

**South African Satire: A Study of  
Zakes Mda's *The Madonna of  
Excelsior.***

**Sonja van Vuuren**



Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of Stellenbosch.

Supervisor: Dr Ralph Goodman

December 2004

## DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:.....Date: .....



## ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses Zakes Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior* from three different points of view, namely post-colonial, feminist and satirical. The latter constitutes the main interpretation of the novel and serves as a link with the other two discourses – the key argument being that satire is not a solipsistic form of art, and thus a satirical text should not be considered on its own, but should rather be interpreted in conjunction with other cultural discourses. This thesis is of the opinion that one needs all three of the named viewpoints in order to fully comprehend and appreciate the depth of Mda's satire and his comments on South African society. His novel contains several candid comments on the political situation of South Africa in both the apartheid and the democratic eras, and his tongue-in-cheek observations force the reader to consider his novel from a political *and* a satirical angle. As apartheid is a form of colonialism and South Africa carries several scars from colonial times (such as diasporic conditions and multi-cultural identity crises, to name a few of those discussed), this thesis analyses Mda's political commentary in terms of post-colonial discourse. Due to Mda's use of female protagonists, this thesis also considers a feminist interpretation as necessary for a better understanding of the novel: through the use of feminist discourse, the violence that is committed against some of the female characters in the novel is interpreted as a way of enforcing colonial power relations. Chapters two, three and four respectively each discuss one of these interpretations: post-colonial, feminist and satirical, whilst chapter one is devoted to defining the art of satire.

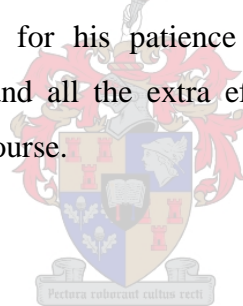
## OPSOMMING

Hierdie tesis analiseer Zakes Mda se *The Madonna of Excelsior* vanuit drie verskillende oogpunte, naamlik die postkoloniale, feministiese and satiriese. Laasgenoemde konstitueer die hoofinterpretasie van die teks, en vorm ook 'n skakel met die ander twee diskoerse. Die hoofargument van die tesis is dat satire nie 'n kunsvorm is wat alleen bestaan nie, en dus behoort 'n mens nie 'n satiriese teks in isolasie te oordink nie, maar so 'n teks moet geïnterpreteer word in verbinding met ander diskoerse. Hierdie tesis glo dat al drie van die genoemde oogpunte noodsaaklik is om Mda se satiriese kommentaar en aanmerkings oor die Suid-Afrikaanse gemeenskap werklik te verstaan en waardeer. Daar is etlike openhartige aanmerkings in die teks wat die politiese situasie van Suid-Afrika in beide die apartheid en die demokratiese eras aanspreek, en Mda se skertsende kommentaar dwing die leser om die teks te oordink van 'n politiese, asook 'n satiriese, gesigspunt. Aangesien apartheid 'n vorm van kolonialisme is, en Suid-Afrika verskeie littekens van koloniale tye dra (soos diasporas en multi-kulturele krisisse, om maar 'n paar te noem), analiseer hierdie tesis Mda se politiese aanmerkings in terme van 'n postkoloniale interpretasie. Mda se gebruik van vroulike hoofkarakters veroorsaak dat hierdie tesis ook a feministiese interpretasie benuttig vir 'n betere begrip van die teks: deur die gebruik van 'n feministiese diskoers kan 'n mens die geweld wat teen sommige van die vroulike karakters gepleeg word sien as 'n manier om koloniale magsverhoudinge af te dwing. Hoofstukke twee, drie en vier bespreek elk een van hierdie oogpunte: postkoloniaal, feminisme en satiere, terwyl hoofstuk een die satiriese kuns probeer definieer.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am indebted to my fiancé Nicholas High, for his support during the writing of this thesis, and for being so patient with all my complaints and long studying nights.

I also want to thank my supervisor, Dr Goodman, for his patience throughout the year and all the extra effort he put into this course.



# CONTENTS

Introduction	7
CHAPTER 1: Satire and the Satirist	14
CHAPTER 2: <i>The Madonna of Excelsior: A Post-colonial Interpretation</i>	23
CHAPTER 3: <i>The Madonna of Excelsior: A Feminist Interpretation</i>	34
CHAPTER 4: <i>The Madonna of Excelsior: A Satirical Interpretation</i>	50
Conclusion	57
Addenda	58
Bibliography	60



## Introduction

This thesis focusses on interpreting Zakes Mda's *The Madonna of Excelsior*<sup>1</sup> from several different points of views. As South Africa is celebrating its tenth year of democracy since the fall of apartheid, it seems fitting to discuss this particular novel: it is set in both apartheid and post-apartheid times, thereby accentuating that transition as well as providing a contrast between the two eras. Mda's depiction of the characters' reactions towards this political change is mainly satirical, and therefore the chief interpretation that this thesis concentrates on is satirical. In addition, two chapters are also devoted to a post-colonial and a feminist reading respectively.

The first chapter is dedicated to a discussion of a possible definition of satire, as well as certain traits that seem common to most satirists. As some satirical texts can be extremely funny, it also aims at explaining the distinction between satire that evokes laughter, and pure comedy. The satirist as an individualist and an outsider in relation to society will also be discussed, with the satirist seen as someone who stands metaphorically with one foot in and one foot out of society. This is one of the ways for him/her to avoid blending completely into society, as s/he "cannot accept and refuses to tolerate" (Sutherland 4) the vices and shortcomings of society, but cannot, on the other hand, distance him-/herself sufficiently from the immorality or corruption that s/he observes to let it go by uncontested. The satirist seems to feel compelled to function as a "disillusioned moralist" (Brown and Kimmey 3) who aspires towards a kind of utopia by exposing or eliminating the immorality and corruption of specific public figures or institutions, thereby also providing some relief from frustration for him-/herself (Pollard 10). This chapter also aims to illustrate the distinctive qualities that "differentiat[e]" the satirist from "most other writers" (Sutherland 5), as well as the lack of obligation that satirists have in "produc[ing] a substitute for what [they] destro[y]" (Sutherland 17). Satire is a very subjective art, and for this reason there exists a need for accord between the satirist and the reader: the satirist can only achieve his/her objective of criticizing and ridiculing his/her subject if the reader can

---

<sup>1</sup> This novel draws on the 1971 trial where 19 people were charged for the contravention of the Immorality Act and miscegenation. A complete, unbiased record of this trial is unobtainable.

be induced to agree to his/her moral values. In addition, this chapter briefly discusses the satirist's use of language – with specific reference to irony – and the role that the *form* of the satirical text plays in contributing towards the success of the satire. In order to aid the reader in understanding the concepts discussed in this chapter, reference is also made to certain *Madam and Eve* cartoons (Francis, Dugmore and Rico). These cartoons can be found in the addenda at the end of this thesis.

Besides the major thrust of this thesis (explored in chapters one and four), there are also smaller or less lengthy indications within chapters two and three that examine the interactions between satire on the one hand, and post-colonialism and feminism on the other hand. The satirical connections to a post-colonial and a feminist reading are thus structured in the following way: chapter two attempt to define post-colonialism and illustrates how such an interpretation is necessary for a broader understanding of the novel, whilst chapter three does the same from a feminist point of view. Chapter four functions as the culmination of these two chapters, as chapter four draws on issues raised in both chapter two and chapter three collectively and also examines these from a satiric point of view. For example, the significance of the term “Madam” is mentioned in chapter two (page 25) and chapter three (page 32), but is only explored and discussed from a satiric point of view in chapter four (page 42). Therefore, although it might *seem* as if chunks of chapters two and three are not related to the topic of this thesis, this is only due to a detailed attempt at arriving at definitions of the terms “post-colonialism” and “feminism” – definitions that are *essential* to a comprehensive understanding of the novel.

As satirical texts focus on “external reality” (Nokes 2) and draw on “changing cultural conditions” (Nicols 28), it seems logical to devote chapter two to a discussion of some aspects of the “cultural conditions” (Nicols 28) and political realities of South Africa that are reflected in *The Madonna of Excelsior*. Much of the action that occurs in Mda's novel is centred on political disputes, which strengthen the link between politics and satire that Hodgart mentions: “politics is the pre-eminent topic of satire” (33). As apartheid can be viewed as a form of colonialism, chapter two will aim to establish some kind of definition of ‘post-colonialism’. In fact, the South African Communist Party defined apartheid as “colonialism of a special type” – this definition is explained in the 1962 programme (*The Road to South African Freedom*):



On one level, that of 'White South Africa' there are all the features of an advanced capitalist state in its final stage of imperialism...But on another level, that of 'Non-White South Africa', there are all the features of a colony. The indigenous population is subjected to extreme national oppression, poverty and exploitation, lack of all democratic rights and political domination by a group which does everything it can to emphasise and perpetuate its alien 'European' character....It is this combination of the worst features both of imperialism and of colonialism, within a single national frontier, which determines the special nature of the South African system...Non-White South Africa is the colony of White South Africa itself" (Adams 43).

One can thus see that apartheid, though definitely a *form* of colonialism, is also different from previous colonial states, in that "colony and metropolis were one" (Saunders and Southey 156). Heribert and Moodley are of the opinion that "the colonial analogy does not apply to South Africa", because the "settlers" (White South Africans) have "become indigenous". Pechey stresses this actuality by drawing attention to the fact that some white South Africans had "taken to naming both their language [Afrikaans] and their culture [Afrikaners] after the whole continent" ("A Complex and Violent Revelation" 13). He finds this move "ambiguous", as it can be interpreted as "post-colonial in its positive valuing of a territorial marginality over the European centre of their origins", but it is also "neo-colonial in its effective monopoly of Africa on Europe's behalf" ("A Complex and Violent Revelation" 13). Once again, it is clear that apartheid is not a pure form of colonialism, but in Pechey's classification rather a mixture of post-colonialism and neo-colonialism. In addition, the definition of apartheid as a form of colonialism is further problematised by the fact that "South Africa always had a functioning democracy, albeit restricted to whites" (Heribert and Moodley) – this racial distinction is echoed by Pechey in his claim that "South Africa's colonial difference stands out at last as a neocolonial order of racial terror" (Pechey, "Post-Apartheid Reason" 6). One can thus see to what an extent apartheid can be classified as colonialism, and this grasp of South African

history plays an important role in the “practical criticism” (Visser 3) of a text, as such criticism is “rooted in a specific historical situation” (Visser 3).

With regard to *The Madonna of Excelsior*, references are made to the novel in order to illustrate the kind of relationship that existed between the coloniser and the colonised and how it links with racism, as well as the effect that colonialism (or in this case apartheid) has on the construction of people’s identities. Several of the characters build their identities on their race or culture, and this chapter explores the relationship between such identity construction and the creation of stereotypes. Some characters are forced into the position of “Other” due to the fact that they have transgressed the established racial borders as defined by the Immorality Act. Chapter two aims to briefly discuss this law and the practice of “miscegenation”, as it has a great influence on the construction of a “communal identity” (Guha 156). The chapter also comments on the concept of hybridity – a concept that is born of the practice of “miscegenation” and that is further defined later in this introduction. A post-colonial reading of this novel also comments on the importance of language and names in enforcing oppression. Lastly, it contains a brief discussion of the aspect of diaspora as a result of colonialism. The reason for this thesis's focus on the difference between First and Third World women is due to the fact that such a full discussion of the term “feminism” is necessary to contextualise the particular *kind* of feminism that this thesis draws on in its evaluation of Mda’s novel. A description of such different kinds of feminisms as practiced by First and Third World women not only contributes to a full and proper definition of the term “feminism”, but these types of feminisms also provide a backdrop for a discussion of the types of oppression that black women have to endure in the novel and the manner in which white women could historically oppress black women, as discussed in chapter three of this thesis.

The third chapter aims to explore several different definitions of feminism, in order to arrive at some understanding of the term, whilst still questioning the possibility of creating a single, universal definition for such a wide-ranging concept. Also discussed is the need to distinguish between the circumstances endured by different women, and how these circumstances influence the different types of feminism that they practise. A large part of the chapter is devoted to discussing and defining the two categories that women are frequently divided into, namely the Western woman and the so-called

‘Third World woman’. Attention is paid to the stereotyping and “othering” of the Third World woman – strategies that are employed not only by men, but also by some Western women, as allowance is not always made “for competing and disparate voices among women” (McEwan 101), but “colonialist power relations [are reproduced] where knowledge is produced and received in the west, and white, middle-class women have the power to speak for their ‘silenced sisters’ in the South” (McEwan 101). The “silence” so often maintained by oppressed Third World women is also discussed, with reference to Spivak’s theory of the “subaltern” and the inability of the subaltern to achieve a dialogic level of utterance.

My choice of feminist and post-colonial interpretations of *The Madonna of Excelsior* is due to the strong link between the two ideologies: both “Feminist and post-colonial discourses...seek to reinstate the marginalized [whether in terms of gender or economics] in the face of the dominant” (Raghumatha and Thomas), who is usually considered as white and patriarchal. There is also “[t]he undeniable fact that colonial oppression affected men and women in different ways...as females were often subjected to what has been called a ‘double colonization’, whereby they were discriminated against not only for their position as colonised people but also as women” (Caslin<sup>2</sup>). McEwan explains that this “double colonization” is due to the fact that “for black women there is no single source of oppression; gender oppression is inextricably bound up with ‘race’ and class” (McEwan 98). This oppression endured by the Third World woman through a mixture of race, gender and class is discussed in terms of the novel, with reference to rape and sexual exploitation as forms of colonialism. The woman (and especially her body) can be considered as the colonised and the man (or more specifically, the white man) then becomes the coloniser.

