



Unveiling The Abyss: Gender, Identity, & Apartheid In “Waiting For Barbarians” By Coetzee & “July’s People” By Gordimer.

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Abstract: J.M. Coetzee's “Waiting for the Barbarians” and Gordimer’s “July's People” are the novels which are preoccupied with questions of identity and its relation to racial, cultural and sexual difference. The proposed reading of these two novels aims at revealing the ideological aspect of identity constructions in general and the investment of diverse political interests in particular. In this paper, it will be examined that how identity and gender are viewed by those who have been the object of desire for the other and how these two selected novels are able to challenge traditional notions of identity and gender.

Keywords: Apartheid, Post-colonialism, The concept of Self and Other, Identity, Gender and Racism

Introduction:

Besides the continuing repercussions of the previous political system, South African literature created following the first parliamentary elections in 1994 are sometimes allude to be post-apartheid literature because this even signified the abolition of legalised racial segregation. A expeditious shift from a racial focus to a wider concern with all the numerous and different elements of the, human kind characterise post-apartheid writing. In the works of post-apartheid writings, the emphasis abruptly shifted from racial concerns to larger concepts with various forms of human survival. During the apartheid era, the literature was divided into "black" and "white" categories. Nowadays days, it is referred to as English, Zulu, Afrikaans, Xhosa, or Afrikaans literature.

J.M. Coetzee and Nadine carefully balance these two concerns. Coetzee develops a deep understanding of the difficulties of depiction while straining the boundaries of language to highlight the shortcomings of the existing literary landscape. Gordimer, who is more overtly politically engaged, may choose to speak for the "Other" in order to draw attention to the concerns at hand, even though her work inevitably contains gaps and is muted by the oppressive culture from which it emerges. Apartheid came to an end in 1994, writers now have the freedom to express themselves as they like and may stop dwelling on the same social ill that was apartheid. Despite the fall of the apartheid political system, the ghost of apartheid continues to hang over writers from white privileged society.

1. The Representation of Self and Other

July's People & Waiting for Barbarians:

The nature of revolution is examined in “July's People” by Nadine Gordimer on both political and a personal level. The white Smales family loses not just their money making and communal position but also the rock hard sense of their individualities when they are forced to flee the violence that breaks out to put an end to the toxic racial tyranny of South African apartheid. In fact, the title of the book emphasises how ambiguous the relationships are. For instance, because July is the Smales' servant, the family is referred to as "July's People" in July's community. But, as the Smales are forced to adjust to living in this village, they run into July's extended family and other black South African "people." They discover that their status as July's "people" renders them relying on him and being an unwanted load to him, making them July's

responsibility in his home. The culmination of Maureen's losses is her perhaps suicidal attempt to flee her circumstances at the book's conclusion.

Maureen is deeply disturbed by July's decision to keep the keys after he has made her aware of the economic assumptions behind her opinions of both of them. Maureen experiences an internal crisis as a result of more than just financial lack. She also struggles since she cannot settle into a fulfilling position within her family or the village. Because her children adjust to village life without her help, she is unable to fulfil a motherly role. She wants to foster a feeling of female sisterhood with the village ladies, but July sabotages her efforts by disliking what she is doing. She thinks she can get over their racial barriers, but the black women regard her as an unskilled white woman who cannot do even the most basic jobs, not as a fellow woman supporting them in their endeavours. She becomes trapped in the role of July's white "mistress" whom others serve, which is now bankrupt. Maureen's situation is again

highlighted by a fight with July because he will not let her acquire favour with him and the other villagers. She wants to be able to communicate with him effectively, but the limitations of his English make this impossible. Because their English in Johannesburg "was based on orders and responses, not the exchange of ideas and feelings," it was not a problem.

When we talk about the "Other" it's deficient in identity, decorum, clarity, and authenticity. He might be referred to as foreign: the one who does not speak a particular, & certain language, who is not a member of a particular group, who does not share the same customs; he is the weird, the odd, the unauthorised, the unsuitable, and the undesirable, the inappropriate. Silence, in all of its manifestations, thereby reveals difference, separation, as well as the chasm between the "Self" and the "Other". Colonel Joll and his troops have blinded a young barbarian girl while torturing her in front of her father. Her body has been marred by unsightly scars and two broken ankles that tell the story of the essential Other. Later, when she is fully cognisant, he travels into the barbaric land to bring her back to her people. The army has arrived as part of a broad offensive against the barbarians, he discovers upon his return. The Magistrate is tortured while in prison for "treasonously consorting with the enemy" (Coetzee, 85). The armed force leaves the town in the weak spot after lacking in conquering the barbarians, giving permission to the freed Magistrate to recommence his mandated obligations & formal duties. In colonial settings, some people become the masters, and some people become the servants: some people have power, and some however, it has a broad meaning where her injured body represents the conquered land, in this case: South Africa. The girl is seen by the Magistrate and Colonel Joll as a representative of the Other in their relationship. His initial attempt to identify with the colonised "Other" fails in this way". The oppressors are working to produce something that makes them miss their own nations while they are thousands of miles away. As they no longer own any rights and have had their freedom, money, land, and other resources removed from them, the oppressed are no longer the rulers of their own nation".

2. The Construction of Identity in the novels:

July's People & Waiting for Barbarians:

The imaginary post-apartheid setting of "July's People". Black natives overthrow the tyrannical white government and seize power in the opening scene of the story. The white Smales family, headed by parents Maureen and Bam, managed to flee the bloody revolution while taking July, a black servant, with them. By driving the Smales to his hometown village, a remote location where he was only permitted to travel once every two years, July offers the family a safe haven. The family struggled to adjust to village life because they were accustomed to a privileged lifestyle prior to the racial and political unrest. Although the villagers grow angry with July's host, he refuses to expel them from the community.

