

Literary Art and Social Critique: Teaching Literature for Social Transformation at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, English Education Discipline

By

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Mabunda Magezi Thompson, hereby declare that the work presented in this report represents my own effort, and that all information cited from other sources is acknowledged.

Signed  At PMT.....on this date 20/01 of the year 2009..

E.M. Magezi Thompson PMT 2014 2009

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which the teaching of literary art to teacher trainees in the Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal could be said to be preparing students with knowledge and pedagogic practices to empower learners with skills for social transformation. The study wishes to propose the kind of pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary works that will enable the educated university students to make use of knowledge gained through artistic works in their interpretation of social reality. It wishes to argue that this pedagogic approach enables teacher trainees to learn how to respond to a variety of contexts and to explain concepts from many areas of knowledge.

To achieve the above, the study is placed within the context of Traditional and Neo-Marxism, as these theoretical vantage points are able to provide insights in analysing, probing, and exposing the underlying socio-political ideologies that shaped South Africa's society and its education systems. Traditional Marxism, for instance, provides the historical and dialectical materialism that serves as the basis for understanding the current affairs of a given society. Within the context of this study, Marxism presents insights into how the socio-historical influences of the South African politics, prior to and during apartheid period, have given rise to the present state of the post-apartheid South Africa and its resultant education system.

This study is largely qualitative in nature using as its methodology, a literary analytical approach, supplemented by document analysis and narrative recounts. The study relies heavily on qualitative data collected through narrative recounts and document analysis. The use of narrative recounts and documents analysis assisted this study in dealing with issues surrounding validity and reliability. The research findings reveal that the teaching of literary art in the English Education Discipline has, in some respects, provided students with knowledge of using literary works in understanding social reality. The study thus recommends a more critical pedagogic practice in the teaching of literary

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Driven by the need to design pedagogic practices geared towards inculcating knowledge and skills, critical thinking and reasoning, and sensitive to such phenomena as racism, sexism, discrimination, and a range of other host of social ills which dominated the apartheid education system, this study argues that teacher training institutions are the prime sites for social transformation. The study insists that the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art must be seen as one of the critical means of ensuring that student teachers who major in English are able to understand the socio-political realities which shaped the country they find themselves in. The study further argues that such pedagogic practices must prepare students teachers in ways that render them as potential contributors to the future development of our society. One way of doing this, this study suggests, is to take into account the relationship between history and the present, and an in-depth understanding of how literary art as a social expression makes for an effective tool in establishing the socio-political realities which shaped South Africa.

This Chapter provides the background and the context of the study and presents the problem statement which is accompanied by an identification of the critical questions that guide the study. The Chapter further introduces the study's main goals and provides a section on concept clarification. An exploration of different existing definitions regarding the concept of literary art as understood by various scholars and literary theorists is also offered in this study. I conclude the Chapter by providing a section on the teaching and learning of literary

art in the context of schooling and presenting the overall design of the study and structure of this report.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Viewed against the background of the developments in educational reform and social transformation in the democratized South Africa, it would seem necessary for teacher-training institutions to become central in the provision of a modest form of critical literacy to teacher trainees. Such provisions would ensure that the pedagogic practices offered in the teaching of literary works create teacher trainees as valuable contributors in the elaboration of the role played by literary art in education and society. This pedagogic practice, this study argues, presents student teachers with opportunities to judge critically all past, present, and future schooling experiences and social structures.

This ability to judge will assist the student teachers in the process of realizing that the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art in schools must be geared towards preparing learners as agents for educational and social transformation. Writing about the pedagogic practices that dominated the teaching of literary art in South African schools, Singh (2003) reminds us that in the past teachers dominated the teaching and learning process while learners became passive recipients of knowledge. Singh argues that literary works taught in this manner did not equip learners with the knowledge and skills for problem solving that should arise from teaching poetry, novels and short stories. Reid (1982, p.6) shares this view and asserts that this approach to literary teaching produced learners who were unable "...to cope with themselves and the society they found themselves in, to gain a proper understanding of their environment, their culture and its systems". For Reid (1982),

the teaching of literary works needs to develop the potential of learners to be able to realize themselves and think critically.

