartheid era, the judiciary system was partial, and that made many black women drag their feet when confronted with reporting their sexual abuses to the police. They were even afraid of second victimisation at the hands of the police. The courts were also frequently not supportive to the black victims of sexual abuse because they tended to blame them “for having provoked their violations by

their mode of dress” (Ward, 1995:37). The judiciary system was intent on “preserving the purity of the white race from the contamination of blacks’ blood” (Ross, 1999:48) by forbidding sexual unions between white and black people. The legal system saw the violation of the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, as more of a felony rather than the sexual abuse of women.

In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda highlights the discrepancy in the treatment of both black and white people accused of miscegenation and contravention of the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. In his defence for the five white males accused of having contravened this Act, their Afrikaner lawyer, Adam de Vries, argues that the black women have framed his clients and that the babies were not fathered by his clients, yet everyone is aware that “immorality was a pastime in Free State” (*The Madonna*:93). The prosecutor, Christiaan Calitz, on the other hand, keeps on reminding Adam de Vries that blood tests have been carried out on the accused and their children to prove that the white men are the fathers of the children and that the black women have agreed to testify against the white men.

The case of Excelsior 19 arouses keen interest in overseas news media. Consequently, the state decides to withdraw the case because it is a disgrace to the Afrikaner community. Dr Percy Yutar, Attorney General of the Free State, makes an astounding decision that all charges against the Excelsior 19 are to be withdrawn (*The Madonna*:96). Mda relates that this decision surprises everyone, including Mr Karel Bezuidenhout, the magistrate, as well as Mr Christiaan Calitz, the prosecutor. However, they can do nothing to change the decision because the Attorney General’s words are final and unquestionable. When the case starts, there is a strong belief that the magistrate will prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the white men are the fathers of the women’s children, lawfully binding them to financially provide for their children. Furthermore, Mda uses *The Madonna of Excelsior* to expose the abuse of power by the state to interfere with the judiciary system. One wonders why the magistrate does not use his power to imprison the black women who refuse to testify. Dr Yutar clearly states in his interview that “he is aware of Section 212 of the Criminal Procedure Act which empowers magistrates and judges to imprison

witnesses who refuse to give evidence” (*The Madonna*:102), yet in the case of Excelsior 19 no witness who refuses to testify is imprisoned.

Dr Yutar should, at least, have discussed the withdrawal of the case with the concerned magistrate and the prosecutor before taking such a decision. In his interview with Weber (2004), Mda states that the trial was in reality so embarrassing to the apartheid government that it pressurised the prosecutors to withdraw the case. He furthermore notes that the act of Nationalist government in interfering with the judiciary system was also a scandal because that was an abuse of power. Since the state has finally withdrawn the case, the black women go home triumphantly knowing that they have humiliated their white madams while the white men return home externally branded as betrayers of the Afrikaner community because of their contravening the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, which serves to protect them against “the mud race” (Duncan, 2002:135).

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has clearly shown that in *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda mocks the danger during apartheid of essentialising white people as civilised, good, and victims of crimes, and black people as uncivilised, bad, and perpetrators of crime. Furthermore, Mda intends to ridicule the hypocrisy and double standards of the Afrikaner men in apartheid South Africa by satirising their pretentiousness in preaching the purity of the Afrikaners while transgressing the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. The irony is that the people that this Act tried to protect were the ones who broke it and that showed their hypocrisy and double standards.

Lawyeraau (2004:11) maintains that “in South Africa, the issue is not so black and white but it boils down to power, who has it, and who has not”. During the apartheid era, white people had power over black people but they frequently used it to abuse and oppress black people. In his interview by Kachuba (2004:2), Mda reiterates that “power corrupts people who rule others”. In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda attempts to show that power that is not controlled by the constitution can easily be abused. A case in point is the

sexual abuse of black women by white men in South Africa during the apartheid era. By sexually abusing the black women the white men asserted their power over them as Cornwell (2002:315) confirms: “The white men debauched black women with impunity.” The abused black women knew that their sexual abusers would evade conviction because the judiciary system and the police were on the side of their abusers. Since power seems to be the main cause of white men’s sexual abuse of black women it is imperative to observe whether in the new South Africa where black people are the rulers the claim holds water.

The next chapter focuses on Coetzee’s *Disgrace* that depicts South Africa in the post-apartheid era, and shows whether black people who have power abuse it to sexually harass white people who do not have power.

CHAPTER THREE

3 THE PORTRAYAL OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN COETZEE'S *DISGRACE*

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on David Lurie's sexual abuse of a female student as well as the gang rape of his lesbian daughter, Lucy. It also focuses on the attitudes of the characters towards the sexual abuse of the two women of different races. Sexual abuse seems to be an act of power and domination. After the demise of apartheid in 1994, which according to Makhaya (2004:1), "was achieved through negotiated settlement", there has been a power shift because black people replaced white people as the political rulers of South Africa. It is thus crucial to observe whether it was easy to relinquish power and to see whether those who now have power do not abuse it like their former oppressors.

In *Disgrace* Coetzee grapples with a 52-year-old character, David Lurie, who is reluctant to forsake the past mentality of treating people of colour as inferior. He cannot accept the new political dispensation that black people are finally in power. He sexually abuses his coloured student, thinking that he will get away with it as he used to do during the apartheid period. Coetzee states that "barely a term passes when David does not fall for one or other of his charges" (*Disgrace*:11-12). However, this time the student reports his sexual abuse to the university authorities and they decide to expel him from the Cape Technical University to set a precedent. Once expelled, he leaves Cape Town and goes to Salem, a remote rural town in the Eastern Cape, to stay with his daughter whom three black men rape to underscore that blacks are now in power and the police will not arrest them.

3.2 DAVID LURIE'S SEXUAL ABUSE OF MELANIE ISAACS

David is a seducer, womaniser, abuser, and manipulator. Before he sexually abuses his coloured student, Melanie Isaacs, he has seduced other girls as well. He meditates on his

predicament:

The company of women made him a lover of women and, to an extent, a womanizer... He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity. He had affairs with the wives of colleagues; he picked up tourists in bars on the waterfront or at the Club Italia; he slept with whores (*Disgrace*:7).

David seems unable to sustain a lasting love affair because he enjoys changing women. It is no wonder that at the age of fifty-two he is twice divorced. Among the women he has sexually abused is Melanie. After all his other relationships have failed, he on several occasions seduces the twenty-year-old Melanie who attends his Romantics course. He believes they are lovers. He first meets Melanie on a Friday while he is going home and she is heading to her flat and he invites her for a drink. They drink Meerlust, eat biscuits and cheese together, and talk a great deal. Eventually he invites her to spend the night with him:

As she sips, he leans over and touches her cheek. "You are lovely," he says. "I'm going to invite you to do something reckless." He touches her again. "Stay. Spend the night with me." Across the rim of the cup she regards him steadily. "Why?" "Because you ought to." "Why ought to?" "Why? Because a woman's beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it" (*Disgrace*:16).

The implication of David's words to Melanie is that she does not own herself and that beauty does not own itself. The most unfortunate slip is that he talks to her while "his hand rests against her cheek" and "she does not withdraw, but does not yield either" (*ibid.*). When she has had enough of the old man's blubbers she decides to leave. However, before she does that "he reaches out, enfolds her" and to show that she does not accept his advances "she slips his embrace and is gone" (*Disgrace*:17). This scene that has taken place in his house is an indication of David's manipulation of women.

It may be assumed that David, as an erudite person, will control his desire for his student

after what has happened in his house since the Cape Technical University's Code of Conduct forbids sexual affairs between lecturers and their students. However, because he has developed a habit of committing sexual harassment of women it is not easy for him to refrain from doing so. The narrator states that "that is where he ought to end it but he does not" (*Disgrace*:18). He finds it difficult to deny his desire its rights because when Lucy enquires about his sexual abuse at the university he tells her: "My case rests on the rights of desire," he says. "On the god who makes even the small bird quiver" (*Disgrace*:89). He believes that his desire has the right to be gratified without considering whether he inflicts pain on others or not.

To validate that his desire has the right to be gratified he pursues Melanie against all odds. He goes to the Cape Technical University on Sunday morning. He gets into the department office. He extracts from the filing cabinet Melanie's enrolment card and copies down her personal details: "home address, Cape Town address, telephone number" (*Disgrace*:18). This act constitutes exploiting his professional position (Azoulay, 2002:35). He cannot even wait for the weekend to pass, and his action in itself is infringement of Melanie's privacy. He phones her and tells her that he will pick her for lunch at twelve. He hangs up his phone without waiting to hear whether she agrees or not. He seems to be used to manipulating female students without any regard for their feelings. He takes her to a Hout Bay restaurant, which is on the harbourside, without asking her which restaurant she prefers. When he realises that she has no appetite and she feels uncomfortable about them being together due to the difference in their age and colour, "he assures her that he would not take it too far" (*Disgrace*:19). This clearly demonstrates that he is aware that what he is doing is wrong, yet he does not exercise any restraint like Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1973). Conrad relates that Kurtz has collected a store of precious ivory from African people in the Congo and any African who resists giving him ivory is killed. His love for ivory has gone to his mind just like Lurie's love for younger girls. When it starts to rain, Lurie and Melanie come back, he takes her to his house, and he makes love to her (*Disgrace*:19) without her consent. David admits that, "though she is passive throughout, he finds the act pleasurable, so pleasurable that from its climax he tumbles into blank oblivion" (*ibid.*).

After he has seduced her, her eyes are closed and she has a frown on her face. Her frown indicates that she feels he has abused and harassed her. If indeed she has given him permission to make love to her she would not have averted her face and freed herself from his submersion. She would not have gathered her tights and panties, and left the room (*ibid.*).

The next Tuesday after her seduction David shamelessly offers to drive her home after her lectures when it is raining and he insists that she should invite him into the flat she shares with her cousin, Pauline. Suspecting that he may seduce her again, she just tells him that she thinks her flat mate is home. Her response clearly shows that she is afraid of being seduced by him. She refuses to see him again and “she slides out of his car and runs to her flat” (*Disgrace:21*). Her actions indeed illustrate that she is unwilling to develop a relationship with him.

The next Thursday, he goes to her flat in the afternoon and knocks at the door. When Melanie opens the door, a shock engulfs her to see him there. Melanie is too surprised “to resist the intruder who thrusts himself upon her” (*Disgrace:24*). Without even greeting her, “he takes her in his arm, her limbs crumple like a marionette’s” (*ibid.*) because she is terrified by his presence in her room. There is an element of force when he thrusts himself on her and it can, therefore, be argued that she does not agree to having sex with him. She tries to tell him that he should not do it then because her cousin will be back any moment but he persists in having it then:

He carries her to the bedroom, brushes off the absurd slippers, kisses her feet, astonished by the feeling she evokes.... She does not resist and all she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes. She lets him lay her out on the bed and undress her: she even helps him, raising her arms and then her hips. Little shivers of cold run through her; as soon as she is bare, she slips under the quilted counterpane like a mole burrowing, and turns her back on him (*Disgrace:25*).