The last chapter of this thesis is devoted to a satirical reading of *The Madonna of Excelsior* and it comments on how this perspective is linked to both post-colonial and feminist interpretations that each serve to enhance one’s reading of the issues that are addressed in the novel. Goodman states that “Mda’s satire exposes the embedded colonial discourse imposed by apartheid so that satire and post-colonial practice converge” (Goodman “De-scribing the Centre” 4). Mda mocks the abuse of post-

---

<sup>2</sup> In compliance with the MLA’s directions for referencing, no page numbers are given with internet sources whenever the web pages did not contain page numbers.

colonial politics, seen through racial prejudice and nationalism, as well as the new wave of proliferating accusations of racism: “Critics, however constructive they might be, were being labeled racists or lackeys of racists” (Mda 242). This is achieved through extensive satirical comments on the Immorality Act, aided by the use of a kind of “Greek chorus” (Goodman “De-scribing the Centre” 7). Political issues are further satirised by focusing on issues of identity and representation (Young 355) in a sometimes quite humorous manner. In this case, Mda’s use of language – especially irony – plays a large role. Feminism is also linked to the satirical interpretation of this chapter, due to the fact that “nearly all satire [on women] has been written by men” (Hodgart 79) and the female gender seems to be a preferred subject for men to satirise. Hodgart speculates that this might be due to the vulnerability of women, in that they are “the scapegoat most conveniently to hand” to blame for the misery of the world. Throughout the chapter, extensive references are made to the novel in order to illustrate the different satirical themes that Mda focusses on.

With regard to the chapters following this introduction, the term “hybridity” needs some definition, and Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (*Post-Colonial Studies*) define it as follows:

hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new **transcultural** forms within the contact zone produced by colonization [sic]. As used in horticulture, the term refers to the cross-breeding of two species by grafting of cross-pollination to form a third, ‘hybrid’ species. Hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc. (118).

Jefferson describes this creation of hybridity as “conceived...within two different parent cultures” that, according to Beya, provide a “counter-narrative” to the dominant Western colonial power. In terms of South African racial history, this term is used in the following chapters with reference to the people who are classified as “coloured”. These people have “mixed genes” from black and white races.

Stafford maintains that the term “hybridity” is a “stigma” that is used “in association with colonial ideas about racial purity and a horror of miscegenation” (11). This “stigmatization” of hybridity is reflected in the treatment that Popi receives as a child (Mda 110, 111, 117). Stafford’s claim that “[i]n the colonial experience the children of white male colonisers and female ‘native’ peoples were assigned a different (and inferior) status in colonial society” (11) is applicable to Popi’s situation in the novel, and I aim to illustrate how she is “shunned by both the coloniser and the colonised” (Stafford 11). Dirlik is of the opinion that this type of enforced “Otherness is [actually] deconstructed because of the hybrid’s claim to both signifier [coloniser] and signified [colonised]”. On the other hand, this dual claim “problematizes boundaries” (Pieterse 220) such as the Immorality Act of *The Madonna of Excelsior*, as hybridity is often the result of ignoring or disregarding such set boundaries<sup>3</sup>. Mda succeeds in making hybridity into a positive aspect of Popi’s identity at the end of the novel. Although Popi at first battles to accept herself, she manages to turn the negative stigma of miscegenation into a positive celebration of her difference.

Each of the chapters in this thesis will, therefore, focus on each of the three interpretations, with the exception of chapter one, which aims to arrive at a definition of the concept of satire. I aim to illustrate that a satiric reading of *The Madonna of Excelsior* is enriched by both feminist and post-colonial discourses, as these contribute to a more detailed understanding of Mda’s use of satire.

---

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed discussion on where hybridity plays a role in society, see Pieterse, p223.

## CHAPTER 1:

### Satire and the Satirist

The multi-national and historical nature of satire makes it quite difficult to define. Nicols's attempt seems to be one of the most comprehensive: "One way of defining satire would be to say that it is the systematic exploitation, with aggressive intent, of what are, or are made to seem, deviations from the norm within a context" (27). Nicols's choice of adjective in "aggressive" makes it clear that satire is not a conciliatory art, but rather "a work in which an unfavorable [sic] comment is made, censure is expressed, someone, or something, is blamed" (Nicols 11). In other words, the art of satire *protests* (Sutherland 4) against something or someone that the writer of satire does not believe to be good or morally correct. Nicols also calls satire a form of "verbal attack" (11): I believe that this further qualifies his choice of the adjective "aggressive".

Nokes comments too on the aggressive quality of satirical works by calling satire "a two-toned genre" (17). His reason for this claim to duality is that he considers satire to be "both sweet and sour, a weapon and a toy" (17). He refers to satire as a "weapon", because "it exists to inflict the pain of public ridicule and humiliation of those whose vices it exposes."

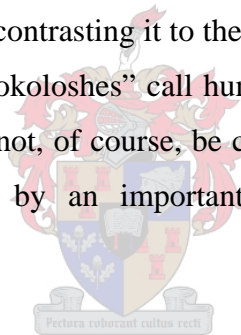
In this case, the satire actually functions as a form of punishment for, or denunciation of, a person's immoral deeds. On the other hand, it also functions as a "toy", in that "as a literary or aesthetic object, satire exists to amuse and entertain" (17). Of course, Nokes's comment is aimed at satire that criticizes and ridicules a specific person: satire can, though, also be aimed at a situation, as illustrated in one of Frances, Dugmore and Rico's *Madam and Eve* cartoons (see Addendum A). In this cartoon, Winnie Mandela is satirised in several ways. Not only are the authors mocking her choice of hat, but they are also questioning her innocence by aligning her with the notorious and infamous O.J. Simpson<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, in the words of Nokes, a specific public figure is "humiliat[ed]" and forced to endure "the pain of public ridicule",

---

<sup>4</sup> Simpson was a famous American football player, but achieved notoriety when he was arrested and put on trial for the alleged murder of his wife.

whilst at the same time the satirical cartoon exists as an “aesthetic object” that “entertain[s]” and “stimulate[s] [the reader] with its daring” (17).

Satirists also pillory abstract issues, popular beliefs and group representatives, as in the cartoon in Addendum B which illustrates how both abstract issues and group representatives are satirised. In this case the ever-irritating “mielie lady” represents all the people who sell their products by walking up and down streets whilst yelling out the availability of their wares; the authors thus satirise these people as well as the influence they have on the rest of the public. They also mock an abstract issue by ridiculing the fact that cellular telephones are nowadays owned by nearly everybody – even impoverished “mielie ladies”. In the third cartoon (Addendum C), both abstract issues and popular beliefs are satirised: the latter is evident in the supposed existence of “tokoloshes”, whilst the former is illustrated through the heading “Tokoloshe Truth and Reconciliation”. The authors are mocking the real Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa by contrasting it to the funny, supposedly “racist” names that the fantasy figures of the “tokoloshes” call human beings, as well as vice versa. The nickname “take-aways” cannot, of course, be considered “racist” and it does not call for an inquiry instigated by an important body such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.



The ability of satire to evoke laughter in response to a critique of serious issues or misdemeanours plays a crucial part in its public acceptance. “By seeking the endorsement of laughter, satire draws the sting of its own attack” (Nokes 17), thereby questioning the chosen subject whilst at the same time providing entertainment. Another inducement for readers to respond with laughter is the fact that the evocation of emotions helps the satirist in “[h]is aim...to move his readers to criticize and condemn” (Pollard 74) the issues or persons that s/he chooses to satirise. However, all satire is not comedic and all comedy is not satiric: “Although satire is sometimes identified with comedy – and certainly it can be very funny – it is basically concerned with exposing some flaw or excess” (Brown and Kimmey 3).

Therefore, the main difference between comedic satire (such as *Madam and Eve*) and pure comedy is that satire – no matter how funny it is – has the purpose of *protesting* against something or someone, whilst pure comedy aims *inter alia* to provide



amusement. Sutherland sums up this difference in intention by stating that the satirist's aim "to expose, or deride, or condemn" is that which "distinguishes him from the writer of comedy" (7). There is also a difference between pure comedy and caricature. According to Sutherland, the satirist uses caricature quite frequently, due to the fact that s/he uses "exaggerat[ion]" as well so that s/he "ruthlessly narrow[s] the area of vision" (15). This is necessary in order to persuade the reader to agree with him/her: through the use of exaggeration, the satirist does away with any other possible point of view and gives the reader the chance to agree with him/her uninhibitedly. An example of this type of satirical caricature can best be conveyed through another cartoon (see Addendum D). In this cartoon Winnie Mandela is once again satirised, although the authors do not even mention her name. However, the drawing of her famous hat is enough to satirise her sense of fashion.

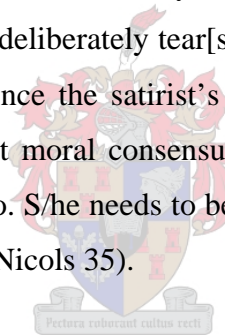
Nokes states that "the use of comedy itself involves the assumption of certain shared normative values" (18). In other words, in order for satire to be truly successful, it has to reflect an opinion or attitude that is acceptable, or at least understandable, to the reader. This means that satire is very context-constrained, because the "[f]ailure to bring a certain kind of knowledge to a satire may affect even a contemporary reader's response to a satire" (Nicols 28). The reader's understanding of the satire can be severely impeded if s/he lacks knowledge about the historical context of the satire, and this is especially relevant to a reading of political satire. For instance, if one were to evaluate the cartoon in Addendum E, one would see that Clinton's question regarding Mandela's wiping of his eyes would not be fully understood as a reference to the damaging of his tear ducts (due to the conditions of his prison term on Robben Island) if one did not already know of this physical defect. Therefore, Clinton's comment would just be passed over and the reader would not comprehend it, unless s/he had a certain amount of historical knowledge.

Nicols also comments on the effect that "changing cultural conditions" have on the reader's understanding of satire and this can be illustrated through the previously mentioned cartoon in Addendum C. A non-South African reader might not fully



understand this satirical comment, because s/he might not know the cultural history of the traditional kidnapping “tokoloshes”. Although the reader would probably comprehend the satirical reference to “racism”, s/he would surely not understand the absurdity of using a mythical creature that supposedly carries one away at night, without knowledge of the relevant cultural background.

As previously mentioned, there exists a need for accord between the satirist and the reader: the satirist can only achieve his/her objective of criticizing and ridiculing his/her subject if the reader can be induced to agree to his/her moral values. Therefore, the satirist “relies implicitly upon some assumed consensus of values or moral expectations by which [his/her] victims are to be judged” (Nokes 17). If the reader is not able to agree with the satirist, the latter becomes a mere complaining moralist instead of someone who “consciously compel[s] men to look at what they have tried to ignore...[and who] deliberately tear[s] off the disguise and expose[s] the naked truth” (Sutherland 11). Once the satirist’s views are accepted, s/he needs to make further use of this implicit moral consensus by impelling the reader to agree with him/her on other matters too. S/he needs to be adept in making “the standards he adopts...seem the ‘right’ ones” (Nicols 35).



Satirists are so indignantly aggressive in their condemnation of iniquity (Goodman *The Dialogics of Satire* 6), that they might even be labeled “disillusioned moralists[s]” (Brown and Kimmey 3), as they condemn the morality of their fellow human beings and aspire towards a higher morality that sometimes represents a kind of utopia. Although the satirist alone determines what is worthy of ridicule or attack, s/he has to do it in a way that makes the object of his/her derision “SEEM worthy of blame” (Nicols 23). When the satirist is successful in *this*, s/he becomes more than a moralist, but is rather “a sort of revolutionary” (Nicols 25) who leads his/her readers in revolt against what *s/he* believes to be morally wrong.

This need for a moral revolution is reflected through the satirist’s art and s/he tries to firstly, expose or eliminate the immorality and corruption of specific public figures or

institutions, or secondly, relieve him-/herself of his/her frustration (Pollard 10) by using his/her art “as a form of revenge; a consolation for personal as well as political impotence” (Nokes 15). Goodman asserts that the elusiveness commonly revealed by satirists, as well as their “desire to be ‘other’ is a basic quality” (Goodman, *The Dialogics* 4), and it is this manner of standing with one foot in society and one foot out of society that enables him/her to realise the faults inherent in this society, whilst still being accessible to the public. It is this subjective quality that is linked to the intention of the satirist’s work “that differentiates him from most other writers” (Sutherland 5). His/her works always have a subjective ulterior motive. The satirist writes with the intention of exposing morally corrupt political issues to a society that has tried to ignore, or that simply was not aware of, these faults. S/he does this brutally and honestly with the intention of annoying, shocking and especially *educating* his/her readers. Paradoxically, the satirist needs to distort what s/he perceives as the truth – an element that drives him/her in his/her quest – in order to convey it to the public. S/he tries to coax or jar people into seeing the familiar in a different light. This also refers back to the opening quotation of this chapter in which Nicols mentions the importance of the “context”, as well as the satirist’s power to choose what are considered as “deviations from the norm” (27). In another case, the satirist might also function as a means of enunciating what the public might be feeling without their having the ability to express their feelings.

Although the satirist aims to attack or mock his/her subjects, s/he does not offer to “fill the [resulting] vacuum” (Sutherland 1), in that s/he does not provide an answer, nor an alternative, to the issues that s/he satirises. Francis, Dugmore and Rico have created numerous cartoons that satirise Winnie Mandela, but during her time in government they did not suggest another person to replace her. Satirists do not and are “under no obligation to produce a substitute for what [they] destro[y]” (Sutherland 17). They merely act upon the need they feel to protest and to “test...certain ethical, intellectual, social, and other standards” (19). It is enough for them to draw the public’s attention to what they deem morally unacceptable, but they do not pretend that they have any answers to their own protests, and in spite of the satirist’s efforts to draw the public’s attention to vice, s/he might actually not even believe that a solution to eliminate the vice can be found.

In order to achieve any success in criticizing contemporary ethics, the satirist must be exceptionally skilful in expressing him-/herself verbally, as his/her art depends greatly on the nuances of language that s/he can wield as a weapon through the use of irony and distortion. I have already commented on the effect that distortion – achieved through the exaggeration of vice and the use of caricature – has on a satirical work. However, the use of irony is itself a form of distortion, as “irony uses distortion...in the form of inversion...[that] includes in its effect implication, insinuation and omission” (Pollard 67). It is quite obvious that satire makes use of “omission”, for I have already suggested that satirists are very selective in their choice of facts. The use of “insinuation” in satirical works is also common and “[it] suggests both the indirectness and aggressiveness of satire” (Nicols 36). However, satire does not automatically use irony, and all ironical works are not necessarily satirical: Frye makes a distinction between the two by stating that “satire is militant irony: its moral norms are relatively clear” (155). Ironical works do not necessarily do this – irony does not need to have the overt intention of “chastis[ing] the foolish or vicious, and...reform[ing] them” (Nicols 30), nor of being an “instrument of punishment” (Nicols 30), as satirical works do. In fact, irony can probably best be viewed as being merely “the MANNER of proceeding in satire” (Nicols 36): although it is a useful tool that assists satirists in making their comments, it is not absolutely crucial to the existence of satire.