It is within the context of this observation that this study investigates the extent to which the teaching of literary art to teacher trainees could be said to be preparing students with knowledge and pedagogic practices to empower learners with skills for social transformation. The context within which this study is located for the purpose of data gathering is the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Faculty of Education on the Edgewood Campus. Within this Faculty, the study confines itself to the English Education Discipline. The context of this study reflects cultural diversity because Edgewood Campus draws students from different parts of the country across racial, class and cultural lines. Within the context of this study, the aspect of cultural diversity is an important one, for it makes the teaching of literary art relevant to students' experience as prospective teachers and will, furthermore, assist them in facilitating the teaching and learning process in a multi-cultural classroom context.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Different scholars and literary theorists provide various claims regarding the role of literary art in education and society. Such claims include that literature serves as an activity of the cultural elite where teaching, learning and reading about one's culture is believed to be an alternative way of providing one with a stake in the culture being learned or read about (Culler, 1997). The second claim is that the teaching of literature plays an important role in enhancing a deeper entrenchment of cultural and social values (Eagleton, 1983). These claims present two extremes: on the one hand, literature as a cultural activity and, on the

other hand, literature as a tool for cultural transmission. Drawing from these claims, it is clear that the teaching of literary art in the context of schooling could not be treated in isolation from the role literary art is expected to play in society. As a consequence, the teaching of literary art served as a means towards preserving, carrying and transmitting values and customs of dominant cultures (Singh, 2003). This study thus seeks to interrogate the above claims by investigating the extent to which student teachers are able to make use of literary art in their understanding of the socio-political realities of South Africa. To achieve this, the study set out two critical questions which I turn to in the next section.

1.4 CRITICAL QUESTIONS FOR THE STUDY

- To what extent have students mastered the knowledge and understanding of the role of literary art in education and society?
- What kind of knowledge do students manifest in their understanding of the role played by literary art in education and society?

The above critical questions guided this study in its attempts to investigate the extent to which students are able to engage critically with literary works in relation to the socio-political realities of South Africa, and the resultant potential effects on the teaching of literary art within the context of schooling. Furthermore, these questions assist in revealing the nature of knowledge and skills students manifest in their individual understanding of teaching literary works. Within the context of attempting to provide research-led evidence geared towards satisfying the above critical questions, the study seeks to achieve particular goals pertinent to the teaching of literary art in the context of schooling. Such goals are presented in the next section.

1.5 GOALS OF THE STUDY

Informed by the need to establish pedagogic practices that will enhance better understanding and facilitate the development of critical literacy in the context of schooling, the findings of this study could be useful to:

- Lecturers in the English Education Discipline with an interest in raising the critical awareness and consciousness of student teachers by providing them with the knowledge and skills to establish the relationship between literary art and socio-political realities;
- Lecturers in various educational disciplines with an interest in inculcating critical literacy skills to student teachers by engaging their knowledge and pedagogic practices in ways that will shape them as critical agents who bring into the classroom a wealth of critical insights on learners;
- Student teachers with an interest in the teaching of literary works as sources of knowledge that will enable learners to make judgements and think critically about the society they find themselves in, and
- Curriculum development specialists who prepare literary set works for South African learners.

1.6 CONCEPT CLARIFICATION AND OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

1.6.1 Literary art

The concept of literary art (often referred to as literature) is understood differently by various scholars and literary theorists. While Eagleton (1983, p.1) contends that literary art is an "... 'imaginative' writing ...which is not literarily true", Marxist theorists such as Kohn (2000), McNeil (2000), Althusser (1984) and Benjamin (1973) argue that literary art and its intended meaning is a direct reflection of social reality. In the context of this study, the two definitions above are equally important, for they represent insights pertinent to the understanding of South Africa's social realities. While the former represents literary art as an imaginative piece of a written text, the latter represents literary art in terms of how it is able to reveal a variety of socio-political ideologies that govern the entire social arrangements of the social system. This Marxist view is also taken up by Culler (1997, p.27), who asserts that literary art "...is a speech or textual event that elicits certain kinds of attention", and

functions as a site of articulation of forms of cultural ideologies. For example, in Mda's (2002) *The Madonna of Excelsior*, a novel that forms the basis of data analysed in Chapter Five of this report, there is a deliberate reflection on concrete issues of politics which affected life for the majority of South Africans. Through the use of literary art which draws from people's experiences, Mda (2002) elicits certain kinds of attention from the readers by presenting a vivid picture of South Africa's life under apartheid and, in the process, places it in juxtaposition with the current affairs of post-apartheid South Africa. Such an articulation enables readers to identify certain ideologies which shaped South Africa. The next section offers an explanation of the concept of ideology.