After he has violated her, he explicitly admits to himself: “Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core” (*Disgrace:25*). His admission that Melanie

does not desire their sexual intercourse demonstrates that he has sexually abused her because he has power over her as her professor. She insists that he must go because her cousin will return any minute and he complies. The fact that Melanie does not want her cousin to see what she is doing with the old man shows that she is ashamed of what David has done to her. His compliance with her command to leave explicitly shows his acceptance that he has violated her. When he arrives at his car, “he is filled with dejection and dullness that he sits slumped at the wheel unable to move” (*Disgrace*:25). This shows that he regrets his action of sexually abusing her but does not apologise to her because he is not used to doing so. He feels that his rights of desire are expected to be satisfied regardless of sexually violating others.

The next day, Friday, she is absent from his class. The unfortunate thing, however, is that it is the day for the writing of his mid-term test. She stays away from his lectures for the whole of the following week because she is traumatised by his sexual abuse. She only returns to David’s house at midnight on Sunday with her face strained and asks him to accommodate her for a night because she is afraid of her boyfriend. Her strained face is an illustration that his sexual abuse has deprived her of some sleep. Rosalind, David’s ex-wife, claims that “Melanie has been taking sleeping pills” (*Disgrace*:45) to minimise her worries and stress caused by his sexual abuse. Without empathising with her he sleeps with her one more time in his daughter’s bedroom.

However, little does he know that that will be his last time to abuse her sexually because he is going to be charged with sexual harassment. He arranges for Melanie to write her missed mid-term test on the next Monday. To his surprise he finds an official withdrawal card informing him that Melanie Isaacs has officially withdrawn from COM 312 with immediate effect. An hour later Melanie’s father phones David to request him to influence her to change her mind, not knowing that he, the professor, is the cause of all her misery. Later that day Melanie’s father arrives at the university and accuses him of distrust and irresponsibility he has shown towards Melanie. The next day, Tuesday, David receives a memorandum from the office of the Vice-Rector (Student Affairs) notifying him that “a complaint has been lodged against him under article 3.1 of the

University Code of Conduct” (*Disgrace*:38). The notification requests him to contact the Vice-Rector’s office at his earliest convenience. It is accompanied by a copy of the article 3 that deals with victimisation or harassment on the grounds of race, ethnic group, religion, gender, sexual preference, or physical disability. Article 3.1 addresses teachers’ victimisation or harassment of students. A second document describes the constitution, and competences of Committees of Inquiry and he reads it as well. David is charged with the sexual harassment of Melanie and this finally leads to his dismissal from the Cape Technical University.

3.3 ATTITUDES OF CHARACTERS TOWARDS MELANIE ISAACS’ SEXUAL ABUSE

This section focuses on the attitudes of the victim, Melanie, and her sympathisers as well as the attitude of her sexual abuser, David Lurie.

3.3.1 Attitudes of the victim and her sympathisers

Not much is said about how Melanie, as a victim, feels about her sexual harassment. Her attitude can be derived from what other characters reveal about her and how she behaves thereafter. Nothing is heard directly from her after David Lurie’s charge of sexual harassment. David Lurie hints that “she has been compelled to lay a charge of sexual harassment by either her father, her boyfriend, Ryan, or her cousin, Pauline, and that Melanie is too innocent for that and too ignorant of her power” (*Disgrace*:39). While being raped, Melanie “dies within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck” (*Disgrace*:25). She behaves as if she is bound to give him what he wants, hence fulfils her obligation and suffers the consequences. Rosalind tells David that Melanie has attempted committing suicide “by taking an overdose of sleeping pills” (*Disgrace*:45). This is an indication that she is depressed by the sexual abuse by a man who should have been a father figure and protector to her. Her acceptance to be regularly violated indicates the apartheid mentality that white people are superior to people of colour and, therefore, have the right to treat them with contempt. She is prepared to

persevere the sexual impropriety because the damaging history of white superiority has taught her to do so.

Mr Isaacs, Melanie's father, feels that David Lurie has done, what Marais (2000:176) calls, "abnegation of responsibility" because David has failed to carry out the duty of protecting his daughter at the University. David has betrayed the trust that the parents of the daughters have bestowed on him. Such a betrayal of the trust of the professor has also tarnished the image of the Cape Technical University that seems to be "a nest of vipers" (*Disgrace*:38). In other words, their daughters are not safe at the University as long as immoral people such as David are lecturers. Isaacs tells David face-to-face that what he has done is wrong and that he should be ashamed of his behaviour.

As a woman of colour, Dr Farodia Rassool, a member of the University's Commission of Inquiry, is of the opinion that David is not regretful of his sexual abuse of Melanie. Farodia, moreover, reminds him that "his case will not be swept under the carpet and forgotten" (*Disgrace*:51) like others before since it is now in the post-apartheid era in which white people are no longer in power. She finally recommends that the severest penalty be imposed to demonstrate how serious sexual abuse of women is. She intimates that David should realise that sexual abuse is painful and that "his abuse is part of the long history of exploitation of women of colour in South Africa" (*Disgrace*:53). She demands that his contrition should come from his heart but he refuses to show any remorse. She is of the opinion that a harsh punishment be recommended to show other potential women abusers the seriousness of the matter.

David's ex-wife, Rosalind, clearly states that what he has done looks "stupid, ugly, and demeaning" (*Disgrace*:44), more so because he is a 52-year-old man but "is still meddling with other people's children" (*Disgrace*:45). She explicitly tells him that "no girl finds any pleasure in going to bed with an old man like him" (*ibid.*). She, furthermore, emphasises that he should not expect sympathy from her in particular and from any other person in this day and age when white people's power has waned in South Africa. She feels that "Lurie has been a great self-deceiver in the way he conducted

himself during the Commission of Inquiry” (*Disgrace*:188) when he tells her that “he was standing up for the principle of freedom of speech and freedom to remain silent” (*ibid.*). In addition, she suggests that David should have got himself some coaching before he appeared before the Commission of Inquiry. She states that if he continues making quick flings he would end up losing his job and be like those sad old men who poke around in rubbish bins. Subsequent to her prediction, David eventually loses his job.

Lucy feels that her father should regret what he has done to Melanie by accepting counselling offered by the University. She, furthermore, reiterates that Lurie should not have been so unbending as it is not heroic to be so. She advises him to appeal so that he can agree to receive counselling but he refuses to do so. She states to Lurie that “he is determined to go on being bad, mad, and dangerous” (*Disgrace*:77) as he informs her that he is not prepared to be reformed. She advises him to help at the animal clinic as a volunteer because that will help him change for good. She tells Lurie that he has run away from the scene of his crime and, therefore, “he is a fugitive” (*Disgrace*:66) and “a moral dinosaur” (*Disgrace*:89). He is seen as a moral dinosaur because he still believes in the Romantic mentality that shuns reasoning and morality but promotes satisfying one’s feelings at the expense of others. She sees Lurie as an old-fashioned professor because he believes in the ideals of patriarchy and Romanticism.

3.3.2 David Lurie’s attitude towards Melanie’s sexual abuse

David’s attitude towards the sexual abuse of Melanie is in a state of flux. There are times at which he admits that what he sexually does to her is wrong. On the other hand, he tends to justify her sexual abuse. When Melanie has heeded his invitation, he keeps “enfolding her in his house and feeling her little breast against himself” (*Disgrace*:17). She, on the other hand, “slips his embrace and sets herself free” (*ibid.*) and this demonstrates that she is unwilling to have an affair with him since she is too young and a coloured. Coetzee portrays Melanie as uninterested in David’s sexual advances but David persists in pursuing her against her will. Instead of refraining from going to the Cape Technical University on a Sunday to retrieve Melanie’s personal details, he goes against

his conscience and goes. He tells himself that “that is where he ought to end it” (*Disgrace*:18) but he does not do it. He is well aware that what he is doing to her is immoral and unethical yet he does not stop it.

David furthermore phones her after having managed to get her personal details from the department office to tell her he wants to take her out for lunch. David’s inability to control his emotion towards Melanie displays what Saunders (2005:99) terms, “significant tensions between the visceral and reason”. David cannot let his reason rule over his emotion (visceral) in dealing with Melanie. He is thus conscious that as a fifty-two-year-old professor and Melanie being in her early 20s, she is too young to know how to deal with him. He can, on the one hand, reason that her hips are as slim as a twelve-years-old’s and that he will take care not to let it go too far but, on the other, he allows the visceral to overpower his reasoning. He admits that he ought to let her go but fails to do so. His reasoning is overpowered by his emotions and his failure to reason logically leads to the betrayal of the filial bond. David does not stop pursuing her because he regards himself “as a servant of Eros” (*Disgrace*:52). As a servant of Eros, he is unable to control his desire which, he thinks, qualifies to be fulfilled despite the fact that he is hurting other people. David is intent on satisfying himself without considering that those who are at the receiving end suffer the consequences of his deeds.

When he finally has sex with Melanie in her flat David admits that “it is undesired to the core” (*Disgrace*:25) but he fails to see it as rape per se. However, after the act he confesses that it was “a mistake, a huge mistake” (*Disgrace*:25) to force himself on her against her will. He furthermore admits that he has behaved worse than she has (*Disgrace*:28), but his arrogance constrains him from apologising to her. His sexual passion seems “animalistic and predatory” (Poyner, 2000:72) and he shows a lack of concern for others. However, when David is summoned to appear before the University Commission of Inquiry on charges of sexual harassment his attitude changes because he is convinced that Melanie was forced to accuse him. David’s conviction that Melanie did not initiate his sexual harassment charge is further echoed when his ex-wife, Rosalind, asks him to explain the reason why Melanie has decided to lay a charge of sexual

harassment. David tells Rosalind that Melanie's jealous boyfriend, Ryan, and her indignant parents might have persuaded Melanie to accuse him and that Melanie is not responsible and must not be blamed. He is still adamant that he has not sexually abused her even though his actions prove otherwise.

Subsequent to his conviction that Melanie was forced to accuse him of sexual harassment, David is prepared to refrain from cooperating with the Commission of Inquiry because he is not ready to make confessions of his wrongdoings before them in order to retain his job. He is evasive to them because he knows deep down in his heart that he did have undesired sex with her against her will. Refusing to read Melanie's statement during the hearing of the Cape Technical University is an indication that he knows that she is going to tell the truth. He states that "he knows of no reason why Melanie Isaacs should lie" (*Disgrace*:49). His refusal to read her charge shows his contempt for the Committee. He has confessed to his lawyer that "the allegations about his affair with the girl are true enough" (*Disgrace*:42), but he still refuses to confess before the Commission. Instead he opts "to plead guilty of all that he is charged of" (*Disgrace*:51). The Committee views his unwillingness to adhere to its demands as a failure to show remorse. When he finally agrees to confess to save his job at Cape Technical University, he is told that his words should reflect sincerity. He feels that their demand is beyond the scope of the law and thus feels the law cannot measure with accuracy the sincerity of his words. Farred (2002:356) suggests that "by refusing to accede to counselling offered by the University Lurie becomes at once an anachronistic symbol of white, apartheid ideology and an ironic representation of anti-apartheid loss". Since he is a product of the apartheid mentality he still has in him the arrogance of apartheid white superiority, hence his contempt for the Committee which comprises of many members of colour.