Another example with regard to the *manner* in which the satirist conveys his/her disillusion to the reader, is to be found in the *form* of the satire. Writers of satire can choose from several different forms, including (amongst others not discussed in this thesis) the novel, the cartoon (like *Madam and Eve*), or the letter (as Beresford did in *The Dear Walter Papers*). If the satirist decides to use the novel form, as Mda did in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, s/he will not create a plot “in the true sense of change but [rather a] mere intensification of the unpleasant situation with which [the] satire open[ed]” (Kernan 177). One can thus conclude that satirical texts are not created to tell a story, but rather to express an unsatisfactory state and by intensifying and exaggerating this situation, the satirist may hope to make some impression on the reader as to the importance of changing the situation s/he has sketched. Therefore,

although the plot is static, *the true intention is to change society*. Kernan is quite explicit in his assertion that even when “satire does have a plot which eventuates in a shift from the original condition, it is not a true change” (177). If one applies this statement to Mda’s *The Madonna of Excelsior*, one can see that what Kernan asserts is challenged by Mda: the plot of this novel shifts from the apartheid era to the post-apartheid era, and the characters’ attitudes change to become more acceptant of each other. However, with regard to Kernan’s assertion that there is a lack of “the simple triumph of good over evil” (Kernan 177) in satiric texts, Mda *does* conform, as none of the main characters are made out to be absolutely good or absolutely devilish – all of the main characters have some good and some evil in their make up. The only “triumph of good over evil” is seen in the *political* change from apartheid to democracy.

There is another important difference between the novel and satire, in that “[u]nlike the novel which is an autonomous entity, creating and sustaining its own fictional world, satire always has its object and validation in external reality” (Nokes 2). Although not all novels need to conform to this rule, all satirical works focus on “external reality”, or else they would not succeed in ridiculing any important issues. Mda’s novel<sup>5</sup> is also important with regard to the subjects that it satirises. Hodgart explains why the satirical novel is not *only* satirical, but it also has other aims:

Whereas the novelist aims at understanding the complexities of life, satire aims at simplification, at a pretence of misunderstanding and at denunciation. The sheer size of the...novel has...much to do with the difficulty that satirists have in using it: satire seems to require a light and closed form which helps to make a simple point effectively – the form is itself a component of the wit without which satire is unbearable. It follows that no full-length novel is likely to be satirical throughout (214).

---

<sup>5</sup> When this thesis refers only to “Mda” or “Mda’s novel”, the text in question is *The Madonna of Excelsior*.

*The Madonna of Excelsior* was therefore chosen for this thesis because it is not “satirical throughout” and illustrates two frequently satirised topics, namely politics and gender. In terms of the former, Hodgart states unequivocally that “politics is the pre-eminent topic of satire” (33), and his reason for this claim is equally applicable to this thesis:

There is an essential connection between satire and politics in the widest sense: satire is not only the commonest form of political literature, but, insofar as it tries to influence public behaviour, it is the most political part of all literature (Hodgart 33).

Much of the action that occurs in Mda’s novel is centred on some political dispute – for instance, one can refer to any of the post-apartheid town council meetings in the novel for evidence of the influence that politics has on the characters’ behaviour. In terms of South Africa’s history, a post-colonial interpretation of this novel is especially useful in identifying the objects of satire that Mda focusses on, as he does not limit himself to merely one state of government: he satirises both the apartheid government and the post-apartheid government. Hodgart offers some form of explanation for this type of duality in his claim that “if the satirist is ridiculing something in favour of its opposite, which he sets up as an ideal [as Mda does with the post-apartheid society], he will tend to ridicule the opposite [apartheid society] as well” (36). Of course, in order for political satire to be comprehended by the reader, “both the satirist and his public must understand some of the processes of politics” (Hodgart 33); this refers back once again to the need for the satirist and the reader to be on the same level of understanding, or else the satire will not be duly appreciated. This is also applicable to the *Madam and Eve* cartoons, as a reader without some knowledge of the politics of apartheid, cannot appreciate Eve’s witticisms or Gwen’s imbecility.

Both *Madam and Eve* and *The Madonna of Excelsior* also illustrate how satire can have a concern with gender, though in the case of both these texts, the emphasis is rather more specifically on politics. As Barrett maintains, “Feminism has politicized everyday life” (Barrett 37). Feminism is, though, linked to satire on more than a political level. This is mostly due to the fact that “nearly all satire [on women] has been written by men” (Hodgart 79) and the female gender seems to be a preferred subject for men to satirise. Hodgart speculates that this might be due to the vulnerability of women, in that they are “the scapegoat most conveniently to hand” to blame for the misery of the world. He also thinks that, “unlike racial minorities or political régimes, women cannot be banished or abolished but are here for ever” (Hodgart 79) and that this might irritate or scare men into trying to prove their power by writing satire. Whatever the reason, women have been satirised frequently – for instance, in *Madam and Eve*, all the regular characters are female – from Gwen and Eve to Edith and Marge, and even the mielie lady. Mda’s main characters in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Niki and Popi, are also female; in this case, the “[s]atire on women [Niki and Popi] is a comic recording of deviations from the ideal set up by the encomium<sup>6</sup>, and traditionally it has been centred on the cardinals of docility, chastity and modesty” (Hodgart 81). In chapter three of this thesis, I will discuss in what way Mda satirises these “cardinals of docility, chastity and modesty” (Hodgart 81) through his two main female characters.



Satire is thus a multi-faceted art form, with the aim of criticizing, ridiculing and exposing immorality and corruption. Although the cartoons from the *Madam and Eve* collections are helpful in establishing a working definition of satire, the next two chapters will illustrate the connection between satire and politics (through a post-colonial interpretation) and between satire and gender (through a feminist interpretation) in more detail by focusing on Mda’s novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior*.

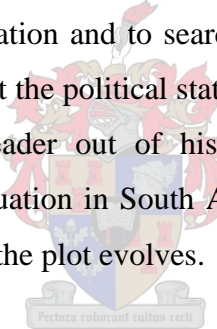
---

<sup>6</sup> For further discussion as to what the “encomium” is, see Hodgart’s explanation, (80, 81).

## CHAPTER 2:

### *The Madonna of Excelsior: A Post-colonial Interpretation*

Mda comments on apartheid society and racial prejudice by focusing on a historical happening in South Africa, when nineteen people were arrested for having sexual relations across the so-called race barrier. He specifically uses the Immorality Act to comment on the political change that South Africa underwent from post-colonial, satiric and feminist viewpoints. This reference to the Immorality Act from an unusual perspective and with a mocking tone, illustrates the satirist's desire "to persuade [the readers]...to examine their habitual assumptions, to face ugly facts, to look beneath the surface of things" (Sutherland 5) and thus to question the validity of such freedom-restricting laws. It is as if Sutherland made the above-quoted statement with this novel in mind: in *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Mda *does* force the reader to "face [the] ugly facts" of racial segregation and to search "beneath the surface" of his/her own "habitual assumptions" about the political status quo. In other words, one can see that Mda tries to shock the reader out of his/her comfort zone into a greater understanding of the political situation in South Africa, as well as its relation to the historical situation around which the plot evolves.



There has been much critical debate about the definition and scope of post-colonialism and, in fact, whether the process of colonialism ever ceases. Ashcroft speaks about the ongoing process of colonialism:

by post-colonialism I mean that dynamic of opposition, the discourse of resistance to colonialism which begins from the first moment of colonization. I most definitely do not mean 'after colonialism' because that would be to suppose an end to the imperial process (162).

This thesis will build on Ashcroft's theory that colonialism, or "the imperial process", is not dead and can not be said to have stopped, but continues concurrently with post-colonialism. In a post-colonial reading of *The Madonna of Excelsior*, both the Black



communities and Afrikaner community respectively create a “dynamic of opposition” towards their oppressors, as seen in some of the Afrikaners’ refusal to use English at the town council meetings, and some of the Sotho people’s refusal to use Afrikaans – both these languages being representative of their respective oppressors (Mda 179, 188). This is also evident in Mda’s “Movement”, of which both Popi and Viliki are members in their struggle against the Afrikaner belief that they had “a God-given right to rule supreme over all” (Mda 164). Loomba states that “colonialism can be defined as the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods” (2) – a view that can be applied to *The Madonna of Excelsior*, as the land of indigenous peoples were appropriated by the English and Afrikaners by force. One can thus argue that “‘postcolonialism’ is not ‘post-’ something or other” (Mishra and Hodge 284) at all, but rather an ongoing process that can never be truly erased. This view of post-colonialism asserts that one can “drop the hyphen” and “effectively use ‘postcolonialism’ as an always present tendency in any literature of subjugation marked by a systematic process of cultural domination” (Mishra and Hodge 284). In other words, colonialism and postcolonialism are intertwined and one cannot pinpoint an exact stage when post-colonialism started and colonialism ended, but post-colonialism is rather a state of rebellion against the “cultural domination” that colonialism enforces. Post-colonialism thus involves a condition of guarded hostility in which the coloniser usually attempts to retain power, whilst the colonised attempts to escape from the oppression that had exerted its influence in terms of an appropriation of cultural activities, land and identity.

In other words, from a post-colonial point of view, *The Madonna of Excelsior* contains several different groups that can be labelled the colonisers and the colonised. The white “Afrikaner” (Mda 148) population becomes the coloniser who – for a few decades, as illustrated in the first twenty chapters of the text – ruled (or colonised) the black and coloured communities through the apartheid system. From a post-colonial point of view, this kind of colonialism would be interpreted as political oppression. There are several ways in which this racial-political colonisation is illustrated in the novel. One of the more petty forms of oppression is seen in the racial segregation enforced in queues at government institutions (such as the Post Office) and public institutions (such as the banks). However, not only were there two different queues for black people and white people, but there was “a slow long queue for blacks and a



quick short queue for whites” (Mda 153). In other words, colonialism extended far beyond racial segregation – as the colonisers and the colonised could be identified by their skin colours – and can be equated with racism. This term can be defined as “a system of ideas and practices which categorises people on the basis of bodily features or skin colour” (Louw et al. 767). However, racism does not merely involve discrimination based on one’s skin colour, but rather an ideology that “depicts people of different racial categories as fundamentally different” (Louw et al. 767) and thus places them in the position of “the Other”. It also “defines one group as more deserving of power and privilege” (Louw et al. 767), thereby instituting a Manichean opposition and disempowering a specific culture.

The theme of racism comes into view due to the historically antagonistic relationship between the different races of South Africa. Racism has played a “decisive role...in all forms of colonial society over the past 500 years...[and] cannot be overestimated” (Mishra and Hodge 285). I would like to focus on three different forms of racism and on the way in which they include the concepts of “the Other”, as well as power relations between different groups as set out in the previously mentioned definition of racism. The antagonism felt by white people towards black people is not only illustrated in the text, but also explored through the post-colonial view of the white community as the coloniser of the black community. It seems as if the main cause of this racism is a power struggle – Tjaart Cronje makes this clear by questioning “what a black person know[s] about power” (Mda 149). This power struggle is mainly centred on whose “own country” (149) South Africa is and whether or not “the Afrikaner would always have the power” (149). The racist tendency of whites is also explicitly portrayed through the board meetings. Generalisations such as “Black people can’t read” abound, and coupled with Tjaart’s likening of black people to “swine” (Mda 194) and his general sarcastically politically correct term, “affirmative action people” (187), these statements speak for themselves of the inherent racist beliefs of some of the white council members. Jolly tries to explain that the racism perpetrated by Afrikaners was in some way a result of the British colonisation of the Boers:

since independence from Britain was won with the 1961  
establishment of the republic...Afrikaner nationalists

believed that they were defending this independence and accepted the isolation that resulted from international antiapartheid [sic] politics as the price of freedom. It is impossible to understand the psychology of nationalist Afrikaners as colonizers without understanding that they continued to see themselves as victims of English colonization and that the imagined continuation of this victimization was used to justify the maintenance of apartheid. In this view...Afrikaner nationalists have always seen themselves as the postcolonials (22).

At a basic level, it thus seems that due to one form of colonialism (the English colonisation of the Afrikaners), another (the Afrikaners' colonisation of indigenous Africans) was instigated. Afrikaners are in the “ambiguous positions [of being] both colonized and colonizers” (Ashcroft et al. *The Empire Writes Back* 22), as they were colonised by the English, but in turn also colonised and subjugated the Black communities.

However, Mda “retain[s] the right to satirise both white and Black people across the board” (Goodman, “De-scribing” 6), and some black people are also seen to be racist towards white people. Viliki makes a good example: he became quite good friends with Adam de Vries, but still says that “[Adam] is a nice guy, although a white man will always be a white man” (Mda 222). In other words, although it seems as if Viliki and Adam are on good terms, Viliki still views him as a stereotypical “Afrikaner” and refuses to acknowledge that Adam might be a person in his own right – he will always just be a stereotypical “white man”.

Another form of racism is evident in the black and white people's attitude towards the children of black women and white men. The term “miscegenation” was applied to the offspring of any sexual relationship between a white person and a black/coloured person. It is important to note that Mda does not choose sides in the racial struggles he depicts – he satirises both the white *and* the black races' attitudes towards hybridity.

In Goodman's discussion of the Immorality Act that banned miscegenation, he states that this

was an attempt at colonial eugenics, [that] appear[s] to even-handedly prohibit any mingling of race, but covertly construct[s] black South Africans in particular as so degenerate that their genes had to be contained, lest they damage the fabric of society" (Goodman, "De-scribing the Centre" 2).

Fanon comments extensively on this type of prejudice:

white and black represent the two poles of a world, two poles in perpetual conflict: a genuinely Manichean concept of the world....I am white: that is to say that I possess beauty and virtue, which have never been black. I am the colour of the daylight (33, 34).

It thus seems as if black people are stereotyped as unable to "possess beauty and virtue", while white people are stereotyped as angelic and "civilized". It is this kind of stereotyping that reinforces the image of black people as a threat to so-called white civilisation, as well as casting them in the role of a kind of Caliban (Shakespeare) who may not woo Prospero's daughter, because his "genes" might "damage the fabric of society". Jolly comments on the fact that in South Africa there are two apparent "poles of Manichean opposition – white (positive)/black (negative)" (18) that automatically "constructed the black as the necessary other" (23) and evil party in this binary opposition. One can thus see that this kind of reasoning was part of the decision to implement the Immorality Act, and that any evidence of miscegenation – in the form of coloured children – would obviously be treated with the greatest disapproval, as it would be testimony to the intermingling of the oppressor and the oppressed – something which both races regarded as an intrusion upon their identities. In fact, their identities are dependent upon their race and Viliki's comment, "The true Afrikaners are the coloured people" (Mda 180), is greatly contested by both Popi and the Afrikaners, as it is a denial of the racial definition that they base their identities on.