1.6.2 Ideology

For Ashley (1989), ideology can be understood as referring to any comprehensive and mutually consistent set of ideas by which a social group make sense of the world. Although this definition offers a general interpretation of the concept, it is important to mention that the connotations of this term have differed widely for scholars and critics. For some, notably, the Marxists, ideology is generally used to describe the world-view of the dominant class, and is used to perpetuate and maintain unequal power relations in society (Ashley, 1989). Within the context of this study, the term ideology is used in line with Marxist's interpretation to offer an in-depth understanding of the historical processes which gave rise to the current social realities of South Africa. Such historical processes and their resultant effects on the current affairs are discussed below within the Marxist interpretation.

1.6.3 Historical Materialism

Historical materialism, or “the materialist conception of history,” to use Marx’s exact words, is understood as the methodological approach to the study of society, economics, and history (Klages, 1997). The materialist conception of history looks for the causes of the developments and changes in human societies in the way in which humans collectively make the means to survive. This methodological approach, in other words, provides an economic analysis in relation to such things as social classes, political structures, ideologies which co-exist with the economic base of the society. In the context of this study, the concept is used to provide a reflection on how the current state of affairs, that is, the present social reality, may be understood by analysing the historical conditions that gave rise to it. Such a reflection is made clear through dialectical materialism, the concept I turn to in the next section.

1.6.4 Dialectical Materialism

Dialectical materialism is a Marxist interpretation of social reality that views matter as the sole subject of change, and all change as a product of a constant conflict between two opposites arising from the internal contradictions inherent in all events, ideas, and movements (Klages, 1997). Its interpretation includes the idea that each class in the social system contains seeds for its own destruction (Marx, 1975). In other words, dialectical materialism claims that each class in the social system comprises internal tensions and contradictions. Within the context of this study, dialectical materialism is used in line with the above school of thought and seeks to present insights on how South Africa’s current social reality has come into being by looking at the relationship between history and class struggle.

1.6.5 Alienation

Alienation, as Marx (1988) describes it, is a state in which people are separated from their own activity, the products of their own work, and that of their fellow human beings. In the context of this study, the concept of alienation is used in line with the Marxist tradition of class relation in the capitalist society. In this study the concept of alienation is used to argue that the teaching of literary art must be able to make teachers and learners realize that teaching and learning is a process that should not constrain their individuality by subjecting to a particular form of ideology. Rather, they need to view teaching and learning as a process that presents them as intellectuals empowered with critical spirit, knowledge and skills to liberate themselves from the bondage of alienating ideologies.

1.7 TEACHING AND LEARNING OF LITERARY ART WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF SCHOOLING

Literary theorists such as Culler (1997), Eagleton (1983) and such scholars as Singh (2003) and Reid (1982), reveal different ideological intents regarding the historical development in the teaching and learning of literary art within the context of schooling. While Eagleton (1983), for instance, argues that the teaching of literary art served as an alternative way of providing one with a stake in the culture being learned, Reid (1982) contends that the teaching of literary art began as means of preserving and transmitting cultures to a wider community of readers. The former is associated with early capitalist England during the period when literature served as a special kind of writing charged with several functions such as, amongst others, preserving and transmitting values and customs of English culture in the British colonies (Eagleton, 1983). The latter can be traced back to the customs of the

ancient Greeks when education was strongly focused on early drama. According to Culler (1997, p.36), the teaching of literary art in the British colonies give “the natives an appreciation of the greatness of England and engaging them as grateful participants in a historic civilizing enterprise.”

While literature was considered as a cultural carrier in the context of schooling in the British colonies, Culler (1997), furthermore, reveals that the teaching of literary art served (in England) as means for perpetuating and fostering the gap that existed between different social classes. Central to this claim is that the teaching of literary art became an alternative way of ensuring that the *status quo* was preserved to strengthen the hierarchical arrangement of the social structure in the English community. In relation to this view, Culler (1997, p.36) writes:

[Literature] would encounter the selfishness and materialism fostered by the new capitalist economy, offering the middle classes and the aristocrats alternative values and giving the workers a stake in the culture that, materially, relegated them to subordinate position. It would at once teach disinterested appreciation, provide a sense of national greatness, create fellow-feeling among the classes, and ultimately functions as a replacement for religion, which seemed no longer to be able to hold society together.

This assertion reveals that the teaching of literature became an ideological intent whose task was not only to perpetuate social inequality within the social system, but also worked as an instrument charged with the task for radically re-organizing the social system.