His proclamation to the journalists that "he does not regret what he has done to Melanie because he was enriched by the experience" (*Disgrace*:56) indicates that he is recalcitrant to University authorities. Holmes (2007:2) notes that "the refusal to repent publicly, which is a romantic outlook, reveals David's fantasy that relationships are governed

solely by an erotic spirit, not mutual response, responsibility or even repentance.” David stands by his beliefs because when the act is done he is not himself, he is no longer a fifty-two-year-old divorcee but “a servant of Eros” (*Disgrace*:52). Graham (2002:13) argues that “Melanie is being blamed by David for inciting uncontrollable fire in him” because he confesses to her father: “She struck up a fire in me” (*Disgrace*:166). By evading responsibility David wants to justify his adherence to satisfying his desire that is influenced by his belief in the Romantic ideology, which, according to Potter (1987:199), “places much stress on emotion - placing feelings before reason - and the individual imagination.” It is not surprising that David is writing a book about the life in Italy of a Romantic, George Gordon Byron (1788-1824). Potter (1987:208) furthermore claims that “the Romantic stress on emotion can be overdone and can lead to emotional self-indulgence”. David, in other words, is self-indulging by placing desire above scruples at the expense of other people. Fried (2005:3) states: “When David seduces Melanie, he believes her to represent the final object of his desire, his last act of lush, Romantic desperation.” It is only after Lucy’s rape that his Romantic attitude towards life changes because he is able to practise empathy, hence his request for forgiveness. Segall (2005:41) confirms that “Lurie does, in the end, recognize that others experience suffering: it is a shift from narcissism to a nascent awareness of others.”

3.4 LUCY LURIE’S RAPE

The Cape Technical University fires David Lurie after he has failed to meet its demands that include, among other stipulations, his confession of sexual harassment of Melanie and his contrition. After his expulsion, he goes to stay with his lesbian daughter, Lucy Lurie, in Sale, Eastern Cape. While he stays there, two men and a boy approach him and his daughter on the path near her house. They ask for a telephone because the sister of one of them has had a baby in Erasmuskraal. David and Lucy trust the three men because the place is a hamlet with no electricity and no telephones. Lucy permits one of the men to follow her after she has unlocked the back door of her house. After a moment, the second man pushes David away and enters the house too. In the kitchen he strikes a blow on the crown of David’s head and David blacks out. He drags David into the lavatory and

locks it. David calls Lucy's name loudly and kicks the door. The second man opens the door and demands the car keys. David gives him the keys and pleads with him to take everything but leave his daughter alone. The man locks the toilet door. David stands on the toilet seat and peers through the window and sees one of the men killing the dogs with Lucy's rifle. He hears them speaking a language he cannot understand. After the killing of the dogs, the second man enters the toilet, trips David, and splashes him, from head to foot, with methylated spirits and uses the match to set him alight. The cool blue flame engulfs David at once and the second man and the boy leave him in flames. David struggles to hang over the toilet bowl, splashes water over his face and douses his head. He manages to beat out the last flame on his clothes and discovers that the fire has scorched his hair and caused a scalp on his head. With his burning the black attackers appear to remind him of his loss of power in the new South Africa.

After the men have accomplished their mission they run away. David calls Lucy's name. The toilet door opens. He sees Lucy walking away wearing a bathrobe, her feet bare and her hair wet. He follows her into the kitchen and finds the refrigerator still open and the food still on the floor. She goes outside through the back door to see "the carnage of the dog-pens" (*Disgrace:97*). He asks what they have done to her and she walks away without answering. He tries to hold her by her arm but "she wriggles loose" (*ibid.*), and goes into the bathroom. Refusing to be held by her father is an indication that she no longer recognises his power because he has failed to protect her during the attack. When she returns, she tells him that "his head looks terrible" and that "he should put some baby-oil on it" (*Disgrace:98*). He tells her that "the criminals have gone in the direction of Port Elizabeth" and that "they must telephone the police" (*ibid.*). She reiterates that the rapists "have smashed the telephone and deflated the combi's tyres" (*Disgrace:99*). She, furthermore, tells him that she will go to the Ettingers to seek help. She makes a request to her father before she goes:

"David, when people ask, would you mind keeping to your own story, to what happened to you."

He does not understand.

"You tell what happened to you. I tell what happened to me," she

repeats (*ibid.*).

Lucy does not directly tell his father that she has been gang raped by the three black men when he was locked in the toilet. Azoulay (2002:39) points out: “Lucy’s body is turned into a battlefield while her father is left behind.” Azoulay implies that her father has been shut out when she was being raped and he, therefore, cannot serve as a witness. Her father just assumes through her behaviour that the men have raped her. David attempts to comfort her but instead she resists his embrace for “she is stiff as a pole, yielding nothing” (*Disgrace*:99). She behaves in this manner because she identifies her father as a source of her rape because his arrival has shattered the peace on the farm. They seem to have raped her to inflict pain that reminds her father that he is powerless and helpless in the post-apartheid South Africa.

3.5 ATTITUDES TOWARDS LUCY LURIE’S RAPE

After David Lurie’s sexual abuse of Melanie, his daughter, Lucy, is raped. This section intends to analyse the attitude of Lucy, her father, and Petrus.

3.5.1 Lucy’s attitude

Horrell (2002:27) notes that “Lucy seems to represent a post-colonial dissenting coloniser, the coloniser who refuses to take up the burdens of the master-slave, owner-worker relationship, fashioning instead a partnership with a black who is at first employed by her.” She behaves in a manner that is peculiar to a coloniser because her father expects that she would oppress the colonised as the white culture commands but she does things differently. She treats her black employees as her equals and partners, and this confuses her father.

After her rape Lucy does not explicitly divulge to her father that she has been raped. Instead, she only begs her father to tell what happened to him when people ask and she too will tell what happened to her. Instead of going straight to the police station to report her rape, she orders Ettinger, her neighbour, to drive them to the hospital where David

will be treated for burns on his scalp. She tells her father that she has seen her doctor for a check-up and that she intends living on the farm as before because it was never safe to live there. She reports the crime of theft and her father's burning to the police, but does not mention her rape. Lucy and her father exchange rooms to evade the site of her violation. When her father persuades her to advance the reason for not telling the whole story she states that "as far as she is concerned, what happened to her is a purely private matter and her business alone in the new South Africa" (*Disgrace*:112). When her father disagrees with her views that she cannot expiate the crimes of the past by suffering in the present she insists that "he keeps on misreading her because guilt and salvation are abstractions, and she does not act in terms of abstractions" (*ibid.*).

She sees one of her rapists at Petrus' party and informs her father so that they can go home immediately (*Disgrace*:131). Her father intends calling the police but she refuses by saying that it is not Petrus' fault and the police will destroy his evening of celebration (*Disgrace*:133):

"Don't shout at me, David. This is my life. I am the one who has to live here. What happened to me is my business, mine alone, not yours, and if there is one right I have it is the right not to be put on trial like this, not to have to justify myself – not to you, not to anyone else. As for Petrus, he is not some hired labourer whom I can sack because in my opinion he is mixed up with the wrong people. That's all gone, gone with the wind. If you want to antagonize Petrus, you had better be sure of your facts first. You can't call in the police. I won't have it. Wait until morning. Wait until you have heard Petrus's side of the story" (*Disgrace*:133).

She reminds her father that things have changed in the post-apartheid South Africa and that "the reason why the police were called in the first place is for the sake of the insurance" (*Disgrace*:134). On the way from New Brighton Police Station Lucy speaks to her father about her rape for the first time:

"It was so personal," she says. "It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was ... expected. But why did they hate me so? I had never set my eyes on them" (*Disgrace*:156).

Her father attempts to persuade her to emigrate but she refuses to leave because “she sees herself as a dead person and leaving the farm would mean that she is defeated” (*Disgrace*:161). Yet she insists on saying that “she thinks she is in their territory, they have marked her, and they will come back for her” (*Disgrace*:158). She, furthermore, states that her rapists see her as owing them something, they see themselves as debt collectors, tax collectors and staying on her farm means agreeing to pay the price (*ibid.*), in other words, they want to expose her to “subjection and subjugation” (*Disgrace*:159). She astonishes her father when she states in her letter to him that “she cannot be a child forever and he cannot be a father forever and that he is not the guide she needs at the moment” (*Disgrace*:161). As a post-colonial dissenting coloniser, she finally informs her father that she is pregnant from the rape (*Disgrace*:197) and that she is not prepared to have an abortion again as she has done it once before (*Disgrace*:198). When her father asks why she kept it secret she points out:

“Because I could not face one of your eruptions. David, I can’t run my life according to whether or not you like what I do. Not anymore. You behave as if everything I do is part of your life. You are the main character, I am a minor character who does not make an appearance until halfway through. Well, contrary to what you think, people are not divided into major and minor. I am not a minor. I have a life of my own, just as important as yours is to you, and in my life I am the one who makes the decisions” (*ibid.*).

Lucy eventually accedes to being protected on her farm by Petrus, a black man who was once her dogman:

“Go back to Petrus,” she says. “Propose the following. Say I accept his protection. Say he can put out whatever story he likes about our relationship and I won’t contradict him. If he wants me to be known as his third wife, so be it. As his concubine, ditto. But then the child becomes his too. The child becomes part of his family. As for the land, say I will sign the land over to him as long as the house remains mine. I will become a tenant on his land” (*Disgrace*:204).

Her reaction clearly shows that she is an unusual, marginalised, and dissenting white lesbian woman. Horrell (2002:27) claims: “Lucy’s homosexuality is a denial not only of colonial values but also of male hegemony and compulsory heterosexuality.” Her

reaction to her rape is historically political in the sense that she accepts that her rapists are filled with anger of being treated badly by white people in the past. She is, therefore, ready to make reparations through her body even though it is painful and humiliating, hence her insistence on staying on and awaiting their return. Holland (2007:2) argues that “he finds Lucy’s character slightly less convincing.” Through Lucy, Coetzee attempts to show the seriousness and negative impact of not properly addressing the issues of land restitution, reparation and homosexuality after the advent of democracy in South Africa. The effects are currently seen through nationwide protest marches.

Marais (2001:35) claims that “Lucy’s refusal to report her rape signifies a desire to transcend the cycle of domination and counter-domination that determines the course of history.” Marais (2001:32), furthermore, states that “Dan Roodt has coined the term ‘Lucy-syndrome’ to signify the notion that white South Africans should debase themselves in atoning for their collective responsibility for apartheid.” Makhanya (2004:1) gives the reason why many South Africans preach the Lucy-syndrome when he claims that “there is a strong feeling that black South Africans led by Mandela have worked harder towards reconciliation than their white counterparts.” There is a need for many whites to show their dedication and commitment to reconciliation in South Africa by initiating strategies to address the past imbalances. Lucy’s rape eventually signifies, what Poyner (2000:72) calls, “a leveller of racial injustice” of the past history in South Africa.