The Smales are unable to leave the village because of the violent episodes that threaten them, instead they are protected by July, a former servant. As a result, when they engage with the people, they experience social challenges. July goes shopping in their bakkie, a pick-up truck. To their annoyance Bam and Maureen were unable to handle the hardships of daily life. Since she had previously thought of herself as being kind and generous to July, Maureen explodes and tells July about their frustration. Her caustic statement and mistreatment enrage July. He starts to favour Bam above her. She meets his beloved girlfriend, whom he had before the horrific events, as a result of his neglecting her. As a result, she starts to have a very hostile relationship with them. Bam, on the other hand, may continue to act morally upright and retain good relationships, particularly if he were to shoot a pig for dinner. Because of this deed, he gained the people's respect, surpassing Maureen in their eyes.

In South Africa, the term "coloured" is used to refer to someone who is of mixed racial background rather than just being dark, as it is in most other parts of the world. In a certain sense, coloured identity is a byproduct of European supremacist ideology. Coloured identity is also mostly the outcome of those who carry it, who were first primarily in charge of articulating the identity and hence determining its structure and content. "While awaiting the Barbarians, the oppressive societal structure that silence and harm the voice inside the real account are outlined in the novel. It is, in particular, due to Coetzee's epic's enhanced standard stature in postcolonial basic hypothetical talks. Several of Coetzee's works address this topic as an abstract body, and in each of these books in particular, the characters try to reactivate the muted voices. He looks at the ways that the creator's history and culture "approve, overwhelm, real, downgrade, forbid and approve, ending up maybe the fundamental organisation for amazing separations inside its space and past it as well." The novel by Coetzee demonstrates how speech, mother tongue and subject matter can be used to "other," one can be used to abuse as well as express, reacting more strongly than other works to the serious issue of silencing spectators and quieting voice.

3. The Representation of Gender in the novels:

July's People & Waiting for Barbarians:

In July's People, there are many gender roles and inequalities that can be seen very easily. When we talk about the two bonds that are in the book they are used to exemplify these preconceptions and inequalities. The first bond is between Bam & his wife Maureen. Their interaction reflects the atmosphere of a typical patriarchal home. While the wife is in charge of the home and subservient to the husband, the husband is dominating and in command (Brink, 161). We see that while Bam looks up for the radio and a rifle, which people very easily consider with the men, Maureen looks for the oranges and toilet paper, which are usually considered to be household items. Most of the machinery is usually sex-based. Bam runs the bakkie as only men can apprehend it. He is responsible for tuning the radio, and despite Maureen's best efforts, she is not able to complete the task. Guns are usually seen as phallic things, an example of one's manhood. He usually even behaves in a way that's good for his family's sake. Bam takes up the position of the provider for the black people as he is a white man and he ought to feel superior to the natives of the poor village while Maureen is put under house arrest in the mud hut (Brink, 161). Next up we have is July and his wife who appear for the second relationship in the book that call attention on the gender norms and the inequalities. In contrast to the patriarchal system used by whites, the Black families have a semi-matriarchal system, or at least one that totally takes both perspectives into account, as opposed to the patriarchy that is forwarded by White families. According to Andre Brink, what he says that the black women acquire influence and power in their communities by virtue of being female, but white women gain all of their competence from being white. Although there can be a possibility of more equal relation between husband and wife, it seems that July still have a lot more power. Even, under the strongly patriarchal arrangement of the Smales, they are doing work that is possibly too challenging for a woman.

It will present a different image in the book, but as far as the gender studies concept is concerned, it conveys a universal message to the reader. Throughout the book, there is no other interpretation of the lady character. In the book, women are still seen as inferior to men and are even dehumanised by Colonel Joll, who refers to them as "barbarian women." The Magistrate even described one female character as "ugly." In the novel, there is no equality; women continue to be on the receiving end. Throughout this book, the terms "sex" and "gender" were used to denote biological differences and social constructs, respectively. Division of labour was presented in a conventional manner by J.M. Coetzee. "The girl" was given shelter by the magistrate in the shape of his bed and room, and she was also given labour in the kitchen to keep her body alive in this way. So, the order of the distribution of labour as identified by "gender studies" has not changed. The evidence of the Magistrate's power granted by the Empire serves as the beginning of the persecution. The Magistrate appears to be the most senior officer who resides permanently outside the Empire.

The Magistrate uses sex as a means of gaining control over the "Other". The Magistrate also uses sexual objectification to reclaim his youthful vigour. The barbaric woman's connection and interaction with Magistrate, which is distinct from "The Star" serves as the novel's fundamental relationship. He tries to discover who he really is by washing and oiling her body. Although Colonel Joll serves as the "Coloniser of the Empire," the girl here stands in for the "colonised subject." J.M. Coetzee brilliantly uses the body as a barrier or a tool.

Conclusion:

"Waiting for the Barbarians" by Coetzee and "July's People" by Gordimer both deal with identity issues in connection to ethnic, cultural, and sexual diversity. The ideological, framework, literary techniques, and points of reference used in the two novels, however, differ. The novel by Coetzee reflects the Jaranian idea that language serves as a medium for displaced desire. The work does not avoid the representational pattern of Orientalist discourse in its attempt to deconstruct the South African white liberal consciousness, with the woman "Other" serving as a tool for self-deconstruction. By flipping traditional oppositions (master/slave, male/female), Nadine Gordimer creates contradictions that reflect both apartheid and the individual. These inconsistencies ultimately result in the demise of the white liberal subject. The African novels covered here "deconstruct" the idea of a centred self (Western and masculine), just as postmodern theory does, while also exposing the limitations of Western philosophy.

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