The differing roles of literature in the context of schooling discussed so far reveal the split in historical developments that served as a rationale for the teaching of literary art in the context of schooling. Two extremes regarding the teaching of literary art emerged in this discussion: on the one hand, the teaching of literature as a means of cultural transmission

and, on the other hand, the teaching of literature as a process that seeks to expose and explore dominant beliefs in the socio-political realities of a given society. While the former presents the teaching of literature as a means of ensuring that dominant cultural beliefs are deeply entrenched within a wider community of readers through the process of formal education, the latter sees the teaching and learning of literary art as an attempt to render reality as subjective, multiple, and unstable. Such rendition, in terms of the latter, was achieved by establishing a close relation between literature and society. This view is also taken up by such literary critics as Lukàcs (1978); Marx & Engels (1976), all of whom point out that literature cannot be understood in complete isolation from the society which it seeks to reflect. Lukàcs (1978, p.74), for instance, insists that:

The existence, substance, rise and effect of literature can ... only be understood and explained within the total historical context of the entire system. The rise and development of literature are part of the total historical social process. The aesthetic essence and values of literary works and, accordingly, their effect, are part of that general and integrated social process in which man masters the world through his consciousness.

Drawing from the above assertion, this study views the teaching and learning of literary art in the context of schooling as a process resulting from the socio-historical and political realities in society. The study, furthermore, considers the teaching of literary art within the context of schooling as a process that represents attempts to recount the past experiences with regard to the interactive processes taking place amongst people and society. Within this context, the study argues that the teaching of literary art must be able to establish a comprehensive interpretation concerning the evolution of the socio-political realities and human thought as integrated historical processes (Lukàcs, 1978). The study suggests that the teaching and learning of literary art, as a process contributing to students' understanding of socio-political realities, must be geared towards providing student teachers with a system of

historical and dialectical relativisms in which an attempt is made to bring about an in-depth understanding of social reality. Within this context, the historical and dialectical relativisms assist this study to establish relative elements which present the teaching of literary art as an attempt aimed at reflecting on social reality (Lukàcs, 1978). This view also relates to Marx's (1971) argument which insists that literature represents life in a vital and contradictory unity, in which important social, moral and spiritual contradictions of the time are revealed.

Writing about this claim, Marx (1971, p.76) confirms that:

[Literature] ...represents life in its totality, in motion development and evolution. [It] aspires to a maximum profundity and comprehensiveness at grasping life in its all-embracing totality. That is, it examines in as much depth as possible the reality behind appearance and does not represent it abstractly, divorced from phenomena and in opposition to the phenomena, but represents instead the dynamic dialectical process in which reality is transformed into appearance and is manifested as a phenomenon and reveals the other side of the process in which the phenomenon in motion discloses its own particular reality.

In light of the above argument, the teaching of literary art in the context of schooling may be seen as a way of inducing particular kinds of reflection and identification, thereby ensuring that students are able to become intellectuals with a special kind of knowledge and critical awareness of social reality. The text to be used for this purpose is Mda's (2002) *The Madonna of Excelsior*. This particular novel represents Mda's attempt to reflect on South Africa's reality and the political practices that were pervasive during the apartheid years. Mda's use of literary art to realize this objective indicates the importance of this medium as a tool for bringing about social transformation that will ensure that readers are able to understand the historical basis of the current social formation which one is part of. Thus, in the process of establishing the relationship between literature and society, this study presents the role of literature within the South African context. To achieve this, the study draws from dominant theories of literary criticism, to which I turn in the next section.

1.8 The overall Design of the Study

While this Chapter presents the rationale and concept clarifications of the study, Chapter Two offers the theoretical framework and discusses the dominant theories that relate to the teaching and learning of literary work. In the process, it examines broadly the approaches used in literary teaching. Chapter Three explores the historical development of teacher training institutions in South Africa and the resultant influences of the socio-political history on such institutions by focusing on the historical development of former Edgewood College of Education and University of Durban-Westville (UDW). To do so, the Chapter provides a section on literature review in two parts: a section on teacher education in South Africa with reference to the historical development of the above institutions and the teaching of literary art in institutions of higher learning in South Africa with reference to, first, the former UDW and Edgewood College; and secondly, the English Discipline in the Faculty of Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Chapter Four outlines the methodological strategies employed as well as the sources of data collected, limitations and ethical considerations for this study. The Chapter also offers the research instruments used for data collection and shows the extent to which the use of more than one research instrument is important in the triangulation process and in dealing with issues related to validity, reliability and transferability. Furthermore, the Chapter presents the limitations and ethical considerations of this study, which form the basis of the development of further research (as will be discussed in Chapter Six) in the area of teaching literary art to student teachers for social transformation in South Africa.