3.5.2 David Lurie’s attitude

Birch (2006:2) states: “*Disgrace* portrays how whites and blacks see things differently in South Africa and how a community that looks after its own interest ignores the consequences of its action on outsiders.” David empathises with his daughter after her rape, forgetting how he himself sexually abused Melanie. He relates that “Lucy’s rape traumatises her because raping a lesbian is worse than raping a virgin” (*Disgrace*:105). He maintains that it is not safe for Lucy to live on her farm alone after her rape (*ibid.*) and he wishes her rapists harm wherever they are (*Disgrace*:107). He expresses his feelings after her rape as follows:

His pleasure in living has been snuffed out and he has begun to float towards his end like a leaf on a stream, like a puffball on a breeze. He sees it quite clearly, and it fills him with despair. The blood of life is leaving his body and despair is taking its place, despair that is like a gas, odourless and tasteless, without nourishment. You breathe it in, your limbs relax, and you cease to care, even at the moment when the steel touches your throat (*Disgrace*:107-108).

His feeling towards Lucy's refusal to report her rape to the police is that it will make her rapists victors because "it will dawn on them that over the body of a woman silence is being drawn like a blanket" (*Disgrace*:110). In other words, they will rejoice that she is too ashamed to tell the public of her violation because the newspaper only reports that the police are looking for the suspects for robbery and assault, not for rape. He, furthermore, informs Lucy:

"It was history speaking through them," he offers at last. "A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it wasn't. It came down from the ancestors" (*Disgrace*:156).

David tries to put some sense in her head regarding her unwillingness to report her rape:

You want to make up for the wrongs of the past, but this is not the way to do it. If you fail to stand up for yourself at this moment, you will never be able to hold your head up again. You may as well pack your bags and leave. As for the police, if you are too delicate to call them in now, then we should never have involved them in the first place. We should just have kept quiet and waited for the next attack. Or cut our own throats (*Disgrace*:133).

He feels that Lucy is stubborn, and immersed in the life she has chosen when she tells him that "she is not ready to leave her farm" (*Disgrace*:134). He accuses her of "wishing to humble herself before history and that the road she has chosen will strip her of all honour" (*Disgrace*:160).

He tells Bev Shaw, her lesbian partner, that he suspects that Lucy's rape has been orchestrated by Petrus:

“Depend on Petrus? Because Petrus has a beard and smokes a pipe and carries a stick, you think Petrus is an old-style kaffir. But it is not like that at all. Petrus is not an old-style kaffir, much less a good old chap. Petrus, in my opinion, is itching for Lucy to pull out. If you want proof, look no further than at what happened to Lucy and me. It may not have been Petrus’ brainchild, but he certainly turned a blind eye, he certainly didn’t warn us, he certainly took care not to be in the vicinity” (*Disgrace*:140).

David displays his paranoia about black people as his neighbours in the new South Africa because apartheid has taught him that white people should not trust black people. The absence of Petrus during the attack qualifies him to be an accomplice in David’s view. Attridge (2002:317) hints that “David represents the all-too-typical white consciousness of his time: by no means, an apologist for apartheid, he nevertheless exhibits on occasions attitudes complicit with racist ideology.” This is validated by the fact that “he was born in 1945” (*Disgrace*:46), only three years before apartheid was legalised in South Africa. Birch (2006:2) states that “in David the shadow of apartheid looms high.” It is indeed difficult for David to forsake the apartheid racist thinking because he is its product, hence his calling Petrus “an old-style kaffir” (*Disgrace*:140). Kaffir is a word used in the past in South Africa to refer to a black man in order to demean him and because of his apartheid mentality David persists in using it in the post-apartheid era.

Lucy’s rape has a huge impact on David’s mentality as Segall (2005:46) hints: “*Disgrace* in the end demonstrates a subtle shift in Lurie, revealing that he is no longer oblivious to others.” David is able to empathise with Melanie’s family. He starts to value reason over feelings and thus his Romantic stereotypes are forsaken. His change has forced him to become aware of the pain that he has inflicted on Melanie and her family. He eventually sees the need to visit Melanie’s family in George in order to apologise. It is, nevertheless, hard for him to accept the realities of post-apartheid South Africa where the master becomes the servant. This is evidenced when he becomes Petrus’ handyman during the installation of water pipes and also becomes a dog man at the local Bev Shaw’s animal clinic. After Lucy’s rape David is able to feel for the Other. He becomes able to exercise sexual restraint. Instead of having sex with the girl prostitute that he has picked up in Cape Town he decides to abandon her (*Disgrace*:195). He, furthermore, gives up the dog he loves dearly to be euthanised in order to relieve it of its pain. This indicates care for

the Other without considering himself first.

3.5.3 Petrus' attitude

Birch (2006:2) states that “in *Disgrace* Coetzee shows how one man’s thinking that he is doing right can appear absolutely evil to another”. As a new black farmer, Petrus is eager to accumulate more land from Lucy to make the redistribution of land from white people to black people possible in post-apartheid South Africa. The tactics he uses inflict pain on the white people around him. He is seen as having played a part in the attack on Lucy’s farm to make her realise how vulnerable she is to crime in the new South Africa without his protection. David’s suspicion of Petrus’s involvement in the attack that involves Lucy’s rape is validated by Petrus’ indifference to the crime and his harbouring of one of the rapists in his house. Petrus is intent on manipulating the incompetence of the police and the lawlessness of the situation because they cannot prove his involvement in the attack. Though he is aware that the police seem reluctant to arrest black criminals in the new South Africa he pretends to David that they will investigate the matter and detain the culprits: “The police must find them [criminals],” he says at last. “The police must find them and put them in jail. That is the work of the police” (*Disgrace*:119).

He furthermore contradicts himself when he tells David that “the boy he is harbouring is too young and cannot be put in jail and that it is the law” (*Disgrace*:138). He informs David that the boy is not guilty, that “he is not a criminal or a thief” as Lurie thinks (*Disgrace*:139). Petrus is unaware that by harbouring the criminal boy he, in turn, is liable to being arrested as he is promoting crime in the new South Africa. However, Petrus’ harbouring of the criminals is a mundanacity in post-apartheid South Africa and it makes the job of arresting them difficult to the police. With the character of Petrus, Coetzee attempts to illustrate the change of roles between black and white people, as Farred (2002:360) concludes: “*Disgrace* seems to portray South Africa as a degraded society where black criminality goes unpunished” because black people are now in charge of governance.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In *Disgrace* Coetzee attempts to portray the complexity of post-apartheid South Africa in that the past white oppressors resist the change intended to close past imbalances between black and white people. White people who resist change because they are the product of apartheid include David Lurie, Bill Shaw and Ettinger. They lament the demise of apartheid by pointing out that this state of affairs has led to lawlessness, crime, corruption in government, and the degeneration of morality. Thoughtless of the negative impact of apartheid on the oppressed black people, these white men in *Disgrace* are pessimistic about the present black-led government with its policies to rectify the wrongs of the past. Cornwell (2002:314) argues that “*Disgrace* has been labelled a liberal-funk novel like Brink’s *The Rights of Desire*” (2001) because both authors portray the breakdown of law and order in post-apartheid South Africa in which black people are in power.

Contrary to the attitudes of most white men in *Disgrace* towards the new South Africa, the white women appear ready to accept the new conditions as the reality of staying in South Africa in particular, and Africa in general. Lucy Lurie, Bev Shaw and Rosalind are depicted as having learnt how to survive in the post-apartheid era despite its daunting challenges. David Lurie’s rape of Melanie and his immediate reaction after he has been caught serve as a clear proof that he puts his interest before that of people of colour without any consideration of the pain he inflicts on them. Nevertheless, when three black men rape his daughter, Lucy, he feels the pain, forgetting that those who raped her have done what he did to Melanie. Lucy’s rape gradually teaches him to empathise with others, and in this way he is able to regain his fallen grace.

Disgrace shows that more white people are disillusioned about post-apartheid realities while their black counterparts are keen to use the situation to their own advantage. In this novel black people appear to remind white people of their past wrongs by treating them badly now that the former are the rulers.

The next chapter will focus on the comparative study between the sexual abuse of women

in the apartheid as well as post-apartheid eras.

CHAPTER FOUR

4 A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE PORTRAYAL OF SEXUAL ABUSE IN *DISGRACE* AND *THE MADONNA OF EXCELSIOR*

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the way the two selected texts portray sexual abuse in South Africa in the two different time frames. The authors of the two novels have had different social, cultural, economic and political backgrounds. It would seem that their dissimilar backgrounds have had an influence on their writing. Farrar, Straus and Giroux (2004:01) confirm this assumption when they note that “South African novelists, awakening the political consciousness, straddled two worlds: the creative and the political.” They emphasise the fact that there is no way in which the South African writers, both black and white, would escape from writing about the political situations in which they find themselves. In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda, on the one hand, depicts, as a black man who was once oppressed by white people, the apartheid era during which the white people had absolute power to control and oppress black people. He, furthermore, shows how some white men used such power to sexually abuse the black women who happened to be their servants. In *Disgrace*, on the other hand, Coetzee, a white man, represents, what Cooper (2005:02) calls, “an anxious, comfortless picture of post-apartheid South Africa”. Coetzee furthermore depicts a country that is ravaged by crime due to the demoralisation of the police who are slack in arresting perpetrators. The most worrying crime that *Disgrace* highlights is the sexual abuse of women by men. Farred (2002:352) claims that crime is “ubiquitous and mundane” in South Africa and this tendency disturbs many people who praise South Africa for having obtained her democracy through peaceful negotiations.

4.2 THE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE WAY THE TWO NOVELISTS PORTRAY SEXUAL ABUSE

4.2.1 Narration

This section shows how Mda and Coetzee use different narrating methods to put across their stories to validate their themes in the two selected texts.

In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda uses the collective voice that represents the oppressed black people to narrate the story. Zulu (2006:01) describes a collective voice as “the narrative voice that speaks for a group of individuals, and that belongs to all those who were affected by the Immorality Act and other apartheid laws that enforced racial division.” For Mda, it would appear, writing to protest against exploitation and oppression of one race by another is not an individual issue per se but a communal responsibility. It is the duty of the people to voice their dissatisfaction against the abuse of power by some individuals. It is within that belief that Mda has selected the collective voice to narrate the events in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, which, in most cases, reflects how white people ill-treated black people during the reign of the Nationalist government.

The most striking element of the collective voice is that it attempts to be impartial and fair in the narration of the story. The collective voice tries very hard to avoid being biased in its representation of white as well as black people. If both black and white people are perpetrators of crime, the collective voice is cautious not to be partial in its presentation. Even though the collective voice that is represented as the omniscient ‘we’ is intent on showing how white men sexually abused black women in the apartheid era, it does, at the same time, indicate that black people are also not blameless. The collective voice portrays, on the one hand, white Afrikaner men such as Johannes Smit, Stephanus Cronjé, Groot-Jan Lombard, and Reverend Bornman as the regular sexual abusers of the black women of Mahlatswetsa Location. On the other hand, it depicts Niki’s black husband, Pule, as a woman abuser who seems frustrated by the suspicion that she sleeps with her white masters: “Pule decides there and then that she was late because she had

been sleeping with white men” (*The Madonna*:34). By demonstrating the abuse of Niki by her black husband, Mda attempts to draw the balance between white and black men, in that they are both guilty of sexually abusing black women. Mda, furthermore, displays the reason why the black men abuse their wives at their homes because they accuse them of sleeping with their white employers, and in this regard, the collective voice seems to justify the sexual abuse of black women by black men. Though the collective voice narrates the story in a fair and just way, Mda, it may be argued, tries to show that the human weakness of abusing women occurs in both races.