Through the reader's knowledge of Popi, one comes to know of the horrible experiences that her unusual skin colour caused her to endure. Not only was she "roasted" as a baby by her mother over an open fire to "smok[e] the pinkness out of her" (Mda 166), but she was also subjected to derogatory name-calling by her black peers – they called her "morwa" (117), "hotnot" (9) and "boesman" (110). In addition, the skin colour of her shaven head was mocked by comparing it to "a white woman's buttock" (111). Mda is satirising "the black community through the terms they use and the implicit judgements they make: the use of the word 'boesman' is unthinking on their part, as is the demeaning talk of 'getting used to' Popi 'and others like her'" (Goodman, "De-scribing the Centre" 9). Although they are angry with the white community for judging them by their skin colour, they still regard Popi as an outsider because of her skin colour. Popi's sense of identity was irreparably scarred through the racism displayed by her peers, who did not believe that she even "deserve[d] to play" (111) with them, as she had "traces of whiteness" (67). She was "forced to adopt [an] antisocial identit[y] as a way of confronting [her] marginalization" (Peterson<sup>7</sup>) – this is seen through her refusal to play with children of her own age (Mda 117). "The pressure to be black was great, the impossibility of 'authenticity' painful" (Ali 136), as she found it impossible to be accepted by her peers. On the other hand, she was also subjected to prejudice from the white people – due to the Immorality Act that banned miscegenation, she has been labeled an outcast from birth. The frequent use of derogatory names forces her into the category of "Other" – she is not an accepted member of society, and is forced into a "social definition through mutually exclusive positions: [she is] [n]either...one thing...[n]or [is she] the other" (Cross 551). In this case, Popi has to be either white or black, but it is regarded as unacceptable to be a mixture of the two. Therefore, as she cannot fit into society due to her appearance and hybrid origin, she is compelled to define herself as "the Other", or as the "thing" (Cross 551) different from the usual. Popi's "awareness of 'being the Other'...bring[s] out the presence of a kind of split identity...marked by an experience of 'unstable cultural identity' characterized by transformation, [and] hybridity" (Schulte, in Sandten 103). Fanon remarks that the female outsider status is a result of being a "woman of colour" who cannot be "accepted in this society" as she

---

<sup>7</sup> In compliance with the MLA's directions for referencing, no page numbers are given with internet sources whenever the web pages did not contain page numbers.

is viewed as “artificial[I]” (33) and “[can] never altogether [be] respectable in a white man’s eyes” (32), as the course of mutation is from black to white (38). In other words, it is not regarded as natural to be born of a black mother but still have “traces of whiteness” (Mda 67).

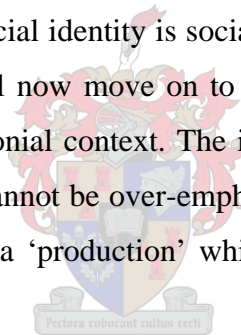
Popi thus has no recourse to a race that she could use as a basis to create a sense of identity for herself, since neither the black nor white communities accept her skin colour and thus both societies marginalise her. She realises that she is stigmatised as an outcast and teasingly sums up her situation as “in the old apartheid days I was not white enough, and now in the new dispensation I am not black enough” (Mda 259). Mda satirises this form of racial prejudice, by mentioning that the black women who have been teasing Popi because of her “traces of whiteness”, are using “Super Rose skin-lightener” or skin lightening products from America, such as “Ambi Extra and Artra” (Mda 81). However, the use of such skin-lightening products also exhibits “the prevalent social definition of beauty and whiteness as synonymous” (Peterson); although the black women are oppressed by the white people, they are taught that to be white is to be good – this is therefore a form of racism that is “parallel to sexism” (Peterson). The fact that the Krok brothers had no qualms against bringing such a damaging cream onto the market, illustrates “a confidence in the power of whiteness” (Isaacson) – they knew that their cream would sell.

Popi’s inability to construct a racial identity for herself contributes to forcing her into the category of “Other” – thereby giving power to the groups that have “othered” her. She senses her lack of power and tries to compensate for it by hiding her “whiteness”: “she had learnt ways of not calling attention to her colouredness...[by wearing] colourful doeks<sup>8</sup> that hid her straight almost-blonde hair” and dressing in “[s]lacks that hid her hairy legs” (Mda 152). The fact that she has hair on her legs is a very painful issue for Popi, as “most black women don’t have hair on their legs”(Mda 198). This “symbol of whiteness” is exploited by Tjaart when he refers to her unshaven legs as a lack of culture and a reason for Popi not being a “lady”, as “[l]adies shave their legs [and] [s]he doesn’t” (Mda 194). His allegation causes a lot of pain and embarrassment to Popi and she actually starts crying (194) and blames “God who had

---

<sup>8</sup> “Doeks” are squares of material that are bound over one’s hair.

burdened her with the hairy problem of white people” (Mda 199). However, it must be noted that Popi refuses to shave her legs because this is an activity performed by white women, and she is adamant that she is “not a white woman” (Mda 198), but rather “a Mosotho girl” (Mda 199). It is thus more important for her to follow the customs of the culture and race that she has chosen, than it is to avoid her “outsider” status by removing the offending hair. Ruden attributes Popi’s stubborn adherence to Sesotho societal norms to “[t]he African ideal of social life...that ‘a person is a person because of other people’” (2). One’s sense of identity thus depends greatly on one’s level of social acceptance and that is one of the reasons why Popi is so unhappy and lonesome: she is *not* socially accepted, but rather “othered” due to her skin colour. According to Mishra and Hodge, there are “three fundamental principles...which are...points of difference between white settler colonies and the rest” (286). These three “points” are “(a) racism, (b) a second language, [and] (c) political struggle” (286). I have already discussed the importance of racism in post-colonialism and commented on “how much of racial identity is socially constructed” (Goodman, “Describing the Centre” 8), and will now move on to the issue of language and how it influences identity in a post-colonial context. The influence of these three principles on the construction of identity cannot be over-emphasised. Identity is *not* “an already accomplished fact”, but rather “a ‘production’ which [sic] is never complete, [and] always in process” (Hall 392).



On the issue of language, it is very difficult to “forg[e] a critical language that can move from a colonial or neocolonial past and present into a genuinely post-colonial future” (Jolly 21), as each language denotes a specific culture. This difficulty is illustrated numerous times during the multi-racial board meetings of Excelsior, especially when Popi states (and once shouts) three times that “Afrikaans is the language of the oppressor!” (Mda 179) and that it is “the language over which people died” (Mda 180). Her outburst serves to illustrate that Afrikaans has become the personification of colonialism and subjugation for some of the board members. Popi reacts towards the language as if it is the cause of *all* the black freedom fighters’ deaths, while in reality it has merely come to symbolise the white nationalist government who oppressed her colonised community. She is “trying to break away from imperialistic domination and engaged in the post-colonial struggle [for] autonomous nationhood” (Salter, quoting Mda 289) – a “struggle” that demands of

her to shed the “imperialistic domination” represented by Afrikaans. By contrast, other board members (notably Tjaart) view the request to “eliminat[e] Afrikaans” as a “communist plot to eliminate the Afrikaner from the face of South Africa” (Mda 178). Tjaart views the board’s opposition to the use of Afrikaans during their meetings as a personal insult and a threat to his nationalist identity. It is evident that he regards the language as far more than just a medium for conversing. To quote Fanon on inferiority, one could state that the board members’ frantic reactions are a result of “the Negro [being] enslaved by his inferiority, [and] the white man enslaved by his superiority [causing both to] behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation” (44). He thus regards such reactions as the result of people’s own racial and cultural images of themselves. Cross states that the “connection [between] language, knowledge, and identity” is crucial to one’s “development” (553), as these three are interrelated in the process of defining and expressing oneself. Popi realises that Tjaart’s angry refusal to speak English is not due to a problem with the language, but rather due to his “problem with *the* English” (Mda, my italics 188), and she believes that “the Afrikaner feels that English is being promoted at the expense of his own language. [Tjaart] sees it as another victory of the English over his people in the ongoing Anglo-Boer War saga” (Mda 189) – a war that “the Afrikaner is still fighting” years after gaining independence from English rule. Tjaart finds the suggested use of English so offensive because he has built his sense of identity on external factors – such as language and history – as well as on his relations with English and Sesotho people. Therefore, he is willing to “accept Sesotho even though it is a black language and he hates black people” (Mda 188), but not the English language, because historically the Sesotho community was colonised by the Afrikaners, who were colonised in their turn by the English. The Afrikaner thus has a less oppressed past in relation to the Sesotho people than the English. Due to this Tjaart considers the Sesotho language as less of a threat to his sense of nationalism and personal identity than the English language. Once again language becomes a metaphor for a community’s identity and is “employ[ed]...as a means to represent cultural identity and difference” (Sandten 99) between the black and white people.

The influence of language on identity is also illustrated in the derogatory names and nicknames that are applied to Popi (Mda 9, 110, 117), which have a great influence on her sense of identity – she hates her apparent “whiteness” and is very protective of her



“Mosotho girl” (Mda 199) culture. An example of the aversion she feels towards her Caucasian roots is seen in her angry retort in answer to Lizette’s friendly advice on how to get rid of her leg hair: she actually “screams” that “[she is] not a white woman!” (Mda 198). Angela van der Walt thought of Popi as a “twenty-five-year-old *girl*” (Mda, my italics 166, 22), it being the “custom” for white people to call black or coloured women “girls” and “[n]ot wom[e]n” (Mda 166). Even “Niki at forty-seven” and “Niki’s mother...if she had still been alive” (Mda 166) would have been called “girls” due to their race, whilst the Sesotho people usually called “every woman... ‘mother’” (Mda 220). They referred to every woman as “mother” – “[e]ven when she is younger than your younger sister” (220) – thereby emphasising the woman’s ability to procreate. At the opposite end of the scale, white women were always called “Madam” (Mda 50, 54) and white men were called “Baas” (Mda 31) by black people. These two terms signify the dominant status of the white people and the servant status of the black people. The dissention and ultimate break up of the “Pule Siblings” or “Pule Comrades” (Mda 187) as a single political voice is illustrated through Viliki’s way of addressing of his sister: instead of calling her by her first name – as he has done all his life – he now refers to her as “Ms Pule” (Mda 188) and she calls him merely “Comrade Mayor” (Mda 187). The abolition of their first-name basis makes the reader more aware of the break in their once-unified political voice. They move away from their intimate first-name relationship to the distanced forms of “Comrade” and “Ms”.

Another important issue in the construction of the characters’ identities is suggested by Mishra and Hodge’s principle “of difference between white settler colonies and the rest”, which is part of the “political struggle” (286)<sup>9</sup>. Popi seems quite lost and alone until she joins the “Movement”: the “Movement had become her lover” (Mda 167) and “she...surrendered herself completely” (167) to it. Although her skin colour still distanced her from her peers, her political activities caused her to become more accepted – “workers” even used to “exclaim in admiration, ‘Hey, that boesman gives the Boers hell!’” (Mda 170). Her involvement in politics thus earned her some form of respect and acceptance, and gave her the opportunity of building up her confidence and creating her own sense of identity. Other characters who define themselves

---

<sup>9</sup> See page 23 of this thesis for Mishra and Hodge’s three principles.



through politics are Tjaart Cronje and some other Afrikaners (especially Reverend François Bornman), who believe that “the changes were wrong” (Mda 164) and that “the Afrikaner would never lose his grip on power” (Mda 148). They referred to the abolition of apartheid as the release of “communists” (148) and “black terrorist[s]” who were “the enemy of the Afrikaner race” (172). In fact, the political status quo of the country was so ingrained in their identities that they even preached that “Apartheid was...prescribed by the Bible” (Mda 129); colonialisation thus “worked hand in hand with evangelical Christianity” (Mishra and Hodge 288) and specifically with the Dutch Reformed Church. In other words, the “political struggle” of South Africa had shaped the Afrikaner’s identity to such a degree that everything revolved around it.

The identity of the some of the black people in *The Madonna of Excelsior* is influenced by the “cultural implications of the diasporic condition” (Sandten 100). These people have been forced into specific locations due to apartheid, and the condition of “diaspora take[s] into account such experiences as...exile, the quest for identity, and conflicts of allegiance, as well as displacement, (dis)location, homelessness” (Sandten 100). The last three conditions are clearly applicable to the Baipehi as they had no homes, and houses from the “Reconstruction and Development Programme” (Mda 185-186) were not available – thus, they “constructed a number of shacks...establishing instant homes” (185). This caused a heated debate amongst the board members, because some of them wanted to chase the “destitute” (Mda 187) Baipehi away, whilst others wanted to force them to move to “alternative land” (187). However, all the members agreed that the Baipehi could not be allowed to create “a shanty town” (187), thereby exiling the Baipehi from Excelsior and forcing them to be homeless once again.

In conclusion, it is evident that a post-colonial interpretation of this novel is greatly conducive to a better understanding of the different aspects of race, diaspora, identity and language that Mda addresses and satirises. However, it is not only this satirical-political reading that contributes to the reader’s understanding of the text; in the next chapter, this novel will be discussed from a feminist point of view, thereby illustrating the link between satire and gender.

### **CHAPTER 3:**

#### ***The Madonna of Excelsior : A Feminist Interpretation***

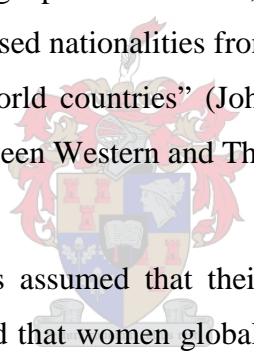
Bell hooks and Nighat Said Khan seem to agree that feminist theory supports equality for *all* people, and that it does not necessarily advocate a matriarchy to replace today's patriarchal rule. Hooks defines 'feminism' as "the struggle to end sexist oppression. Its aim is not to benefit solely any specific group of women, any particular race or class of women. It does not privilege women over men" (26).