On the basis of the discussion offered in Chapter Four, Chapter Five offers an exploration of the qualitative data analysis as an attempt to meet the suggested purpose of this study. The Chapter achieves this by means of a critical analysis of how an understanding of the narrative discourses of the novel reveals the extent to which students are able to make use of their acquired knowledge and skills for critical engagement and analysis of literary texts as sources of knowledge. The Chapter further provides a reflective evaluation of the data analysed. In light of the limitations, research findings and reflective evaluation of the data analysed, Chapter Six offers a concluding summary of the previous Chapters and provides recommendations for future research in the teaching of literary art in teacher training institutions of South Africa.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

Chapter one presented the rationale and clarified concepts applied in this study by tracing the historical development, and discussing different understandings, of the concept of literary art and the teaching and learning of literature within the context of schooling. Chapter two offers the theoretical framework of this study by discussing the dominant theories that relate to the teaching and learning of literary works. Chapter two will, in the process, offer an examination of Cultural Heritage as an approach to literary teaching by focusing on its role on the rapid spread and preservation of dominant cultures through the education system.

Driven by the need to establish the theoretical interpretation and analysis of the relationship between literature, education and society, the Chapter limits itself to Marxist theories of literary criticism, namely: orthodox and neo-Marxism. The Chapter focuses specifically on these two theoretical vantage points because they are able to provide insights in analysing, probing and exposing the underlying socio-political ideologies that influence the teaching and learning of literary art within the context of education. The Chapter will then provide a concluding section that summarizes the need for a socio-political analysis through the teaching of literary art within the context of South African schooling.

2.2 Cultural Heritage as an Approach to Literary Teaching

This section seeks to highlight the relationship between literary art and social reproduction. It offers the extent to which literary art served as an important tool in the transmission of culture. The section, furthermore, indicates that Cultural Heritage in the teaching of literary art rose in the 1930s in England and, according to Singh (2003), was advocated by such literary scholars as F.R. Leavis. Singh (2003) further points that, during this period, the teaching of literature in England served as a viable means for cultural dissemination, and was geared towards the establishment of a civilized aesthetic heritage and a return to 'high culture' which shaped the role of the teacher in the literature class. In relation to this view, Prinsloo (2002, p.61) contends that the use of literature as a culture carrier shaped the role of the English literature teacher as one "... who was to assume a pastoral role, not as a didactician, but as 'trusted friend', entrusted with the task of promoting the moralizing values of a great literature, keeper of an English culture and protector of civilised values".

Prinsloo (2002) further points out that the teaching of literature as a means to enforcing Cultural Heritage tended to present literature as a cultural resource. Prinsloo's claim relates to Carter and Long (1991); Culler (1997) and Eagleton (1983), all of whom assert that the teaching of literature in Britain and its colonies, for instance, encouraged students to appreciate Cultural Heritage and to come to view literary art within the heritage it seeks to reflect. In this context, the teaching of literature was administered as a means of cultural transmission in which the English Department was charged with the task of ensuring that cultural values and moral standards of the dominant culture were disseminated equally to students (Ashley, 1989; Reid, 1982).

Writing about the teaching of literature in Britain, Carter and Long (1991) further note that the use of literature as a resource for Cultural Heritage and its transmission presents several problems. This may not necessarily mean that educators themselves are without knowledge of their literature, but the "... likely faults [are] a dreary manner of presentation, and a selection of texts, whether externally imposed or not, which failed to arouse the interest and motivation of the students" (Carter and Long, 1991, p.23). In the context of this study, Carter and Long's (1991) understanding reveals problems associated with the teaching of literary art as a cultural resource because it fails to prepare students and arouse their interests to engage with literary art to understand the world around them. Instead, this approach to teaching literature tends, as Perlman (1972, p.3) puts it, "... to maintain the veil which keeps people from seeing that their own activities reproduce the form of their daily life". He argues that teaching literature as a cultural resource alienates students from the activity of engaging with literary art as a way of understanding the world they find themselves in.

Drawing from the above presentation on the teaching and learning of literature within the context of schooling, this study calls for the pedagogic practice that will "...allow more exploration of the literary text by the [students] and invites [them] to develop their own responses and sensitivities" (Carter and Long, 1991, pp.24-5). This exploration can be easily attained through critical engagement with the socio-political and economic realities that form the basis of any given society. The next section offers an exploration on orthodox Marxism.