Mda occasionally interrupts the collective voice to evince his own attitudes and feelings. Zulu (2006:11) claims that “sometimes the voice of Mda is heard as a writer and social critic intruding the narrative to persuade the reader of his views.” The reason why Mda keeps on interfering is that he has declared that “the arts have a role to play in transformation” (Mda, 1995:38). His implication is that no one can divorce any art form from the social conditions within the society, and as such, it is influenced in one way or another by the culture of the people. He, furthermore, points out that the arts should be subversive to the oppressive tendencies prevailing in the communities.

Contrary to Mda’s collective narration in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Coetzee in *Disgrace* adopts a unique type of narration. Instead of using the collective voice, Coetzee opts for using an individualistic narration in which the protagonist, David Lurie, is used, in Marais’s words (2006:84), as a focaliser. *Disgrace* is based on what Lurie does, thinks and articulates. Cornell (2002:312), furthermore, states that “the authorial narrator tells the story that is consistently focalised through the consciousness of the protagonist, Lurie.” From the beginning of the novel, the authorial narrator represents David as a man who is not happy with the state of affairs at Cape Technical University where he works as “an adjunct professor of Communications” (*Disgrace*:3). The cause of his unhappiness is the introduction of the transformation and rationalisation strategies that have to be implemented by the University to address the past imbalances. He is portrayed as a “Casanova” (*Disgrace*:43) at the University because he flirts with female students without any fear of being apprehended. After having abused one of his female students in

her flat he still maintains that it is not rape per se even though he admits that their sexual intercourse is “undesired to the core” (*Disgrace*:24). Lurie’s arrogant attitudes eventually change only after the three black men have raped his daughter, Lucy Lurie. It is this change from “a betrayal of ethical responsibility” (Graham, 2003:438) to respect and empathise with the others that many critics find commendable. Coetzee’s emphasis on the moral consciousness of David seems to indicate that every immoral person can change for good and that out of the evil good may emanate.

The narrative style of each novelist serves the purpose it is designed to fulfil especially since Mda is an African who spent much time abroad whereas Coetzee is a white man who is enmeshed in Western culture. The collective voice of Mda in *The Madonna of Excelsior* is based on communalism that had originated in Africa that served to unite black South Africans to fight white domination during the apartheid era, whilst the individualistic voice of Coetzee in *Disgrace* has its history in individualism and functions to enhance the individual freedom in the post-apartheid era.

4.2.2 The Settings

Though the two novels represent South Africa in two distinct timeframes, their settings also have contrasting historical backgrounds. This section intends to briefly outline the history of the Free State Province as the setting for *The Madonna of Excelsior*, and that of the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces as the setting for *Disgrace*.

In the past the Free State Province was regarded as a stronghold of the Afrikaner National Party. During his interview with Weber (2004:03) Mda states: “It was a racist province during the days of apartheid.” Mda has selected it as his setting because he knows that he wants to depict the scandals of the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, that prevailed in the 1970s between the rich Afrikaner men and the poor African women who worked as their servants. In his interview with Weber (2004), Mda, furthermore, reiterates that many newspapers covered the scandals of the Afrikaners who had sex with black women by coercion. Mda appears to have chosen this province to portray the sexual abuse of

African women by Afrikaner men because of its history of “disgracing” the Nationalist government by regularly breaking the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, that prevents the ‘contamination’ of the Afrikaner blood from people of colour. Head (1993:ix) relates the history of this Act:

This legislation, which progressively outlawed sexual union between black and white, has a long history. In 1927, the first country-wide prohibition of union between the White and African people outside marriage was passed, in 1950 this prohibition was extended to include Indian and Coloured people ... behaviour of sexual nature involving white and black people was criminalised - imprisonment of up to seven years could follow from just inviting a person of another race to perform an illicit sexual act.

Head also illustrates that the breaking of this Act was a scandal. It was aggravated by the fact that the Afrikaner men were the ones who pursued the African women while the law was meant to protect their contamination from those women. For the contravention of the Immorality Act, No 23 of 1950, the police arrested many Afrikaner men and African women during the apartheid era. The fact that such cases attracted international media attention and that the state interfered with the judiciary system seems to have prompted Mda to write a novel about the effects of that Act.

The small town of Excelsior in the Free State Province is where most of the events of the novel take place. Most of the inhabitants of this small town are Afrikaners who retired as farmers or run their own businesses. In terms of the Group Areas Act, No. 22 of 1950 (Bernard, Cronjé & Oliever, 1986:115), black people were not permitted to reside in Excelsior. They could be employed as servants of the wealthy Afrikaners. The black township of Mahlatswetsa was next to Excelsior and many poor black people lived there. Many women from Mahlatswetsa location such as Niki, Mmampe, and Maria allowed themselves to be sexually abused by Afrikaner men from Excelsior because they gave them a little money to sustain their poor families. With the juxtaposition of Excelsior town and Mahlatswetsa location Mda serves to indicate the imbalances of the socio-economic conditions between the black and white races in the apartheid era that

prompted the African women to accept being sexually abused by the Afrikaner men as a way of life.

While Mda has chosen the Free State Province as his setting for *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Coetzee has selected both the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces as his setting for *Disgrace*. In *Disgrace* Coetzee portrays two cases of rape. One rape takes place in the Western Cape Province while the other occurs in the Eastern Cape Province. Both provinces are depicted as being dominated by English-speaking people as opposed to the Free State Province which is dominated by Afrikaans-speaking people. The capital city of the Western Cape Province is Cape Town and it is, according to McDonald (2002:321), “a key centre of what was the British Cape Colony”. It was once under British rule and many Afrikaners left Cape Province during the Great Trek of 1835-37 to settle in the Free State Province.

Coetzee portrays David Lurie as an erudite person who resides in Cape Town and believes that desire should be satisfied. It is intimated in *Disgrace* that such a view of life is nurtured by the Romantic literary texts that he has read as well as the lifestyle he has adopted over a long period while staying in Cape Town. Coetzee portrays Cape Town as a city in which prostitution is freely practised because Lurie visits an escort agency “ninety minutes a week” (*Disgrace*:5) to satisfy his sexual desire. Lurie confesses: “Cape Town, a city prodigal of beauty, of beauties” (*Disgrace*:12). *Disgrace* depicts Lurie as a product of the city culture, and his attitude towards women seems to have emanated from the way his family of women has brought him up. He states: “The company of women made him a lover of women and, to an extent a womaniser... He existed in an anxious flurry of promiscuity. He slept with whores” (*Disgrace*:7). His lack of paternal guidance has led to his abnegation of responsibility towards his female lovers. He seems to have been brought up through a womanly ideology without a manly one. This is typical of city life nowadays where many single mothers bring up boys.

Coetzee attempts to show the effect of single parenting on children. The fact that Lurie has not had a father figure in his upbringing justifies some of his ideas and behaviour.

Though David Lurie is fifty-two-year-old, his behaviour is far from being associated with an aging man. He is twice divorced but is still, according to his former wife, Rosalind, “meddling with other people’s children” (*Disgrace*:45). He should be acting as a protector of his female students but instead he sees them as potential lovers. Coetzee’s Cape Town in *Disgrace* seems to have cultivated Lurie’s ideology of objectifying women of colour because he prefers feelings to reasoning. When he rapes Melanie, he claims to have the right to thrust himself upon her without considering that he inflicts pain on her. The motif of desire is extensively explored in André Brink’s *The Rights of Desire* (2001) that, like *Disgrace*, has Cape Town as its setting. The protagonists in both *Disgrace* and *The Rights of Desire* are aging men whose desires persist and refuse to wane with time. In these two novels, the two aging men who desire young women undergo a psychological change that eventually helps them to control their desires and lead healthy lives.

The second rape in *Disgrace* occurs in the Eastern Cape Province that is home to many Xhosa-speaking people. Kissack and Titlestad (2005:51) claim: “Eastern Cape is the site of the most protracted conflicts of the colonial era which took place from 1779- 1877.” Eastern Cape acts as the frontier where the British and the Xhosas used to fight over land occupation. Graham (2003:438) postulates that “Coetzee’s choice of the rural Eastern Cape as a setting for the rape of Lurie’s daughter by the three black men emphasises the complex historical relationships between issues of race, gender, and land.” When the Natives Land Act, No. 50 of 1913 (Seleti, Dyer, Naidoo, Nisbet, Rosbert, and Saunders, 2000:234), was enacted, the first people who felt its impact were those in Eastern Cape because it denied Africans the right to buy land from white people. Such a restriction of black people from buying land bred anger among them. In *Disgrace* Coetzee dramatises such extreme anger which eventually leads to the rape of a white woman by three men.

Although *The Madonna of Excelsior* and *Disgrace* use different historical settings to explore their themes, they both tend to focus on the theme of desire that seems to transcend time. The two novelists attempt to show the negative impact of desire if it is not properly managed and controlled while they indicate also that desire transcends time,

place, and social barriers. In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, the white men cannot control their desire for black women while in *Disgrace*, the black men cannot control their desire to sexually violate a white woman.

4.2.3 Political and Economic Power

In his interview with Kachuba (2002:02), Mda states: “Power does corrupt in many instances.” Lawyeraan (2004:11), moreover, points out: “In South Africa, the issue is not so much black and white but it boils to power, who has it, and who does not have it.” The abuse of power by some individuals is a serious threat to peace and humanity in South Africa. This section examines the effects of political and economic power in both novels.

The Madonna of Excelsior portrays the Afrikaners as people who have political power and who abuse black people. After the National Party’s victory in the 1948 elections, laws were promulgated to enhance the superiority of the white people in general, and to suppress the rights of the black people. Mda depicts Johannes Smit as an Afrikaner who “waylays the black girls in the fields” (*The Madonna*:15) but the girls do not report him to the police for fear of reprisal, ill-treatment and brutality of the police. The police seem, on the one hand, brainwashed that a white man cannot commit a sexual crime against a black woman, while the black women, on the other hand, are terrified to report their sexual abuses to the police due to the way in which the police demean them as victims of crimes. Though Niki wills to report Smit to the white police after he has raped her, her two friends, Mmampe and Maria, dissuade her from doing so. They frankly tell her that she will be arrested instead for breaking the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, that prohibits sexual contact between black and white people. In this way, Mda attempts to demonstrate the dilemma of the sexually abused black women in the apartheid epoch who were seen as Other by the white men. These women are presented as powerless to challenge the political status quo and hence they accept their sexual abuse as a normality that can only be changed when blacks were in power. White people wielded more political power than black people.

In *Disgrace* Coetzee offers a different perspective of political power in the new South Africa. In this novel the reader is faced with post-apartheid South Africa in which the reign of the National Party has ended to be replaced by the new black rule. The white people have bequeathed their political power to the black majority. The dawn of democracy has filled many South Africans with high expectations of peace and prosperity but some of the snags are that numerous white people still lament the demise of apartheid, while large numbers of black people seek reparation and vengeance. The ideals of liberation and freedom are seen as being betrayed by the corrupt elements in the new government of the black people. The rape of Lucy by the three black men in *Disgrace* is an indication that white people should pay for the wrongs of their ancestors. McDonald (2002:326) points out that “*Disgrace* depicts at the level of a story not just rape, but black-on-white assault, burglary, and police incompetence,” which is what Mda in *The Madonna of Excelsior* depicts in reverse. McDonald is of the view that many crimes in the new South Africa are directed at the white people because they have gained from their evil past, hence some black people are still viewing them as perpetrators of crime against humanity. Coetzee, therefore, attempts to show how complex the situation is in South Africa after the attainment of democracy. Coetzee, furthermore, wishes to illustrate the threat posed by the disgruntled minority in any democratic society.