In line with hooks's "struggle to end sexist oppression", Khan defines feminism as "the recognition of patriarchy as a system of male oppression and domination" (7). Both of these critics are in search of an *equal* society that acknowledges both men and women. This type of equality is mirrored in Khan's claim that "Feminists...seek a more holistic and structural transformation of society" (7). The emphasis seems to fall rather on abolishing patriarchy and all the economic and sexual/gender abuse that accompanies it, instead of establishing another form of gender tyranny.

However, McClintock calls such definitions of feminism into question, stating that a singular, universal definition of the concept of 'feminism' is equivalent to "the [discredited] singular category of 'Woman'...[that is sometimes used] as a bogus universal for feminism, [and which is] incapable of distinguishing between the varied histories and imbalances in power among women" (McClintock 293). It is therefore needful to distinguish between the circumstances endured by different women, as well as the different types of feminism that they practise.

Several feminist writers convey this distinction by dividing women into two categories: the Western woman and the so-called 'Third World woman'. The latter can be defined as a woman who originates from a 'Third World' location, which "is defined through geographical location as well as particular sociohistorical conjunctures" (Mohanty, "Introduction" 2). The term 'Third World women' "ignores the diversity of women's lives in the South across boundaries of class, ethnicity and

so on, and reproduces ‘Third World difference’. This is a form of ‘othering’, a reprivileging of western values, knowledge and power” (McEwan 99). The stereotype of the Third World women is created through the Western belief that these women “are not ‘normal’, because they are other, and because they are not written by white women” (Trinh, quoted by McEwan 100). Caslin believes that this form of ‘othering’ is a symbol of “the way in which our imperial, racist heritage reduces African identity to the construction of white, Western assumptions”. According to McEwan, this is a frequent criticism directed at Western feminists, as they seem to be “universalizing their own particular perspectives as normative, essentializing women in the South [or Third World] as tradition-bound victims of timeless, patriarchal cultures, and reproducing the colonial discourses of mainstream, ‘male-stream’ scholarship” (McEwan 99), thereby reinforcing the patriarchal voice that they fight against themselves. Johnson-Odin defines ‘Third World’ “in two ways: to refer to ‘underdeveloped’/overexploited geopolitical entities, i.e. countries, regions, and even continents; and to refer to oppressed nationalities from these world areas who are now resident in ‘developed’ First World countries” (Johnson-Odin 314). Many feminist writers make the distinction between Western and Third World feminisms:


 Western feminists assumed that their political project was universal, and that women globally faced the same universal forms of oppression. However, divisions among women based on nationality, race, class, religion, region, language and sexual orientation have proved more divisive within and across nations than western theorists acknowledged or anticipated (McEwan 96).

The mixture of race, gender and class applies especially to Third World women, as some of these women are oppressed on all these levels. Therefore,

[w]hile it is clear that sexual egalitarianism [as defined by hooks and Khan] is a major goal on which all feminists can agree, gender discrimination is neither the sole not perhaps

the primary locus of the oppression of 'Third World women'. Thus, a narrowly defined feminism, taking the eradication of gender discrimination as the route to ending women's oppression, is insufficient to redress the oppression of Third World women (Johnson-Odin 315).

Gilliam supports this philosophy, as one can gather from her statement that a "unified approach [to feminism] must simultaneously integrate the questions of racism, class oppression, and sexism" (Gilliam 217). She is especially adamant about the need to create this kind of integration, as she believes that "[t]he separation of sexism from the political, economic, and racial is a strategy of elites. As such, it becomes a tool to confuse the real issues around which most of the world's women struggle" (Gilliam 229). In line with these statements, Caslin believes that as "Western feminism was rooted in a bourgeois, euro-centric prejudice", it has "to be remedied in order to avoid the continued neglect of the so-called 'Third World woman'".

Another reason for linking sexism and gender to issues such as class and politics, is that "[t]he reification of gender [possibly] propels the [feminist] movement into identifying women and men as two distinct classes...All men therefore are transformed onto oppressors of all women, and hence the former are declared the enemy" (Gilliam 216). Clearly, one cannot claim that *all* men are oppressors, or that *all* women are oppressed; in some cases there are also women that oppress other women:

Black American women sometimes suspect that the movement which purports to represent the interests of 'women' is...the desire of a few white women to enter the corporate boardroom. The metamorphosis which this feat in itself would require in a patriarchal society might slightly better the lives of some women, but would only basically change the sex of the 'master' (Johnson-Odin 319).

This statement is echoed by bell hooks, who argues that

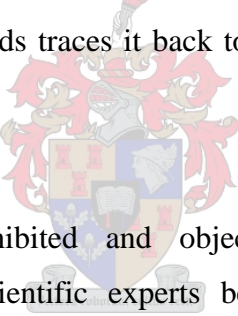
All too frequently in the women's movement it was assumed one could be free of sexist thinking by simply adopting the appropriate feminist rhetoric; it was further assumed that identifying oneself as oppressed freed one from being an oppressor. To a grave extent such thinking prevented white feminists from understanding and overcoming their own sexist-racist attitudes toward black women. They could pay lip service to the idea of sisterhood and solidarity between women but at the same time dismiss black women (McEwan, quoting hooks 97-98).

The above two statements *also* provide another reason for supporting the distinction between different kinds of feminisms, as well as different types of oppression. McEwan believes that there should be allowance “for competing and disparate voices among women, rather than reproducing colonialist power relations where knowledge is produced and received in the west, and white, middle-class women have the power to speak for their ‘silenced sisters’ in the South” (McEwan 101). This allowance would also combat the “state practices [that] effaced any notion of difference among and between black women, including those of class, color [sic], and educational and economic privilege; all black women were designated as the same” (Hammonds 176).

In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, this kind of across the board stereotyping is evident in the way in which *all* black women are cast as evildoers sent by “the devil”, just because a handful of black women had had sexual relations with a few white men: “The devil had sent black women to tempt him [Reverend François Bornmann] and to move him away from the path of righteousness. The devil has always used the black female to tempt the Afrikaner” (Mda 87). In this case, *all* black women are cast as evil seductresses who draw “innocent” white men into illegal and “immoral” relations and the fact that the white men had initiated these relations is not considered relevant.

The exertion of a kind of “intellectual neocolonialism” (Gilliam 218) by Western women against Third World women can also be noted in *The Madonna of Excelsior*. In this novel, white women regard black women as immoral and untrustworthy, and they impose many kinds of petty oppressions on the black women who work for them. For instance, “Madam” Cornelia Cronje “had started a new custom of weighing workers twice a day to make sure they were not stealing any of her meat” at the butchery (Mda 40). When Niki’s “morning clock-in weight” was not the same as “the afternoon clock-off weight” (Mda 40), “Madam” Cornelia forced her (Niki) to “strip...in front of everyone” (Mda 41). Although Niki was innocent, she still had to go through this acutely embarrassing process, because “Madam” Cronje had the power and the social conditioning to create her own form of neocolonialism in the work environment.

The differentiation between Western women and so-called Third World women is historically an old one. Hammonds traces it back to Sarah Bartmann, the “Hottentot Venus”, who



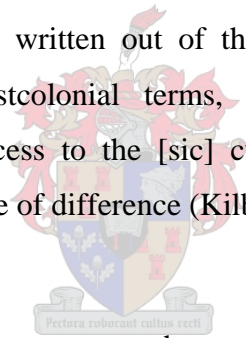
was crudely exhibited and objectified by European audiences and scientific experts because of what they regarded as unusual aspects of her physiognomy – her genitalia and buttocks....The ‘primitive’ genitalia of these women [all Hottentot females] were defined by European commentators as the sign of their ‘primitive’ sexual appetites. Thus, the black female became the antithesis of European sexual mores and beauty and was relegated to the lowest position on the scale of human development (Hammonds 172).

In this case, the use of the adjective “primitive” seems to mean merely that it is not “Western” – the only culture that was considered acceptable. A stereotype was

created, with the term ‘Third World women’<sup>10</sup> replacing the adjective “primitive” with reference to most women who do not come from white, Western, middle-class backgrounds.

Spivak has commented extensively on the ‘othering’ of Third World women by Western feminists. However, she rather uses the term “subaltern” which, though closely related to the concept of ‘the Other’,

is not ‘just a classy word for oppressed, for Other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie.’ She points out that in Gramsci’s original covert usage (being obliged to encrypt his writing to get it past prison censors), it signified ‘proletarian,’ whose voice could not be heard, being structurally written out of the capitalist bourgeois narrative. In postcolonial terms, ‘everything that has limited or no access to the [sic] cultural imperialism is subaltern – a space of difference (Kilburn, quoting Spivak).



In other words, the Third World woman can be considered as a ‘subaltern’, as she is not only oppressed by Western colonialists and patriarchy, but she is *also* not afforded the chance to speak of this oppression.

In her article, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, Spivak does not encourage Western feminists to speak *for* subaltern women, but rather to “clear the space to allow [them] to speak” (Kilburn) for themselves. Somebody else cannot speak effectively *for* the subaltern, as that person acting as a narrator might not truly understand the conditions under which the subaltern lives or the true meaning of what the subaltern is trying to express. A second-hand narrator would only be voicing her opinion or *interpretation*

---

<sup>10</sup> Although this suggests that, from an historical understanding, the term ‘Third World women’ is not exactly free of stereotypes or derogatory connotations, I am going to keep on using this term with reference to its earlier definitions by Mohanty and Johnson-Odin, merely because there is no other recognised term that carry as much significance.

of what the subaltern is trying to convey. In using a narrator, there would also be the problem of historical oppression – the meaning of what the subaltern is trying to express would not be properly conveyed, as it would have to first pass through the former oppressor’s understanding. Added to this problem, the subaltern might not be comfortable in expressing herself in the language of the oppressor. The main problem with “Subaltern talk” (Kilburn) is thus “not that the subaltern does not cry out in various ways”, but rather that it is not possible to “achieve the dialogic level of utterance” (Kilburn) with Western feminists. Spivak states that “By ‘speaking’ [she] was obviously talking about a *transaction* between the speaker and the listener” (Spivak, interviewed by Landry and MacLean, my italics 289).

Bearing in mind that the need for equality and gender integration are two important issues for some feminists (i.e. hooks and Khan), it is significant to note Mda’s comments on this. Taweni Gondwe (a former student of Mda) conducted an interview with him in which they discussed *The Madonna of Excelsior*. The following extract from this interview is very significant, as it shows that Mda is considered sympathetic to a woman’s perception of oppression:

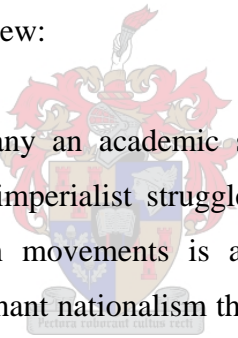
Gondwe: In the story, you speak in a woman’s voice in a very insightful way. How do you find the experience of writing in [sic] this point of view?

Mda: I don’t deliberately try to write “like a woman” or consciously create strong female characters, but I think that there’s a very strong woman in me...Recently, in London, after doing a public reading of an excerpt from this novel, and [sic] Eritrean woman came to me and said, “I’m sorry for what I’m about to say. I don’t mean to offend you, but you write like a woman.”



She was so apologetic and not aware that she had given me the greatest award I've ever received...It was a wonderful compliment (Gondwe 1).

Debatable though this is, that a man can apparently speak for a woman without questioning these gender binary opposites, if taken at face value it does seem as if Mda is trying to transcend the enclosures imposed by gender. Mda's illustration of the town of Excelsior's movement towards acknowledging different races and genders can be considered with reference to the previous chapter of this thesis, as it is possible to view colonialism in this novel from a feminist point of view: "[a] number of feminists have used the terms terrorism and/or colonization [sic] to describe the impact on women's lives of sexual violence" (Kelly 349). It *does* seem as if post-colonial interpretations are sometimes viewed as the more important discourse, to the detriment of a feminist point of view:



the subtext of many an academic study on women and Third-World anti-imperialist struggle, national reform, or national liberation movements is also inadvertently the record of a triumphant nationalism that makes its gains and wins its accomplishments at the expense of a subordinated feminism (Heng 31).

There are, though, several affinities between feminist and post-colonial discourses,

and for this reason the two fields have long been thought of as associative, even complimentary...both discourses are predominantly political and concern themselves with the struggle against oppression and injustice. Moreover, both reject the established hierarchical, patriarchal system, which is dominated by the hegemonic white male, and vehemently deny the supposed supremacy of masculine power and authority. Imperialism, like patriarchy, is after all a phallogocentric,

supremacist ideology that subjugates and dominates its subjects. The oppressed woman is in this sense akin to the colonized subject. Essentially, exponents of post-colonialism are reacting against colonialism in the political and economic sense while feminist theorists are rejecting colonialism of a sexual nature (Caslin).

In other words, both “Feminist and post-colonial discourses...seek to reinstate the marginalized [whether in terms of gender or economics] in the face of the dominant” (Raghumatha and Thomas), who is usually the white, patriarchal male. In spite of this obvious link between the two discourses,

[t]he undeniable fact that colonial oppression affected men and women in different ways should be recognized, as females were often subjected to what have been called a ‘double colonization’, whereby they were discriminated against not only for their position as colonized people but also as women (Caslin).

McEwan explains that this “double colonization” is due to the fact that “for black women there is no single source of oppression; gender oppression is inextricably bound up with ‘race’ and class” (McEwan 98) and that is why “in many cultures black women often feel solidarity with black men...they struggle with black men against racism, and against black men over sexism” (McEwan 98). In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Mda makes it clear that Popi had to endure many sexist remarks (Mda 194), whilst at the same time she was “dedicated...first and foremost” (Mda 168) to the “Movement” that resisted apartheid and racial oppression.

In terms of the link between colonialism and feminism and its application to the novel the woman (and especially her body) becomes the colonised and the man (or more specifically, the white man) becomes the coloniser: Hammonds explains this kind of dichotomy as “Europeans males’ fear of difference in the period of colonialism, and their consequent need to control and regulate the sexuality of those rendered ‘other’” (Hammonds 172). Both Catharine MacKinnon and Kathleen Barry describe “male

control of female sexuality as the foundation of patriarchal societies and the result of this is sex colonization [sic]" (Kelly, with reference to Barry and MacKinnon 349). Sexual activity – when forced – can therefore be considered as a form of colonisation, as it acts as proof of the colonising male's power, control and strength over the colonised woman, and explains how "sex is often an instrument of oppression" (Gilliam 229).