2.3 Orthodox Marxism as an Approach to Literary Criticism

While there are several other Marxist theories which include, amongst others, post-modern Marxism, poststructuralist Marxism, post-Marxism, all of which exist either as an extension or criticism of traditional Marxism as a school of thought (Selden and Widdowson, 1993), this study locates itself within the confines of orthodox Marxism. Orthodox Marxism has most often been identified as a theory of political change (revolution). Its theoretical analysis draws quite directly on real concrete issues and problems. According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), Marxism is a theory that provides political criticism and reflects a moral attack on social relations under capitalism. In order to explain the concept of dialectics, Marxism provides two strands of materialism: dialectical and historical materialism. While the former focuses on how things are, how they have come to be the way they are over time and, more importantly, on the relations of production and the consequent class relationships and struggle, the latter claims that the current state of affairs cannot be understood without, first, understanding the historical conditions which have given rise to its present position.

Within the context of this study, the two strands of materialism are both important, because firstly, they establish the interconnectedness of literature and society and, secondly, they provide the basis from which the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art are critiqued and analysed. This interconnectedness is also revealed by such literary critics as Furst (1992) and Marx (1988), who assert that literary art is the product of real events; it is an artistic form of expression shaped by the impact of political and social changes. While Furst (1992) argue that literary art acts as a representation of an actual situation at a given historical moment through its careful use of a broadly mimetic approach, Marx (1988)

contends that literary art is a social institution that uses language (a social creation) as its medium, to reveal a variety of ideological elements forming the bases of the social structure. In other words literature, through the use of language as its medium, becomes a social expression in which the writer presents his or her experiences about social reality.

Within the context of this study, Marx's (1988) argument is an important one, for it offers an understanding of how the teaching of literary art can become a means of exposing and examining the conditions, by which certain practices within the South African society were/are legitimated. This study therefore argues that literary art needs to be seen as an important teaching tool geared towards inculcating critical spirit and awareness concerning socio-historical and political realities as processes contributing to social transformation.

The above should enable student teachers and their learners as agents of social change to realize that the role played by educational institutions in South Africa needs to be viewed as a product of real social relations that are mandated, in part, by the political dominance of one class. This relates to Marx's (1988, p.64) argument that:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas; i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of the society, is at same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as idea; hence the relationships which make the one class the ruling class, therefore, of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess amongst other things consciousness, they rule and determine...as thinkers, and regulate the ...distribution of ideas....

To challenge the *status quo* as presented above, this study argues that the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art to teacher trainees need to be geared towards ensuring

that student teachers are able to equip learners in ways that will prepare them as potential critical citizens guided by a vision of social change. Such a vision should enable both student teachers as prospective teachers and learners not to alienate themselves from their respective roles of teaching and learning as they seek to analyze critically the socio-political realities of South Africa. The alienation referred to above is one that is described by Marx (1988) in his critical analysis of the class system in a capitalist society. Alienation, as Marx (1988) describes it, is a state in which people are separated from their own activity, the products of their own work, and that of their fellow human beings. Marx (1988, p.151) advances this concept by writing that:

Alienation is apparent not only in the fact that my means of life belong to someone else, that my desires are the unattainable possession of someone else, but that everything is something different from itself, that my activity is something else and finally (and this is the case for the capitalist) that an inhuman power rules over everything.

Through the above observation, Marx reveals that human potential is made to appear unattainable and external to a person's self-realization because particular powers are exerted on this person. This study argues that the teaching of literary art must be able to make teachers and learners understand that teaching and learning as a process does not represent them as individuals subjected to a particular form of alienation. The study insists that teachers as agents of social change need to realize that alienation appears not only in the result, but also in the process of knowledge production and deposition (Freire, 1972).

To arrive to this realization, pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art need to ensure that teaching and learning as a process is not placed only in the hands of teachers as sources of knowledge, where learning serves as testable skills with speed and accuracy as primary criteria for success (Singh, 2003). Under this condition, teaching and learning is mainly

teacher-centred, and learners are allowed too little opportunity to formulate their own feelings and critical understanding of the world, while too much of the formulation comes directly from the teacher, who also does most of the talking (Singh, 2003; Prinsloo, 2002). Through certain attempts to secure learning, the teaching of literary works may make individual learners lose sight of the human process of teaching and learning. In this case, the teachers' role of teaching, and the learners' role of learning, may confront them as things apart, indeed as things that command them as knowledge-donors and knowledge-receivers. In particular, teachers would then become, through their practices, the official agents of implementing the imposition of intellectual ideas in order to ensure efficiency in, and control over, quality of learners' learning (Haney, 2000).