In *Disgrace* a few vengeance-seeking black men who are on a raping spree of white women believe that these women deserve such treatment as a revenge, forgetting that it is a crime against humanity to commit such acts of violence. Kissack and Titlestad (2005) argue that the minority poses a serious threat to peace and stability in democratic societies because the laws of the majority impose restrictions upon their liberties, particularly upon the expression of their instincts. The rape of Lucy might have been the result of the frustration and discontent of the rapists concerning the prevailing political conditions in Eastern Cape, particularly in Salem.

In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda furthermore demonstrates the lack of economic power that might have compelled the black women to give in to the harsh sexual advances of the white Afrikaner men. The African women who keep on visiting Smit’s barn are called

“five supplicants” (*The Madonna*:52). Mda calls them supplicants because they are begging the Afrikaner men to give them a pittance after the latter have sexually violated them. By exchanging them among themselves during the orgies, the Afrikaner men illustrate that they do not see them as dignified people but as objects of sexual pleasure. Due to the lack of economic power Niki, like Mmampe and Maria, gives Smit the latitude to sexually abuse her: “She just lay there and became a masturbation gadget” (*The Madonna*:18-19). Mda intends to show the extent to which a lack of economic power can compel a woman to do that which she abhors, and hence makes an appeal for a balance of economic power between black and white people in the new South Africa.

In *Disgrace*, however, Coetzee displays one mechanism of addressing the economic imbalances of the past through the character of Lucy Lurie. After her rape the traumatised Lucy baffles everyone when she refuses to report her rape to the police, saying that her reason to do so is that “what happened to her was a purely private matter, her business alone in South Africa” (*Disgrace*:112). The attainment of political power without economic power by the majority of black people remains one of the most frustrating factors among the youth. In targeting Lucy the rapists seem to have been influenced by jealousy when they see her thriving economically because she already owns a farm while being relatively young. There is evidence that her black colleague, Petrus, might have played a part in instigating her rape to scare her to leave the farm in his care. Cornwell (2002:316) concurs: “Lucy’s neighbour and part-time worker, Petrus, has possibly engineered the incident to demonstrate her vulnerability and the importance of his patronage.” Lucy eventually succumbs to Petrus’ proposal of protecting her by giving him her land but allowing her to remain in her house and become his tenant. McDonald (2002:328) affirms that “by ceding her farm to Petrus as a gesture of redress and for her protection she is reversing the colonial order of the South African farm, hence she elects to become a bywoner, a tenant on Petrus’s farm.” By giving her land over to Petrus, Lucy wants “to start from the ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapon, no property, no rights, and no dignity” (*Disgrace*:205). She decides to adopt such a stance, if one may argue, after she has realised that her rape has been motivated by her economic power. By relinquishing everything she owns she thinks that

she can live in the new South Africa peacefully “like a dog” (*ibid.*) because the economic power would have been redressed. She suspects that her rape is connected to her property that emanates from her privileged history.

In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda furthermore attempts to validate the notion that absolute power indeed corrupts, be it political or economic. He enacts the incidents of abuse of power using the white Afrikaner men when they sexually abuse the poor Basotho women of Mahlatswetsa Location. But in *Disgrace* Coetzee shows the remnants of the apartheid ideology which refuse to wane in David Lurie because he still views the women of colour as his objects to gratify his desire. Coetzee also depicts the abuse of power by the black people after their liberation. Both novelists protest against the abuse of power by either black or white people over the other in different periods of history. In addition, Coetzee and Mda both chronicle the pain the victims of sexual abuse have to endure due to a lack of support from the police. The two novels, furthermore, expose the dereliction of the police as a contributing factor towards the abuse of power. If the police were indeed doing their work competently many abusers of power, regardless of race, would be arrested without partiality and delay and punished to deter others from committing similar and other abuses.

4.2.4 Communalism versus Individualism

One of the main differences between the two novels is the opposing view the characters have concerning the ideals of communalism and individualism. This section aims to show that in *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda enacts the positive side of communalism, while in *Disgrace* Coetzee endeavours to promote the principles of individualism.

Mda portrays the Afrikaners as well as the black people in *The Madonna of Excelsior* as practitioners of communalism, particularly during the apartheid era. The Afrikaners have to stay as a unit in the Free State Province because they have had their adversities in the past. They had engaged in the frontier wars against both Africans and the British in the previous years. The Afrikaners as a nation have a responsibility of protecting their own

interests, and hence they call themselves the “decent volk” (*The Madonna*:71). To achieve that objective they formulated laws such as the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, to ensure that sexual union between black and white people is curbed, as that would, in their thinking, degenerate their superior race. Mda depicts the Afrikaners attending the Dutch Reformed Church *together*, attending parties *together*, enacting the Great Trek of 1836 *together*, attending the cherry festivals *together*, and engaging in the swapping orgies *together*. To show that they are indeed committed to protecting their interest and their women from other races they chase the Greek Dukakis family away from Excelsior after it is found that their son has had sexual relations with Reverend François Bornman’s daughter. Though Mda presents the Afrikaners as a unified and principled nation, they seem to have the weakness of failing to control their sexual desire for the Basotho women from the Mahlatswetsa Location. Even the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, cannot deter them from pursuing these women. Mda, moreover, presents the community of Mahlatswetsa Location as unified by its poverty and oppression from white Afrikaners. It is thus logical that the likes of Niki’s son, “[Viliki] had joined the guerilla forces, those who were fighting to liberate South Africa from the oppression of the Boers. He was working for the underground political movement” (*The Madonna*:125). The narrating voice, “we” is a demonstration that the community of black people in the poor black township shares the pain of being marginalised by the Afrikaner community.

Contrary to Mda’s enhancement of communalism in the apartheid era, Coetzee shows the flaws of communalism as they breed discontent among the minority group. In *Disgrace*, the period for the liberation of the oppressed black people has passed, and democracy has prevailed, and individual interest looms high. *Disgrace* depicts David Lurie as a “self-centred [individual]” (Cornwell, 2002:314) who mourns the end of apartheid because he could then sexually abuse women of colour as he liked. Graham (2003:437) construes that “Lurie has a history of desiring exotic women and assumes that he has the right to purchase their bodies without being responsible for them or respecting them.” When the disciplinary committee of the Cape Technical University attempts to make him aware that what he did is wrong, he refuses to confess and repent. He justifies his rape of Melanie by intimating that he has been following “his rights of desire” (*Disgrace*:89). His argument

is that he cannot be punished for responding to his own instinct. Expecting repentance after he has responded to nature is, according to him, an infringement of his rights by the University. He seems discontent with the mainstream view that what he has done is wrong. He is only interested in satisfying his individual lust without regard of the communal interest.

Coetzee, on the contrary, illustrates the individual interest in the character of Petrus who is a black farmer in the post-apartheid era. Like Lurie, he is portrayed as an ambitious individual who is interested in his own personal advancement without the slightest consideration of whether he hurts others. His desire is to possess Lucy's land, so he hires three black men to rape her to create the impression that she is not safe on her own. Indeed, she signs her land over to him as a guarantee for her protection against other criminals. The irony is that Petrus is not a police officer who can offer her 24-hour protection and, furthermore, he is not immunised from any crime. His individual interest overshadows her vulnerability in the new South Africa. Coetzee is aware of the individual interests that pervade this country and that is an indication that a certain minority is discontent.

Mda shows that apartheid was so evil that it made people put up a desperate struggle for a common cause. The Afrikaners struggled to sustain themselves while black people too had the vision of liberating themselves from the white people's oppression. In *Disgrace* Coetzee demonstrates that the wishes of the masses during the liberation struggle are betrayed because everyone wants to enrich oneself because capitalism has prevailed. In the new South Africa of *Disgrace* many people in government do as they wish as the police are corrupt, crime is rampant, the white and black minorities are disillusioned, and finally there is no peace. It is, therefore, understandable that individuals such as David Lurie long for the apartheid era when a white man could "teach [a black man] a lesson and show him his place" (*Disgrace*:206). Coetzee depicts the new South Africa as bleak because of a few discontent black people such as Petrus who resort to criminal activities to accumulate wealth.

4.2.5 Christianity and Secularism

No general conclusion can be made about the role Christianity and secularism play in the two novels. A few instances of major characters practising both religions will be briefly discussed to show how the two novelists use them to influence the lives of their characters.

Mda portrays the Afrikaners in *The Madonna of Excelsior* as Christians because they go to the Dutch Reformed Church every Sunday. The church teaches them to be righteous in their lives. The snag is that the Afrikaners who are the respected members of the church fail to practise what they preach. They fail to treat other races with dignity and respect. They proclaim that “apartheid was therefore prescribed by the Bible” (*The Madonna*:129). They distort the Bible completely. Their behaviour demeans Christianity.

By contrast, some of the characters in *Disgrace* show a different Christianity that is based on the truth and faithfulness. Coetzee presents Mr Isaacs as a true and sincere Christian who, unlike the Afrikaner men in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, is able to practise what he preaches. Though David has raped his daughter, Melanie, Isaacs welcomes David to his home. He, furthermore, accepts David’s apology for having raped his daughter. He insists on asking David to say what he has learnt after he has become repentant. To evade his question David tells him that he is a believer. Boehmer (2002:342) concludes that David avoids making a “Christianized confession” but on the contrary, “with careful ceremony he gets to his knees and touches his forehead to the floor” (*Disgrace*:173) as gesture of contrition. Mr Isaacs also volunteers to mediate between David and the Cape Technical University for his reinstatement after his expulsion. Mr Isaacs is not a hypocrite. He lives according to what he believes in. The rape of his daughter is, it may be argued, meant to test his faith in Christ and to tempt him to fall from grace.

Whilst both authors endeavour to show how various Christians live their lives, they furthermore illustrate that some of the characters lead secular lives. Mda presents Niki in *The Madonna of Excelsior* as a traumatised woman because the Afrikaner men have

frequently abused her. Furthermore, the police have physically and emotionally abused her during her arrest. She is hurt by Stephanus Cronjé's denunciation as the father of her coloured child. She is grieved by Cronjé's sudden suicide, and betrayed by her abusive husband, Pule. After all these adversities, she remains resilient as an African woman to fend for her children single-handedly after their fathers' unfortunate and untimely deaths. She is able to do so because she has headed her family at a tender age after the death of her mother regardless of the drunkenness of her father. Practising secularism has contributed towards her survival.