With regard to the sexual encounters between the "Excelsior 19", one can apply Kelly's general statement on how the "assaults by [the] white men often involve[d] the fusion of racial and sexual violence" (Kelly, quoting Ruth Hall 346). Niki and her comrades are considered to be prizes that are there to be acquired by the white men, because they are black and female. They are referred to as "stolen delicacies" (Mda 52), "black honey" (54), "padkos – ...provision for the road" (49) and "sport" (15) – all terms that denote the women's status as objects. Kelly states that feminist theorists refer to the "concept of sexual access...[as] the range of processes through which women are defined as sexual objects available to men" (346), and this type of objectification of black women is emphasised by Stephanus Cronje's viewing his recurrent sexual antics with Niki in terms of his "sole ownership" (Mda 53) of her – a concept that, according to Mama, was not that unusual: she maintains that some colonisers "reserve[d] certain [black, colonised] women 'for white men only'" (Mama 50). The white men do not regard these black women as having a choice in the sexual escapades; instead, these encounters are referred to as someone's "turn" (Mda 15) – as if the women have no way of escaping these sexual activities. Even when Niki makes it clear that she "was not looking forward to it" (Mda 15), she is "forced" (18) to partake, "dragged" to the field and thrown on the ground (15), because in general these "men saw sex as a male entitlement" (Kelly 347). This form of violent sexual objectification is linked to colonialism by Sharpe in her statement that "[s]ince it articulates the contradictions of gender and race *within the signifying system of colonialism*, the sexual discourse of rape<sup>11</sup> is overdetermined by colonial relations of force and exploitation" (232). It is therefore very significant that the rapists are men

---

<sup>11</sup> In this thesis "rape" is defined as any form of sexual contact that the woman is forced to participate in – whether she is forced through the male's physical strength, her own ignorance or economic reasons is not of importance: the only relevant fact is that she would not have taken part in such sexual activity had there not been any pressure from the male.

of the colonising community, and the women who are raped are seen as representatives of the colonised community who need to be “tamed” through violence. Sharpe maintains that this form of “interracial rape” – of which Stephanus Cronje’s rape of Niki is an example – is a way of “play[ing] out the tensions between a dissenting native population and a defensive European minority” (235). It is also significant that the Immorality Act explicitly banned miscegenation: Mama believes that this was one of the tactics of colonisers to establish their power, by “consolidating patriarchal and racist gender values which commodified African women by encouraging prostitution but outlawing the contract of legitimate marriages between white men and black women” (Mama 50).

However, according to Kelly, rape is not only a form of colonialism, but also a way for males to prove their masculinity. She believes that “Masculinity, as it is currently constructed in western culture, draws on notions of virility, conquest, power and domination and these themes are reflected in gender relations and heterosexual practice; sex and aggression are linked” (347). It is significant, though, that she limits herself to “western culture”, which is in accordance with Sharpe’s determinant of the “European minority” above. When applied to *The Madonna of Excelsior*, it becomes evident that both Sharpe and Kelly’s theories are applicable to the rape scenes, and that “rape and conquest” are closely linked. This link “indicates that colonialism also humiliated women, not only as colonial subjects but also in gender-specific ways” (Mama 54).

The rapists are all white men (colonisers) who believe that the black women are their sexual objects to do with as they please, purely *because* they are black and colonised, and Johnson-Odin questions “how often racism has excused the rape of black women” (323). Most of the rapists have wives and the sexual escapades that they force the black women to participate in seem to be nothing more than a private form of colonisation, as well as a way to prove their “power” and “virility” in the way that Kelly specifies. These colonised black women could not even defend themselves legally, as “the European chauvinistic constructions of femininity and a marginalizing ideology of domesticity decreased the legal and social status of African women in many spheres of life” (Mama 61). Therefore, although the white men of the

“Excelsior 19” could hire as many lawyers as they wanted, the black women were helpless: they were already cast as the guilty parties purely because they were black. The only answer that these women had to their oppressive status was silence: “black women have reacted to the repressive force of the hegemonic discourses on race and sex that constructed this image with silence, secrecy, and a partially self-chosen invisibility” (Hammonds 171). It is possible, though, that even if they had tried to raise their voices against this kind of treatment, it would not have had any effect, as at that time there existed a “political climate which empower[ed] officials [or any white male] to perpetrate mass abuses against women on the streets of many African cities” (Mama 47).

There is a form of sexual exploitation illustrated in the novel through Father Frans Claerhout’s behaviour towards the black women who pose nude for his paintings. Although there is never any physical sexual interaction between Claerhout and Niki, his treatment of her body does seem to reflect some form of objectification. She is uncomfortable before his scrutiny – the reader is told that she is “embarrassed”, that she “cringed” and that she found the experience “mortifying” (Mda 13). However, she did not have much choice in the matter – if she did not pose naked for Claerhout, he would have found someone else to do the job, and she was desperate for the money he offered as she had lost her job when the white women of Excelsior found out about their husbands’ “black honey” (Mda 54). Her acceptance of the “Madonna-whore dichotomy” (Peterson) that she represents thus illustrates the roles that apartheid forced some black women to enact. Mama explains that several black, colonised women were in this dilemma due to “the violent treatment meted out to African women by a colonial state which excluded women from all political and administrative structures and from the *wage economy*” (Mama, *my italics* 52). Gilliam is more explicit about the role that *apartheid* played with regard to the economic status of black families: she maintains that “Women under apartheid bear the brunt of having to feed the family as a consequence of the forced separation of men from their families” (Gilliam 221). This statement is applicable to Niki’s situation, as her husband had to work far away from home in the mines (Mda 22), and Niki had to find a way to make money (by posing nude) in order to feed Viliki and Popi. Paradoxically, although Claerhout’s paintings can be construed as a form of sexual

exploitation, they also seem to “provide a religious and aesthetic endorsement of the essential goodness and beauty of the women” (Isaacson).

Claerhout’s paintings also introduce nearly every chapter in the novel through the effect of magic realism, with his paintings transcending traditional norms, in that the colours and the actions of the figures are unusual, if not surrealist. For instance, Niki poses as a kind of fallen, pregnant Madonna – a reversal of the religious, virginal Madonna that is traditionally accepted by society. Peterson explains why magic realism has become such an integral part of many African authors’ works:

While critics have referred to South American influences to explain Mda’s use of ‘magic realism’, it is important to emphasize [sic] that there is a long tradition of the use of realism and fantasy in African oral narratives and in the works of African writers...As the dreams of the nationalist struggles have increasingly turned into nightmares in the postindependence period, African writers have found the conventions of realism inadequate in representing the absurdities and violence of neocolonialism. As a result, African writers have turned to the use of the magical and fantastic in their depictions of the hopes and horrors of postindependence Africa (Peterson).

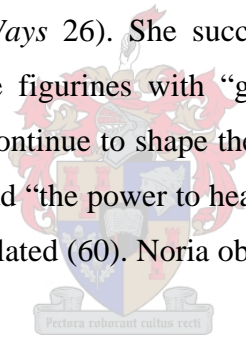
Claerhout’s paintings function as a medium through which Mda can comment on “the mixing of [racial] colors [sic] that ha[d] such consequences in the formation of South Africa and its citizens” (Hawley). Even by calling Father Frans Claerhout the “trinity: man, priest and artist” (Mda 2), Mda is making a rather blasphemous and surreal allusion to Christianity, although this man was really an employee of the Church who moved from Belgium in 1946 to come and live in South Africa permanently. He is not a figment of Mda’s imagination – in fact, the use of his paintings as introductions to several chapters is partly explained through Mda’s statement that “it is beautiful to tell a story through paintings” (Isaacson, quoting Mda). Goodman explains the inclusion

of the descriptions of the paintings in the novel by calling them “Mda’s...satirical answer to the enforcement of racial categories in the past” (Goodman, “De-scribing the Centre” 11) due to apartheid. He (Goodman) thus moves away from the feminist reading that views the paintings as a form of sexual abuse and towards a post-colonial interpretation that interprets the inclusion of these paintings as Mda’s use of magic realism “to fragment and muddle as many human categories as possible, thus suggesting that identity is in fact complex, unpredictable, and not as the practice of apartheid suggested, related to mere surface [in other words, racial] appearances” (Goodman, “De-scribing the Centre” 11). This is the opposite of what the white male characters in the novel believed: to a large extent they *did* build their identities on their race and gender, but due to their violent interactions with black women, one can deduce that their constructed identities are not very stable, and that they need to prove their masculinity and power again and again through rape. Mda therefore uses the effect of magic realism to transcend racial borders, as the figures in the paintings are extremely unusual and rather surreal. In fact, magic realism is a regular aspect of Mda’s writing: in *She Plays With The Darkness* it is closely linked to the protagonist, Dikosha: her dancing “evokes direct links with ancestral spirits” (Peterson; also see Mda, *She Plays* 50-53 for examples). Her dancing in the Cave of Barwa is a form of personal escapism: in the world of “the people of the cave” (Mda, *She Plays* 52), “Men did not deem themselves to be more important than women. There seemed to be an equality among them that did not exist in the world of Ha Samane” (Mda, *She Plays* 33). This surreal world that she believes in helps her to overcome the jealousy and anger she has felt since childhood because of her exclusion from further academic studies due to her gender, as it “blurs the distinction between fact and fiction, past and present, human and supernatural” (Hawley). However, African tradition becomes overshadowed by European tourism, as “The names of tourists from the lowlands were *encroaching* deeper into the cave...They imprisoned [the people of the cave]” (Mda, *She Plays* 101, my italics). Dikosha is thus forced to face the modern world due to the strength of European cultures, and in this way the magical quality of indigenous African dances are suppressed by the ‘unmagical’ quality of tourism. It is not, though, only Dikosha who feels the effect of magic realism in this novel: all the people of Ha Samane are linked to it through their traditional African beliefs. An example of this is seen in their conviction that there are people who “have the gift of controlling lightning and of sending it to destroy their enemies” (Mda, *She Plays* 1).



*Ways of Dying* is also an unusual novel, as it too breaks with the conventions of realism. There are some happenings that are rationally inexplicable: for instance, Noria's second pregnancy is extremely surreal, because "she did not know how it had happened, as she had eschewed all contact with men" (Mda, *Ways of Dying* 140). The only men that Noria met were in her dreams, but she believed that they had sex with her. Her first pregnancy also had an inexplicable component, as although she knew who the father was, both pregnancies lasted for "fifteen months" (Mda *Ways* 74 and 140) instead of the usual nine. What made her second pregnancy even more extraordinary, was that the child "looked exactly like the original Vutha [her first child]. He even had the same birth marks" (Mda, *Ways* 140).

Noria's ability to sing can also be classified as an example of magic realism. Her songs were so captivating that she "had all this power to change mediocre artisans into artists of genius" (Mda, *Ways* 26). She succeeded in inspiring, for instance, Toloki's father Jwara, to create figurines with "great talent", but as soon as she stopped singing, "he could not continue to shape the figure" (Mda, *Ways* 25). Except for her song, her laughter also had "the power to heal troubled souls" (Mda, *Ways* 87) and cause the listener(s) to feel elated (60). Noria obviously had some magical quality in her voice.

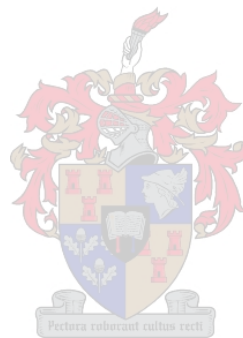


A last example of magic realism in *Ways of Dying* ties in closely with the people of Ha Samane in *She Plays With The Darkness*, who believed in the super-natural ability to control lightening (Mda, *She Plays* 1). In Noria's case, she believed that the grandmother of her husband, Napu, was a "witch" (Mda, *Ways of Dying* 69). This belief was strengthened when "the grandmother stripped naked, and danced over her, chanting in some strange language" (Mda, *Ways* 69) when she thought that Noria was asleep. As a result of this extraordinary behaviour, Noria suspected Napu's grandmother of bewitching her pregnancy into lasting more than nine months. There are, therefore, clearly several examples of magic realism in this novel.

To return to *The Madonna of Excelsior*, from a feminist point of view one can see the enactment of sexual abuse as another form of colonialism. In this case, the woman's body becomes the helpless, oppressed colonised and the man's sexual lust and



violence can be viewed as that of oppressing coloniser. The fact that in this novel the colonised female is also a member of the colonised race, and the male coloniser a member of the colonising race, further emphasises the connection between colonialism and feminism. Although it is possible for colonialism that is based on race to be abolished and move into *post*-colonialism, this cannot be said of sexual colonialism. The only *post* factor in rape is the woman's reaction to the violation of her body. Niki moves from feeling fear and loathing for the rapist – a man she calls “a plastic bag full of decaying tripe” (Mda 16) – to being triumphant about her sexual power over white men (53). These emotions suggest that Niki does *not* consider her experience in a “post” light, where “post” means “after”, since the sexual abuse, just like racial colonialism, can not be entirely erased from her memory.



## **CHAPTER 4:**

### ***The Madonna of Excelsior: A Satirical Interpretation***

This thesis is primarily a satirical reading of *The Madonna of Excelsior* and Mda himself believes that “we [South Africans] are gradually moving away from the victim mentality so that we can freely satirise our own follies” (Salter, quoting Mda 301). However, “satire is not in itself a pure and exclusive form” (Pollard 5) and there are links between different interpretations of this satirical novel. Mda’s use of satire “is only intermittent, one element in a more complex effect” (Sutherland 2), as illustrated in the previous two chapters. The specific link between post-colonialism and satire is particularly noteworthy: “Mda’s satire exposes the embedded colonial discourse imposed by apartheid so that satire and post-colonial practice converge” (Goodman, “De-scribing the Centre” 4).