Consequently, as other critics such as Haney (2000), Kohn (2000), McNeil (2000), and Ohanian (1999), amongst others, point out, under such an alienating condition both learning and teaching as human processes become narrow, and hence there is a decline in innovation and critical thinking. Writing about alienation and its effects on human function, Marx (1988, pp.124-125) argues:

First, the work is *external* to the worker, that is not part of his nature, and that consequently, he does not fulfil himself in his work but rather denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker, therefore, feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work he feels homeless. His work is not voluntary but imposed, *forced labour*. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a *means* for satisfying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague.

This lack of energy and absence of subjectivity as shown above can plainly be found in the teaching and learning conditions where learners are placed in the receiving end of knowledge production. The above argument relates to Block's (2000) claim, when

commenting on the role played by schools in capitalist societies, that despite the rhetoric belief that schools are community based, schools under capitalism must be viewed as always and already products of alienation. Alienation in this regard, Block (2000) adds, is apparent in the sense that schools in capitalist society do not belong either to the population which they mean to serve, or the population which functions within them. Instead, Block (2000) concludes, they belong to the ruling class that determines the extent to which such schools may be made to return the largest dividends upon the material investment of time, energy, and money. In this context, schools and their pedagogic practices as a result of their conformity could be seen to serve as a primary site and means of social reproduction. Within the context of this study, social reproduction is perpetuated through the need to entrench deeply the cultural beliefs, norms and standard values of the culture being taught, learnt and read about.

The above exposition offers the background on orthodox Marxism as an approach to literary criticism. However, following the latest developments on Marxism as a philosophical approach to understanding how the social structure of the society functions, and how literary art plays a role in exposing such a social structure, this study wishes to acknowledge the fact that new forms of Marxism have emerged which criticise orthodox Marxist's philosophy of the material world. Amongst these criticisms is the rejection of the overriding focus on material factors and a focal concern for the proletariat instead of dealing with all social inequalities present in societies (Ritzer and Schubert, 1991). Instead of looking on the single discourse of the proletariat as the only societal problem, Ritzer and Schubert (1991) contend that it is very important to focus on a multitude of diverse discourses emanating from a wide range of dispossessed voices such as women, blacks, immigrants, consumers and the like.

On the basis of this contention, this study argues that the teaching of literary art in the context of schooling must be seen as one of the possible means of ensuring that the dispossessed voices of different suitability are treated as social problems. The study therefore incorporates neo-Marxism, to which I turn in the next section, with orthodox Marxism to form the basis upon which different groups, including students, learners and educators will be encouraged to see the need to bring about social transformation in their society.

2.4 Neo-Marxist Theory as an Approach to Literary Criticism

Neo-Marxism, according to Ritzer and Schubert (1991), is a sociological theory which emerged as a result of the latest criticism of, and developments in, orthodox Marxism. Neo-Marxism rejects the conception of communism as evolving from the need to emancipate the proletariat, which is the primary concern for orthodox Marxism. Alternatively, neo-Marxism proposes a radically democratic system which, instead of concentrating on individual democratic rights, will be the outcome of the articulation of a number of democratic struggles which may include, amongst others, antiracist, antisexist, anticapitalist, antiexploitation of nature struggles and many others by different social groups (Ritzer and Schubert, 1991). Ritzer and Schubert further point out that these multiple democratic struggles must be seen as equivalent to one another, and thus be brought together so that they serve as part of the larger struggle for radical social change. To account for this joint struggle, Ritzer and Schubert (1991) argue that dealing with all social inequalities in different spheres of society require a far broader movement than that envisioned by orthodox Marxism.

On the basis of the above, this study argues that neo-Marxism presents the teaching of literary art in the context of schooling as a way of equipping teachers with the knowledge and skills to uncover and challenge implicit oppressions such as inequalities based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other aspects of identity. As such, the study insists that the teaching and learning of literary art should be viewed as an introduction to the democratization of culture, a process with teachers and learners as its active agents armed with knowledge and skills for social transformation. As a consequence, this study adds, literary art should be seen as a program which itself would be an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts, one in which students would develop the impatience and vivacity which characterizes search and invention (Freire, 1972).