Like Niki, Lucy in *Disgrace*, practises secularism in a positive way. After her rape, she refuses to leave the farm even though she insists that the rapists will come after her again: "I think I am in their territory. They have marked me. They will come back for me" (*Disgrace*:158). She goes further to flabbergast her father: "I am prepared to do anything, make any sacrifice, for the sake of peace" (*Disgrace*:208). Her secular view is condemned by Fugard (2000:32), who finds her position "a very morbid phenomenon" because it debases the white people in *Disgrace*, in particular, and in the new South Africa, in general. Marais (2006:32) notes: "Some critics see Lucy's passivity following her rape as exemplifying whites' acceptance of their peripherality in the 'new' South Africa." Dan Roodt (2000) has coined the term, 'Lucy-syndrome', to be used to signify the notion that white South Africans must be prepared to abase themselves to atone for their collective responsibility for their apartheid past. There are contrasting views with regard to Lucy's response to her rape. Some critics, such as Fugard, feel that her response is unrealistic, while others, such as Roodt, appear to associate themselves with her reaction. It remains to be seen whether the "Lucy-syndrome" materialises in the new South Africa to address past imbalances.

To conclude, Mda and Coetzee portray their characters in a realistic way because they offer them, as in real life situations, religions from which to choose. They can choose between Christianity and secularism to lead sustainable lives and to heal the wounds of the women's sexual abuse by men.

4.2.6 History breeds Fiction

This section intends to argue that both *The Madonna of Excelsior* and *Disgrace* are fictions that are based on the history of South Africa.

The characters in *The Madonna of Excelsior* are fictional, but the theme of the novel is based on real incidents that happened in the Free State Province in the 1970s. Such incidents were extensively reported in the various newspapers. Many newspapers reported on 28 February 1971 about the charges against 19 people - five white men and 14 African women - who were accused of having contravened the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. Their charges were withdrawn because the prosecution witnesses were not willing to give evidence. The number of the accused is similar to that of *The Madonna of Excelsior* and it, therefore, suffices to say that Mda uses history to provide some of his themes. To validate that the trial indeed took place Mda states in his interview with Weber (2004) that he has physically met some of the 1971 accused and their coloured children and he has made friends with them. Even though Mda uses history in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, this tendency does not qualify it to be a chronicle of history per se because he has added his own characters, events, and words to make it more fictional, but at the same time to be able to inform, educate, and entertain his audience.

Contrary to Mda's socio-political history that he uses as the backdrop for *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Coetzee, in *Disgrace*, applies the psychological effects of history on his characters. *Disgrace* seems to be a spiritual document that reflects the extent to which apartheid has affected the psyches of both black and white South Africans. The effects of apartheid have made it extremely difficult for both black and white people in post-apartheid South Africa to confess, repent, and reconcile to attain peace and stability. The two rapes in *Disgrace* are portrayed as being closely related to the history of apartheid. David's rape of Melanie is related to history because Farodia Rasool states that "it is part of the long history of exploitation" (*Disgrace*:53). The sexual abuse of the female students at universities is, according to Cooper (2005:02), "a white privilege", as Lucy confirms to her father: "It certainly went on when I was a student. If they prosecuted

every case the profession would be decimated” (*Disgrace*:66). From time immemorial male educators have sexually abused female students because they have been made to believe that they have the masculine power to do so. It is, therefore, not surprising that it has also happened when Lucy was a student at the university. She was equally aware that the law did not punish the abusers. Her account implies the extent to which the patriarchal government was turning a blind eye on the sexual abuse of women.

Disgrace, furthermore, shows Lucy’s rape as being influenced by the history of apartheid. They gang rape her because they want to punish her and her white race, as she confesses to her father: “It was so personal. It was done with such personal hatred” (*Disgrace*:156). Her father responds: “It was history speaking through them. A history of wrong. Think of it that way, if it helps. It may have seemed personal, but it was not. It came down from their ancestors” (*ibid.*). The anger and hatred that apartheid has created between black and white people have been passed on to the younger generations. Coetzee calls for this realisation and appeals to both black and white people for reconciliatory answers to be found. In other words, he calls for co-existence, living a life of cultural and social, as well as political cohesion and peace. He uses the characters he has invented to show such fear and anger, and, therefore, it can be concluded that *Disgrace* is a fictional novel, not a novel built on a specific historical incident, as *The Madonna of Excelsior* is.

Mda and Coetzee are both prolific novelists whose fictional texts have usually been written from a historical perspective of apartheid. In the two novels under discussion, they use history in different ways to make their writing achieve their set literary aims, namely of exploring the sexual abuse of women. Both novelists use history to remind their readers of their past so that reconciliation can be attained through confession and forgiveness.

4.2.7 Change and Resistance

This section aims to explore the way in which the two authors attempt to effect positive changes in their characters. It furthermore illustrates how some characters resist change

through evasion.

Mda shows that some of his characters are able to change due to circumstances while others resist change. The enmity between Niki and Smit persists until the end of *The Madonna of Excelsior*. Niki insists that she will never forgive him for raping her when she was still a girl and that rape has led to her loss of virginity. She still thinks that he deserves to be arrested. Smit still shows no remorse. Though Niki cannot forgive Smit, she has also wronged Madam Cornelia Cronjé who, like her, cannot forgive her for stealing her husband, Stephanus Cronjé. Madam Cornelia keeps thinking about Niki: “She silently cursed the woman who had led him [Stephanus] to his demise. She wondered what had happened to Niki. The traitor who had seduced her husband. She blamed her for everything. Niki had never set foot in the butchery since his death” (*The Madonna*:150). It is clear that Madam Cornelia who is portrayed as a Christian is not ready to change her negative attitude towards Niki. On the contrary, Madam Cornelia’s son, Tjaart, who is taught to hate black people, eventually wavers in his hatred and admits that he and Popi, Niki’s coloured daughter, share one father. The acceptance by these two characters that Stephanus Cronjé is their father is a reconciliatory gesture that Mda endeavours to promote. He promotes the idea and attitude of unity in diversity in the new South Africa.

In *Disgrace* Coetzee depicts David Lurie as, to use Cooper’s words (2005:02), “a representative of an older social order” of apartheid. With the advent of democracy in South Africa, he is expected to undergo a mental change in order to survive. After having raped Melanie, he is told to change his lifestyle of objectifying women of colour. He resists change by stating to Lucy: “I am old-fashioned, I would prefer simply to be put against a wall and shot. Have done with it” (*Disgrace*:66). He, moreover, informs her: “I am not prepared to be reformed. I want to go on being myself” (*Disgrace*:77). David is completely opposed to changing his way of life. He cites his age as an impediment even though his daughter advises him to repent. His ex-wife, Rosalind, is frank with him: “But you are always a great deceiver. A great deceiver and a great deceiver” (*Disgrace*:188). The repetition of ‘great deceiver’ alludes to the need to change his psyche. He does not

realise that if he resists change it will, in turn, impose itself upon him. He is eventually compelled to change in a painful way after his daughter's rape. It is from this rape that he, for the first time, understands the pain he has inflicted on Melanie and her family. The rape of his daughter changes his outlook on life in general because it traumatises him. He could not prevent it as her father. His visit to Melanie's home to ask for forgiveness serves as a testimony that change is inevitable. Nevertheless, Lucy, on the other hand, is unlike her father because she acts according to the demands of the situation. She is still more flexible than her father after her rape. Bev Shaw confirms this assertion to her father: "Lucy is adaptable. And she is young. She lives closer to the ground than you. Than either of us" (*Disgrace*:210).

Coetzee has succeeded in imposing change on his characters in *Disgrace* to elevate reconciliation even though some, such as David Lurie, resist it from the beginning. However, Mda intends to portray in *The Madonna of Excelsior* change in his characters to promote reconciliation between black and white people. But some of his characters such as Niki and Cornelia are unable to transcend the anger and hatred caused by apartheid. What these two authors are saying is that much needs to be done to eliminate the cultural and social rift caused by apartheid. By showing that only a minority resists change, Mda and Coetzee paint a picture of hope not only for South Africa, but also for the rest of Africa and beyond.

4.2.8 Prevarication and Confession

This part briefly discusses the motif of prevarication and confession in *The Madonna of Excelsior* and *Disgrace* respectively.

Mda characterises the era of the 1970s as follows: "It was the Golden Age of Immorality in Free State. Immorality was a pastime. It had always been popular even before laws were enacted in Parliament to curb it" (*The Madonna*:93). *The Madonna of Excelsior* shows that parliament was aware that the Afrikaner men were sleeping with black women, by either coercion or consent. The newspaper, *The Friend*, keeps on reporting

cases of white men bedding black women. The accused women gave birth to children of mixed race. A doctor from Bloemfontein also conducted paternity tests on the coloured children that proved that their fathers were white. With all the reports and evidence to prosecute the accused, the suspected Afrikaner men prevaricate to the court. Their lawyer keeps on stating: “These men are innocent. They have been framed by the blacks” (*The Madonna*:75). This is an indication that these men are liars who use Christianity as a scapegoat. With their behaviour, Mda parodies the apartheid mentality that projects white people as victims and black people as perpetrators. The irony is that with enough evidence, the court withdraws the case, and in so doing, the abuse of judiciary power is enacted.

Both Mda and Coetzee show hope of reconciliation and peace in the new South Africa by showing that it can be attained through confession of the wrongs done in the past and the present. Some of Coetzee’s characters at the Cape Technical University are of the view that confession may breed absolution to the rape that David Lurie has committed. Poyner (2000:67) views David’s trial as “an allegory of the troubled Truth and Reconciliation Commission within the context of a nation in transition.” This Commission failed dismally because it was difficult for the panelists to measure the extent to which a culprit was remorseful of his crime. One’s heart could not be read during the confession process to determine the extent to which one was repentant of one’s crimes. It did not produce the desired results because many people confessed their evil deeds without sincere repentance and they were granted, to the disappointment of many victims, amnesty. During his trial David insists: “I make no confession” (*Disgrace*:51). He, furthermore, reiterates: “Repentance is neither here nor there. Repentance belongs to another world, to another universe of discourse” (*Disgrace*:58). Since he cannot comply with the demands of the Cape Technical University that entail that he should confess his rape and show repentance, he is expelled from the institution. Nevertheless, his attitude changes after Lucy is raped. Marais (2006:77) construes: “After Lucy’s rape he puts himself in her position and by so doing he is able to imagine the effects of the rape of Melanie on her family because after his daughter’s rape he finds himself in their position.” His visit to Melanie’s home to confess is an act of empathy. But his confession does not seem to be

accompanied by repentance because he still desires Melanie's younger sister, Desiree. He imagines "the two of them in the same bed: an experience fit for a king" (*Disgrace*:164). His desire for Melanie's sister shows how hard is it for one to forsake what one is accustomed to doing. Though he seems to have partially changed, he is "not bad but not good either. Not cold but not hot, even at his hottest" (*Disgrace*:195). He still has a huge responsibility of controlling his desire for the young women. Boehmer (2002:346) proclaims David's change of heart by stating that "the surrender of self through empathy is a state which Lurie in time comes to achieve."

The Madonna of Excelsior represents some white men as prevaricators in the apartheid era because the laws protect them while *Disgrace* offers a passage for their change through confession and repentance to ensure the prevalence of reconciliation between them and their fellow black people.

4.2.9 African Culture versus Western Culture

The two novels were written by novelists from different cultures. *The Madonna of Excelsior*'s author is a black man who is immersed in an African culture. *Disgrace*'s writer is a white man who is the product of a Western culture. This part explores how the two novelists explore their own cultures and those of others in their portrayal of sexual abuse.