Although satire and post-colonialism overlap, these two readings differ greatly in their aims: “satire [theory] is relatively detached, with an agenda that is oblique – a marginalized form which capitalizes on its marginality...[and which contains] very little of the overt commitment and...controversy which mark postcolonial theory” (Goodman “De-scribing the Centre” 11). In contrast to the aloof quality of satire, “postcolonial strategies...are essentially ethically and politically driven...they strive to challenge attitudes and structures which perpetuate inequality within societies” (Goodman “De-scribing the Centre” 11,12). The main difference between a post-colonial and a satirical interpretation of Mda’s novel lies in the level of commitment of the reader; ordinarily, a satirical agenda would only highlight and mock situations and viewpoints that the author considers corrupt, whilst post-colonial literature aims to influence the reader’s opinion through active incitement to change. I regard *The Madonna of Excelsior* as a mainly satirical novel that can be read from other perspectives (notably a post-colonial or feminist perspective) to enhance one’s perception of the issues that the novel addresses. Mda achieves his satirical tone in several ways, the most important of these being the mocking of racial prejudice. An example of this is the white women’s prejudice against and treatment of black women: “Madam” Cornelia orders Niki “to strip...in front of everyone” when the

latter is suspected of theft, merely because she had gained one kilogram of weight during the day and that was due to a large, late lunch (Mda 41). This treatment is cruel and unjustified, but Mda invites the reader to laugh at “Madam” Cornelia later, when Niki has sex with Cornelia’s husband and triumphantly thinks that “[s]he was gobbling up Madam Cornelia’s husband, with the emphasis on *Madam*” (Mda 50). Mda thus mocks Cornelia’s petty and cruel treatment of Niki through the latter’s ultimate revenge on her: public disgrace through her husband’s transgression of the Immorality Act.

Mda also satirises white South Africans by “historicizing their dominance and then ridiculing it” (Goodman, “De-scribing the Centre” 2). At first it is quite obvious that the Afrikaners are in control of the country through the implementation of apartheid, but with the advent of democracy, they are disempowered. An example of Mda’s ridiculing of the Afrikaners’ loss of power is seen in Adam de Vries’s claim that he had been trying to change the apartheid government “from within” (Mda 222) and that he had never really supported apartheid. The reader knows that his claims are false and ridiculous, as he had earlier asserted that “[t]he Afrikaner will never bite the dust” and that “the Afrikaner would never lose his grip on power” (Mda 148). Viliki sums up his sudden change of politics in a very succinct and appropriate manner through the observation that “these days it is very difficult to find a white person who ever supported apartheid” (Mda 222). Mda mocks the Afrikaners’ change of attitude and emphasises the fickleness of some of their politics. The latter is illustrated through the description of Adam’s new frame of mind as “melt[ing]...into the dispensation” (Mda 243), thereby intimating that Adam has no backbone or firm beliefs.

The political theme is also satirised by focusing on issues of identity and nationalism in a sometimes quite humorous manner. In this case, Mda satirises black exploitation of democracy, as well as white patriarchal nationalism. The latter is most evident in the portrayal of Tjaart Cronje, who is ridiculed through his repetitive harping on the importance of Afrikaans: “The members of the council had heard this line of argument before. Tjaart Cronje always found a way of linking any issue that arose in the council to the marginalisation of the Afrikaans language” (Mda 188). Tjaart’s political stance is mocked through this description of him, as well as his tendency to

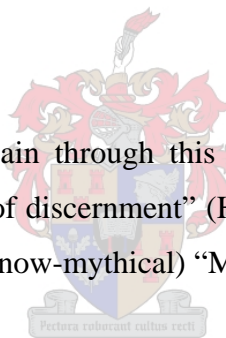
“foa[m] at the mouth” during his “rantings” (Mda 172). Mda thus “shows that some whites are unable to relinquish their sense of superiority” (Hunter 82). Tjaart Cronje is the obvious example of this kind of man, and the reader is told that he is the representative of “Those who stubbornly held the view that the changes [i.e. the abolition of apartheid] were wrong, and that the Afrikaner has a God-given right to rule supreme over all” (Mda 164). Mda’s depiction of Tjaart makes him look a fool with a kind of pathetic, obsessive personality that the reader is invited to scoff at.

On the other hand, Mda also satirises the manner in which some black people, notably Sekatle, exploit the new democracy. This man “adopted the Baipehi” and “assured” them that “the Movement would stand with them” (Mda 186) in their effort to retain the land that they had built their homes on. However, Mda mocks the apparent benevolence of this con man by innocently commenting that “[h]ere was a man who stood with the people, even though he himself was so wealthy...[but] never forgot his humble origins” (Mda 187). Sekatle’s comradeship is, of course, ridiculous, as he only exploits the Baipehi’s naïve trust by sending his “people” to “collec[t]...money from every one of [them]” (Mda 190). The “concern” shown here by Mda to expose “the actions of wrong-doers and the effects of those actions on other people and society” is quite characteristic of most satirists (Nokes, quoting P.K. Elkin 22). The Baipehi’s vulnerability to Sekatle’s apparent concern is also mocked, as they are the ones who are providing him with the wealth that they consider such a distinguishing and trustworthy element of his so-called benevolence. When Popi “accuses [him] of stealing money from poor people” (Mda 190), Sekatle acts as if he is upset and offended although her accusation is true. This man had *never* “stood with the people”, but only befriended them because he knew that they were uneducated in the business aspects of property and politics, and realised that he could make easy money by exploiting their innocence. If “[a]ffectation and hypocrisy are ready topics for [the satirist] at any time” (Pollard 12), he (Sekatle) is an excellent target. The irony is that the Baipehi still viewed Sekatle as their “revolutionary” (Mda 191) leader, even though Popi tried to explain to them that his collecting money from them was illegal and criminal.

Sekatle succeeded in turning the Baipehi against the council by constantly reminding the Baipehi of the so-called support of the “Movement”. His reliance on the mythical power that the “Movement” holds for the Baipehi is made explicit through his repetition of the word and his constant use of it is illustrated through Mda’s six-fold repetition of it in one paragraph:

the *Movement* would stand with them. The *Movement* had fought for liberation so that people could have roofs over their heads and bread and butter on their tables. The *Movement* would see to it that they were given title to the land they had already allocated themselves. The *Movement* would give them water and electricity and paved streets. The *Movement*. The *Movement* (Mda, my italics 186).

Politicians are satirised once again through this illustration of the exploitation of democracy, as well as the “lack of discernment” (Hunter 82) and naïve trust invested by others in the power of the (by-now-mythical) “Movement”.



From the above example, it is evident that politics do not only automatically denote racial matters, but also issues of representation. Young questions the assumption that “representation is properly a relation of identity between the representative and constituents”, but argues that “this identity assumption...misrepresents the meaning and function of political representation” (355). It is exactly this assumption of communal identity that Sekatle cultivates between himself and the Baipehi that contributes greatly to his success as their “manager”, and it is through the chaos that results from their affiliation that Mda satirises the naivety of the Baipehi. Although Mda keeps to the traditional use of satire as a means of “excoriating society for its evils” (Goodman “De-scribing the Centre” 6), he is also able to use it as “a way of celebrating the particular strengths of marginalized communities” (Goodman “De-scribing the Centre” 6). This is evident in his portrayal of the Baipehi’s strong sense of communal values, in spite of their gullibility and suffering.

The controversy around the Baipehi's settlement is grounded in the symbolism attached to space and this is especially relevant to South Africa, where there used to be forced legal separation of the races. According to Uguris, "space mirrors social relations...[thus] social change needs to produce new spaces" (51). Christopher Hope mirrors this theory in his novel, *Me, the Moon and Elvis Presley*, where "Aunt Betsy's house is so much a part of Mimi's identity...that she lives in it after [the fall of Apartheid]" (Smith 5). As this house was originally part of the "white" region, Mimi's choice of residence is deemed unusual by the townspeople, as she is "coloured". In other words, as soon as apartheid had been abolished, the original division between "white areas" and "coloured areas" needed to be destroyed too, because the racially-defined areas spatially illustrated apartheid and, theoretically, segregation on the grounds of race has been abolished. There are many other South African writers who might be discussed in this context, but a lack of space unfortunately prohibits this. In *The Madonna of Excelsior*, the formation of the Baipehi settlement on ground that causes so much controversy amongst the Town Council members illustrates how important space is in determining social relations.

Sekatle is also used to satirise the new wave of proliferating accusations of racism: "Critics, however constructive they might be, were being labeled racists or lackeys of racists" (Mda 242). Mda mocks the way in which people have become so defensive that they redefine the accusation of racism to mean any criticism of black people. Instead of focusing on whatever is being criticised, the person would rather interpret the criticism as a personal attack on his race. These unjustified accusations of racist comments are not directed only at white people, but "[i]t had become treacherous for [even] a black person to point out the corruption of a fellow black" (Mda 242). This personalisation of racial-nationalist tendencies is illustrated through the comment that "people like Sekatle were turning into black Tjaart Cronjes" (Mda 242). Of course, this does not reflect well on Tjaart's politics and policies, but as Mda has been satirising his nationalist beliefs from the start, a statement such as the above serves to insult and mock Sekatle rather than Tjaart.

Another form of racial prejudice that serves to satirise white people is illustrated through the existence of the Immorality Act. The fact that white people believed that black genes could “weaken” white genes implies that white people were not at all sure about the strength of their own genes. They could not even accept responsibility for their sexual antics with Niki and her friends, but blamed “[t]he devil [who] had sent black women to tempt [white men] and to move [them] away from the path of righteousness” (Mda 87). This belief does not, of course, take into account the fact that many of these black women were “forced” (Mda 18) to participate in these sexual exploits.

The last form of racism that Mda satirises is seen in his portrayal of the attitude of the black community towards coloured people like Popi. Although her peers had never wanted to be associated with her and forced her to “withdra[w] from the world of her age-mates...[in order to] escape from their snide remarks” (Mda 117), years later they “lamented the fact that [they] never saw her smile” and conveniently “forgot that [they] had stolen her smiles” (Mda 169) through their consistent taunting. Mda satirises this lack of responsibility by calling attention to the community’s selfish disregard of their complicity in causing Popi’s permanent self-consciousness about her body. He does this by using a kind of “Greek chorus” (Goodman “De-scribing the Centre” 7) evident in the first person plural voice, “we” (e.g. p169). This voice creates “a strong sense of communal watchfulness and involvement”, as well as “the airing of stock group attitudes” (Goodman “De-scribing the Centre” 7). It is this lack of individuality, illustrated through the use of a “first-person plural speaking for an entire community from a position entrenched within it” (Guha 156), that Mda is satirising. The use of a so-called “Greek chorus” illustrates that satire is usually “less concerned with pillorying an individual than with indicating a political system and with identifying the...expropriation of moral values” (Nokes 61,62). By not focusing on a specific member of the community who teases Popi, but rather concentrating on a communal voice, Mda draws attention to the “moral values” practised by this community and the “political system” that outlaws miscegenation, thus emphasising the political issues that he wanted to criticize in the first place. In this way, the “perspectives of ‘the community’ [embody] boundaries which exclude as ‘the other’ all those perceived as different, for example ethnic and cultural minorities” (Uguris

55). This last statement is especially valid with regard to Popi, as she is considered as an outcast or an “Other” due to her “ethnic” difference in having a lighter coloured skin.

However, Mda does not only comment on the sheep-like quality of the community, but also seems to “includ[e] himself in the ‘we’ whose views he is interrogating” (Goodman “De-scribing the Centre” 7), as he chooses a first instead of third person pronoun, thereby mocking himself through his inclusion in this voice. Nicols explains the satirist’s ability to do this: “the further we read, the more aware we become that the details, and the words themselves, have been carefully selected to imply an adverse criticism even though no direct comment may be made” (Nicols 17). He also does not *criticise* the community, but obliquely refers to their prejudice, thereby avoiding “direct comment” (Nicols 17), but still ridiculing their biased views.

Mda has stated before his belief in the satirist’s prerogative of “freely satir[ising] our own follies” (Salter, quoting Mda 301) and this conforms (to some extent) to Menippean satire, where “the scene is stressed and absorbs the satirist, to some degree” (Kernan 170). This is in line with Kristeva’s statement that “[Menippean] discourse exteriorizes political and ideological conflicts of the moment” (83), a claim that is applicable to Mda’s *The Madonna of Excelsior*, as the novel can be construed as an implicit comment on the political ideologies – both past and present – of South Africa.



## Conclusion

In line with the celebration of ten years of democracy in South Africa, I have selected Zakes Mda's novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior* as the dissertation's primary text, as it celebrates the fall of apartheid, but at the same time it enables the reader to look at South African history from several different points of view. Throughout this thesis, references to Mda's novel attempt to relate the text to the historical realities of the time, as well as to offer the reader an analysis of the novel that is unique in that it is conducted from the viewpoints of three different discourses: satire, feminism and post-colonialism. For this purpose, what Hodgart defines as "topics" of satire are frequently drawn on (Hodgart 33, 79).

As the main focus of this thesis is satirical, the first chapter is devoted to defining this form of art. The second chapter focusses on a post-colonial reading of the novel, thereby referring to South Africa's unique form of colonialism, namely apartheid. Mda comments on how apartheid has influenced the society of South Africa. He also observes the kind of stereotypes applied to the different races and how these stereotypes strengthen the link between racism and post-colonialism. The third chapter views the novel in terms of several feminist discourses, furthering the post-colonial reading through a discussion of the colonial aspects of rape. Although there is a satirical strain running through chapters two and three, the last chapter focusses solely on interpreting *The Madonna of Excelsior* from a satirical point of view.

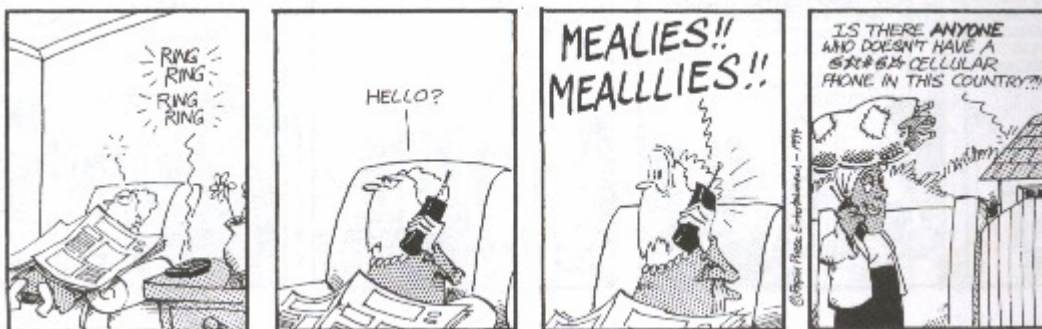
This thesis provides the reader with a commentary on South African life and history, whilst at the same time it links several discourses in an attempt to analyse Mda's commentary. As satire is not a solipsistic form of art but rather draws on real life issues for its subjects, it follows that an analysis of a satirical text is best conducted in conjunction with other discourses.