Mda presents the Afrikaner culture in *The Madonna of Excelsior* as that of the Other while he is tendentious with regard to his own African culture. The Afrikaner men are shown to have developed a breach of their culture by illegally sleeping with African women. They attribute this habit to the devil:

The devil had sent black women to tempt him [Reverend Bornman] and to move him from the path of righteousness. The devil had always used the black female to tempt Afrikaner men. It was a battle between lust and loathing. A battle that the Afrikaner must win (*The Madonna*:87).

Though there are many cases in *The Madonna of Excelsior* that indicate that during the apartheid era many white men sexually abused African women, there are a few incidents of sexual abuse of African women by African men. Of course such despicable acts did happen, but Mda here, wants to focus on the bigger picture. His main aim is to expose the evils of apartheid and he consistently depicts the bigger picture of the ‘rape’ of the African in general.

However, Coetzee in *Disgrace* attempts to establish a balance between Western and African cultures. Both black and white men commit sexual abuse of women from another race. Unlike Mda, Coetzee blames both black and white people for sexual abuse in post-apartheid South Africa. The post-apartheid era poses a new challenge to South Africans of all races. South Africa is now viewed, according to Farred (2002:18), “as a liminal space where certain transgressions are endured” even if they are not legally permitted. Lucy and Melanie, for instance, do not report their rapes to the police; instead, they opt to endure the consequences of their sexual abuse. When Lucy’s father wants to know why she has taken such a stance, she responds: “I am prepared to do anything, make any sacrifice, for the sake of peace” (*Disgrace*:208). David Lurie intimates: “More and more he is convinced that English is an unfit medium for the truth of South Africa” (*Disgrace*:117). The implication of David Lurie’s assertion is that now that apartheid has been defeated black people must also be given a chance to express and explain their experiences in their own African languages that they speak fluently. Coetzee seems to suggest that a redress of the past imbalances is the only solution to the problems experienced in South Africa and that should be done in the languages that the oppressed speak. This is part of catharsis, which is the process of releasing pent-up emotions. In that way anger and hatred will dissipate. Coetzee appears to be arguing that the more people talk freely in their own languages about their past, the more healing can be achieved.

4.2.10 The Police

Sexual abuse of women is a crime against humanity. This part looks at how the two authors view the role of the police in preventing this crime by arresting the perpetrators

of sexual abuse and how they cared for the victims.

In *The Madonna of Excelsior* the police are presented as advocating the ideals of apartheid that entail, among other crimes, the oppression of black people, the promotion of the superiority of the white people, and the promotion of the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. The role of the police in the apartheid era is not to prevent the sexual abuse of black women by white men per se, but to prevent sexual intercourse across black and white people even if there is consent between them. For example, if Niki had reported her rape to the police, the fact remains that she would have been arrested because the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, would have been violated. The police would only consider the fact that sex between a black woman and a white man had taken place without bearing in mind that there had been an element of coercion. This flaw is being manipulated by many Afrikaner men such as Johannes Smit because they know that the abused African women will not report them to the police for fear of being arrested too for the contravention of the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950. Niki's friends, Mmampe and Maria, are aware that if a black woman accuses an Afrikaner man of rape, she too will be arrested since sex has taken place. They advise Niki to "give him what he wants and eat his money" (*The Madonna*:18). The inconsiderate policing frustrates the abused black women so that they eventually develop a habit of giving the white men unlawful sex and get money in return. The black women's attitude is sound as it sustains them against the uncaring laws of apartheid.

In *Disgrace* the police seem demoralised because they do not have the absolute power to do as they want. It would appear that the new government has reduced their power and changed their policing style to the extent that many of the police officers find it hard to comply with the changes. The two rapes in *Disgrace* are not reported to the police. Melanie does not report her rape to the police because she views it as the culture of the Cape Technical University. Lucy too does not report her rape to the police because it is her own private matter. The fact that in the new South Africa there is a mundanacity of crime serves as testimony that the police are still adjusting to the international laws of policing which observe the rights of the perpetrators and victims of crime. The policing

style of apartheid that debased the black people has been done away with to make space for community policing, hence the old South African Police has been changed to the South African Police Service. This implies that the police no longer serve a particular ideology but serve all communities regardless of race.

In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda condemns the police that serve the interest of the white race at the expense of black people during the apartheid era whilst Coetzee in *Disgrace* laments the fall from grace of many people due to the incompetence of the police.

4.2.11 Hope through mixed-race children

The two novels endeavour to hint that reconciliation between black and white people may be achieved in South Africa through the birth of mixed-race children from inter-racial relationships. Though the two novels approach this theme differently, both authors, nevertheless, seem to suggest that the coloured children conceived during sexual abuse can close the gap of hatred between black and white people. This section briefly attempts to show how each novelist brings hope through mixed-race children.

In *The Madonna of Excelsior* the collective voice declares: “From the outrage of rape, our mothers gave birth to beautiful human beings” (*The Madonna*:234). From the beginning of the novel the collective voice points out: “All these things flow from the sins of our mothers” (*The Madonna*:1). At the end of the novel, the narrating voice concludes: “From the sins of our mothers all these things flow” (*The Madonna*:268). The narrative voice is intent on showing the importance of mixed-race children such as Popi, Niki’s child with Stephanus Cronjé, in forging a strong bond between white and black people.

After Lucy’s gang rape she becomes pregnant and she refuses to make an abortion because she wants the baby to live. She has taken such a decision because she believes that her child will in future forge unity between her father and Petrus. She tells her father

that the child she is carrying will be Petrus' because one of her rapists is the younger brother to Petrus' wife.

Both Mda and Coetzee use young, mixed-race children as the mediators of peace between the old racial antagonists of apartheid. They, furthermore, portray that it is difficult for old people who were filled with apartheid mentalities to forsake them within the twinkling of the eye. They have, therefore, resorted to use children who have relations in both antagonistic races to forge unity between them. Both novelists seem to argue that the coloured people of South Africa have a huge task of uniting both black and white people since they are assumed to have mothers and fathers from both races.

4.3 THE MOTIF OF CONDEMNATION

Even though the two writers portray sexual abuse of women in two eras, they tend to embark on the motif of the condemnation of the abuse of power by both races. Mda views white people in the apartheid period as abusers of power. He condemns them. On the contrary, Coetzee sees the new ruling black people in post-apartheid South Africa as abusers of power as well and he attacks them in his novel. Coetzee, furthermore, attributes the abuse of power by black people to anger that apartheid has nourished for a long period. He is of the opinion that anger on the part of black people is to a certain extent justified and that reparation for their oppression by the white people should be done to avoid recurring cases of racism.

Unlike Coetzee, Mda shows that the West relates the white men's sexual abuse of African women during the apartheid era to a long history of colonialism of Africa that even the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, could not eradicate. The collective narrator confirms Mda's view: "It became a past time the very first day explorers' ships weighed anchor at the Cape Peninsula centuries ago, and saw the body parts of Khoikhoi women" (*The Madonna*:93). Mmampe furthermore confirms the love of the white men for black women: "White men have always loved us. They say we are more beautiful than their wives. We are more devastating in the blankets" (*The Madonna*:62). Mda condemns

Afrikaner men for denouncing their own children who are scorned for not being white enough to be called whites and not black enough to be called blacks. Coetzee condemns David Lurie for advocating the rights of desire while at the same time hating their repercussions. The two novelists advocate for men's restraint of sexual desire to prevent the escalation of sexual abuse of women and the need for proper policing and judiciary systems.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

This study has endeavoured to show that sexual abuse of women during the apartheid and post-apartheid eras in South Africa is connected to patriarchy. Robertson (1998:1) is correct when he attests that “South Africa is traditionally a male dominated and patriarchal society and women hold limited power and authority and are frequently exploited.” Mda demonstrates in *The Madonna of Excelsior* how the apartheid government gave power to white men who eventually abused it by sexually violating African women. Even though the Nationalist government was aware that white men were committing sexual abuses over black women, as a government it did practically nothing to curb the abuse. The only thing that it did to safeguard the existence of its “decent folk” (*The Madonna:71*) was to introduce the Immorality Act, No. 23 of 1950, to prevent any form of sexual contact between white and black people. White men’s sexual abuse of black women was not considered a crime per se because it was believed that the black women precipitated their sexual abuse. Reverend Bornman confirms this claim to the church elders when he is in hospital:

He was not in any physical pain, he told his visitors. His pain was the pain of the heart. The pain of knowing that he had betrayed those he loved and those who love him. It was the work of the devil, he said. The devil had sent black women to tempt him and to move him away from the path of righteousness. The devil had always used the black female to tempt the Afrikaner ... The devil made the Afrikaner to covertly covet the woman while publicly detesting her. It was his fault that he had not been strong enough to resist the temptation. The devil made him do it (*The Madonna:87*).

Reverend Bornman confesses the dilemma of the Afrikaner men who simultaneously desire and hate black women. They attribute temptations to sleep with black women to the devil. It is as if only the devil should be blamed whilst the Afrikaner men are blameless in their pursuit of these women. The worst thing about the Afrikaner men’s predicament is that even their sons are aware that their fathers are involved in these illicit

affairs and they too emulate their fathers to bed their nannies. Mda recounts:

He [Tjaart] knew already that it was the tradition of Afrikaner boys of Free State platteland to go through devirgination rites by capturing and consuming the forbidden quarry that lurked beneath their nannies' pink overalls (*The Madonna*:42).

It is a gloomy white culture that the Afrikaner men have inherited from their forefathers, namely that of capturing and consuming the forbidden quarries without having any love for the black women who possess them (*The Madonna*:42). Mda seems to use the word “quarry” to imply that the Afrikaner men had no respect for the dignity of black women even though they bedded them. It is a pity that this white culture of bedding black women is passed onto their sons. In *Disgrace* the protagonist, David Lurie, is a product of apartheid and lives to witness the post-apartheid era but still leads a life based on the apartheid mentality of debasing black women.

Although in *The Madonna of Excelsior* Mda tries to condemn black women's sexual abuse in the apartheid era, little is said about the sexual abuse of white women by black men. In *Disgrace* Coetzee, on the contrary, shows that black men too have the tendency to sexually abuse white women if they are given power like their white predecessors. Coetzee, like Mda, is conscious that power corrupts.

The two novelists have clearly indicated that as long as men have more power than women they may still sexually abuse them, seeing themselves as superior to women. Regardless of their colour women need to be given the same power as men so that men can see them as their equals. The government needs to be involved as it is doing presently. It is also the responsibility of women themselves to unite and fight against patriarchy in South Africa. The fact that at the ANC Conference held at Polokwane in 2008 the resolution was taken that gender equity be seriously implemented in all government departments and business sectors is a major step in the right direction (ANC Manifesto:2009). The ANC Manifesto 2009, furthermore, reiterates that “the ANC policies will further increase women representation in parliament and government to 50% by 2009” (ANC Manifesto:2009). In the current world of technological advancement and

transformation, there is fortunately hope that the rights of women will be upheld. When that happens, the world will be a better place where women will live without any fear of being sexually violated.

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