## Addenda

Addendum A:



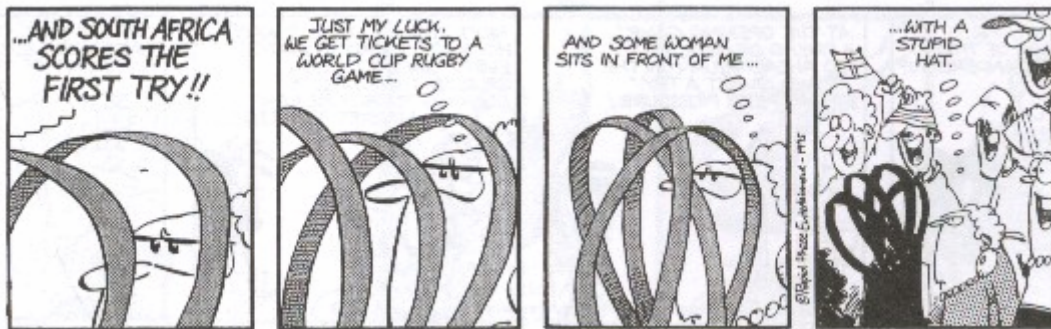
Addendum B:



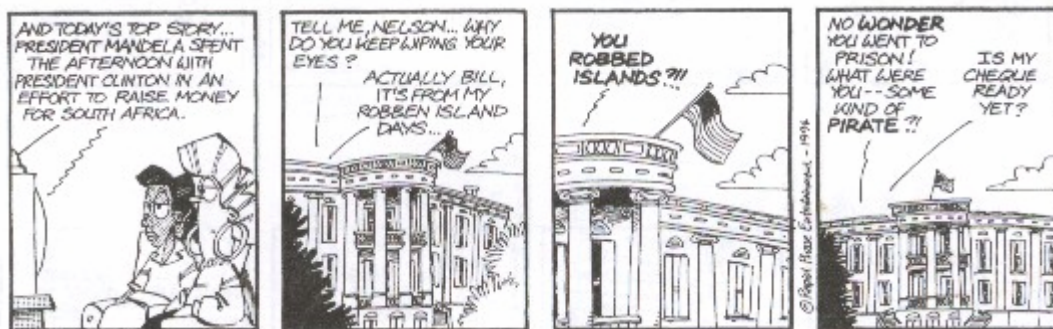
Addendum C:



Addendum D:



Addendum E:



## Bibliography

### Primary Texts

Francis, S., Dugmore, H. & Rico. *International Maid of Mystery*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1999.

Francis, S., Dugmore, H. & Rico. *Madam & Eve: All Abroad for the Gravy Train*. London: Penguin Books, 2002.

Mda, Zakes. *The Madonna of Excelsior*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

### Critical Works

Abbott, Charlotte, Sarah F. Gold, Mark Rotella, Janna Riess, Jeff Zaleski. "Nonfiction Notes." *Publisher's Weekly*. 248.44 (29 October 2001): 56-58.

Accad, Evelyne. "Sexuality and Politics: Conflicts and Contradictions for Contemporary Women in the Middle East." *Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism*. Eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. 237-250.

Adams, Simon. *Comrade Minister: The South African Communist Party and the Transition from Apartheid to Democracy*. New York: Nova Science, 2001.

Ali, Suki. "Who Knows Best? Politics and ethics in feminist research into 'race'." *Global Feminist Politics: Identities in a Changing World*. Eds. Suki Ali, Kelly Coate and Wangui wa Goro. London: Routledge, 2000. 133-153.

Amabile, T.A. "Dark Side of the Dream: Book Review." *Times Literary Supplement*. 4666 (9/4/92): 28.

Ashcroft, Bill. "Africa and Australia: The Post-Colonial Connection." *Research in African Literatures* 25.3 (1994): 161-170.

Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London, New York: Routledge, 2001.

Ashcroft, B., G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. London: Routledge, 1989.

Beresford, David. *The Dear Walter Papers*. Braamfontein: Mail & Guardian, 1997.

Beya, Abdennebi Ben. "Mimicry, Ambivalence and Hybridity." *Emory University Postcolonial Studies*. 1996. 1 August 2004. <<http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/1WEBPAGE.HTML>>

Brown, Ashley and Kimmey, John L. (eds.) *The Modes of Literature Series: Satire*. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing, 1968.

Caslin, Sinead. "Key Concepts in Postcolonial Studies: Feminism and Post-colonialism." *The Imperial Archive*. 16 March 2004. 4 August 2004. <<http://www.qub.ac.uk/en/imperial/key-concepts/feminism-and-postcolonialism.htm>>



Cross, Ashley J. "Indelible Impressions: Gender and Language in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." *Women's Studies*. 27.6 (1998): 547-580.

Dirlik, Arif. "Post-Colonial Hybridity: Arif Dirlik." *University of Louisville*. 27 April 2000. 1 August 2004. <[http://www.louisville.edu/as/english/babo/fox/poco\\_dirlik.html](http://www.louisville.edu/as/english/babo/fox/poco_dirlik.html)>

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Transl. Charles Lam Markmann. St. Albans, Herts: Paladin, 1970.

Frye, Northrop. "The Mythos of Winter: Irony and Satire." *Modern Satire*. Ed. Alvin B. Kernan. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World: 1962. 155-163.



Gilliam, Angela. "Women's Equality and National Liberation." *Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism*. Eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. 215-236.

Gondwe, Taweni. "Free State of Mind." *Oxford University Press of South Africa: "Zakes Mda"*. 4 June 2004. Taken from *O Magazine* Oct/Nov 2002. <<http://www.oup.com/za/resources/interviews/mda>>

Goodman, Ralph. "De-scribing the Centre: Satiric and Postcolonial Strategies in *The Madonna of Excelsior*." Paper delivered at the AUETSA Conference, University of Pretoria, July 2003.

Goodman, Ralph. *The Dialogics of Satire: Foci and Faultlines in George Orwell's Animal Farm and Nineteen Eighty-Four*." Doctoral Dissertation: University of Stellenbosch, 2000.



Guha, Ranajit. "The migrant's time." *Postcolonial Studies*. 1.2 (1998): 155-160.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*. Eds. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994. 392-403.

Hammonds, Evelyn M. "Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality: The Problematic of Silence." *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. London: Routledge, 1997. 170-182.

Hawley, John C. "Village Scandal, Mountain Spirits." *America* 191.1 (2004): 25-26. *Academic Search Premier*. 16 July 2004. <<http://web6.epnet.com/citation.asp>>

Heng, Geraldine. "'A Great Way to Fly': Nationalism, the State, and the Varieties of Third-World Feminism." *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic*

*Futures*. Eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. London: Routledge, 1997. 30-45.

Heribert, Adam and Moodley, Kogila. "Colonialism, Communalism, and Democracy: South Africa in Comparative Perspective." *Scholarship Editions*. 26 October 2004. <<http://texts.cdlib.org/dynaxml/servlet/dynaXML?docId=ft958009mm&chunk.id=ch1>>

Hodgart, Matthew. *Satire*. London: World University Library, 1969.

hooks, bell. "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression." *Feminisms*. Eds. Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 22-27.

Hope, Christopher. *Me, the Moon and Elvis Presley*. London: Macmillan, 1997.

Hunter, Eva. "Apartheid's Long Shadow." *Foreign Policy*. 136 (May 2003): 78-82.

Isaacson, Maureen. "The Free State Madonnas Prevail in Mda's New Novel." *The Connection: from WBUR Boston and NPR*. 16 July 2004. <<http://www.theconnection.org/features/zakesarticle.asp>>

Jefferson, Antwan. "The Literature and Culture of Zimbabwe: On Hybridity and Postcolonialism." *Contemporary Postcolonial and Postimperial Literature in English*. 1999. 23 August 2004. <<http://www.postcolonialweb.org/zimbabwe/antwan/3.html>>

Jolly, Rosemary. "Rehearsals of Liberation: Contemporary Postcolonial Discourse and the New South Africa." *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*. 110.1 (1995): 17-29.

Johnson-Odin, Cheryl. "Common Themes, Different Contexts: Third World Women and Feminism." *Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism*. Eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. 314-327.

Kanaganayakam, Chelva. "Devotional Poetics and the Indian Sublime: Book Review." *Letters in Canada*. 70.1 (Winter 2000/2001): 314-316.

Kelly, Liz. "A Central Issue: Sexual Violence and Feminist Theory." *Feminisms*. Eds. Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. 345-351.

Kernan, Alvin B. "A Theory of Satire." *Modern Satire*. Ed. Alvin B Kernan. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World: 1962. 164-178.

Khan, Nighat Said. "The women's movement revisited: areas of concern for the future." *Global Feminist Politics: Identities in a Changing World*. Eds. Suki Ali, Kelly Coate and Wangui wa Goro. London: Routledge, 2000. 5-10.

Kilburn, Michael. "Glossary of Key Terms in the Work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak." *Emory University Postcolonial Studies*. 1996. 4 August 2004. <<http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Glossary.html>>

Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Transl. Alice A. Jardine and Thomas Gora. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

Landry, Donna and MacLean, Gerald. "Subaltern Talk: Interview with the Editors." *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak*. Eds. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean. New York and London: Routledge, 1996. 287-308.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. London: Routledge, 1998.

Louw, D., D. Edwards, D. Foster, A. Gilbert, A. Louw, G. Norton, C. Plug, A. Shuttleworth-Jordaan, and J. Spangenberg. *Psychology: An Introduction for Students in Southern Africa*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Johannesburg: Heinemann, 1997.



Mama, Amina. "Sheroes and Villians: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence Against Women in Africa." *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*. Eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. London: Routledge, 1997. 46-62.

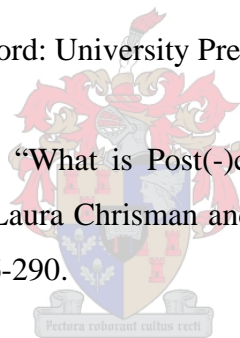
McClintock, Anne. "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-colonialism'." *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*. Eds. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994. 291-303.

McEwan, Cheryl. "Postcolonialism, feminism and development: intersections and dilemmas." *Progress in Development Studies*. 1.2 (2001): 93-111.

Mda, Zakes. *She Plays with the Darkness*. Florida: Vivlia, 1995.

Mda, Zakes. *Ways of Dying*. Oxford: University Press, 1995.

Mishra, Vijay and Hodge, Bob. "What is Post(-)colonialism?" *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*. Eds. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994. 276-290.



Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism." *Third World Women and The Politics of Feminism*. Eds. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991. 1-47.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*. Eds. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994. 196-220.

Nicols, James W. *Insinuation: The Tactics of English Satire*. The Hague: Mouton, 1971.

Nokes, David. *Raillery and Rage: A Study of Eighteenth Century Satire*. Brighton: Harvester, 1987.

Pechey, Graham. "‘A Complex and Violent Revelation’: Epiphanies of Africa in South African Literature." *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies*. 11.1 (2002): 9-25.

Pechey, Graham. "Post-Apartheid Reason: Critical Theory in South Africa." *Current Writing*. 10.2 (1998): 3-18.

Peterson, Bhekizizwe. "Zakes Mda." *Dictionary of Literary Biography: South African Writers*. 225 (2000). Ed. Paul A. Scanlon. Gale website. 16 July 2004. <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/LitRC>>

Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. "Hybridity, So What? The Anti-hybridity Backlash and the Riddles of Recognition." *Theory, Culture & Society*. 18.2-3 (2001): 219-245.

Pollard, Arthur. *Satire*. London: Methuen, 1970.

Raghumata, Anita and Thomas, Helen. "Similarities between Feminism and Postcolonialism." *Mural*. 13 August 2004. <<http://mural.uv.es/gemdelho/>>

Ruden, Sarah. "Thoughts on Mda, Ndebele and Black South African Writing at the Millennium." *The Iowa Review*. 28.2. (1998) 19 May 2004. <[http://www.uiowa.edu/~iareview/reviews/sarah\\_ruden.htm](http://www.uiowa.edu/~iareview/reviews/sarah_ruden.htm)>

Salter, Denis. "When People Play People in (Post) Apartheid South Africa: The Theories and Practices of Zakes Mda." *Brecht-Yearbook*. 22 (1997): 283-303.

Sandten, Cecile. "In her Own Voice: Sujata Bhatt and the Aesthetic Articulation of the Diasporic Condition." *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*. 35.1 (2000): 99-119.

Saunders, Christopher and Southey, Nicholas. *A Dictionary of South African History*. Cape Town: David Philip, 1998.

Shakespeare, William. "The Tempest." *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*.<sup>12</sup> New Lanark, Scotland: Geddes and Grosset, 2001.

Sharpe, Jenny. "The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgence." *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*. Eds. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994. 221-243.

Stafford, Roy. "Globalisation and Hybridity: What to teach?" *MediaED: the UK media education website*. 10 August 2004. 4 September 2004. <[http://www.mediaed.org.uk/posted\\_documents/Hybridity.html](http://www.mediaed.org.uk/posted_documents/Hybridity.html)>

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*. Eds. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994. 66-111.

Suleri, Sara. "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition." *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*. Eds. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994. 244-256.

Sutherland, James. *English Satire*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1958.

Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. New York: Harper and Row, 1965.

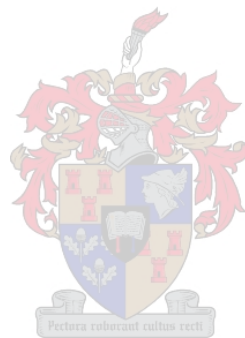
Uguris, Tijen. "Gender, ethnicity and 'the community': locations with multiple identities." *Global Feminist Politics: Identities in a changing world*. Eds. Suki Ali, Kelly Coate and Wangui wa Goro. London: Routledge, 2000. 49-68.

Visser, Nick. "The Critical Situation and the Situation of Criticism." *Critical Arts* 3.2 (1984): 2-8.

---

<sup>12</sup> No editor is listed for this compilation.

Young, Iris Marion. "Deferring Group Representation." *Ethnicity and Group Rights*. Eds. Ian Shapiro and Will Kymlicka. New York: New York University Press, 1997. 349-376.



**20 724 words**

**68 pages.**