Literary art must assist in raising the critical awareness of students by providing them with the knowledge and skills to establish, to a greater extent, the relationship between ideology and political consciousness. Once acquired, such knowledge and skills should enable the teachers to highlight important concepts such as racism and sexism for careful deliberation by their learners in the classroom context. In this light, this study concludes, literary art should engage with local realities; it should mobilize teachers' knowledge and practices in ways that will render them as critical agents who bring into the classroom a wealth of critical insights into their world.

Indeed, neo-Marxism is geared towards creating a radically democratic society at the centre of which is a democratically accountable economy, education system, family structure, and neighbourhood. Within the context of this study, neo-Marxism provides insights into the need to establish educational reform as opposed to reproduction. It calls for a deliberate

collaboration of various objectives for different levels of education across racial groupings. In this context, teacher-training institutions, for example, must be geared towards the provision of better quality education. The main thrust here is to achieve equity, efficiency and high quality education in institutions of higher learning (which will play a most important role of moulding and promoting multi-culturalism and racial diversity), both in private and public sectors across all cultural groups and economic levels (Hofmeyr and McLennan, 1992).

2.5 Conclusion

Chapter Two offered the theoretical framework of this study by looking at the dominant theories that relate to the teaching and learning of literary work, and presented an examination of Cultural Heritage as an approach to literary teaching by focusing on its role on the rapid spread and preservation of dominant cultures through education as a system. The Chapter juxtaposed Cultural Heritage with Marxist theories of literary criticism, namely: orthodox and neo-Marxism in order to provide a critical analysis of the underlying socio-political ideologies that influenced the teaching and learning of literary art within the context of education in capitalist societies. Most importantly, Chapter Two provided the relationship between these theories and the extent to which each of them is able to reflect on the social realities that relate to the historical development of literary teaching in the context of schooling. The next Chapter offers literature review regarding the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art at universities, and how such a practices relate to the above theories.

CHAPTER THREE

3.1 LITERARY ART IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Introduction

On the basis of the discussion of the theoretical framework in Chapter Two, it is clear that the use of theories in the teaching of literary art can serve as one of the ways of inculcating knowledge and skills in student teachers, and developing their individual abilities to engage with literary texts in ways that will render them as agents for social transformation. This Chapter provides a section on literature review which is divided into two parts: the first introduces a section on the teacher education in South Africa with reference to the former UDW and Edgewood College of Education¹, and the second focuses on the teaching of literary art in institutions of higher learning in South Africa in general. The second part, furthermore, offers a section on the teaching of literary art within the context of teacher training institutions in South Africa by focusing on the two institutions referred to. The Chapter concludes by setting out the implications based on the discussion.

3.2 PART ONE

3.2.1 Changing Curriculum of Merging Partners

In a country where education has been used as a means to ensure political dominance and subjugation of the majority of the population, historical evidence regarding the development

¹ With regard to the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art at Edgewood College of Education, this study relies on the narrative interview conducted with the then Program Director (PD) of the English Department at Edgewood College, who currently works as a lecturer in the Faculty of Education's English Education Discipline at Edgewood Campus, University of KwaZulu-Natal, as a result of the unavailability of literature on literary teaching. These narrative recounts are not part of the data to be analysed in the analysis Chapter (five) of this study, rather they seek to represent the missing literature regarding the topic under investigation.

of teacher education cannot be understood without an exploration of the socio-political history of teacher training in higher education. The historical development of the former UDW² and Edgewood (for the purpose of this study) cannot be discussed in isolation from the socio-historical politics and economics of Indians and Whites in South Africa. Given the constraints in terms of the breath of the study, however, I begin from the period of the establishment of UDW as higher education institution set aside for Indian people in 1961.

In 1953, with the introduction of the Bantu Education Act³, an initiative concerning the establishment of separate universities for different non-White groups of South Africa was introduced. Following this initiative, a University College for Indians was established in 1961 at Salisbury Island in Durban⁴ (the University of Durban-Westville as it was later known) (See Samuel and Pillay, 2002; Naguran, 1985). It is important for us to be reminded that the establishment of UDW was to fulfil the apartheid conception of separate education for different racial groups in South Africa. However, over the years UDW became known for its political resistance against the apartheid policy of separation by adopting a mission towards attaining social justice and democratic participation for all South Africans. Evident to this is the fact that in the late 1970s, UDW began to absorb other non-White groups of students such as Blacks and Coloureds which resulted in a rapid increase in the number of

² See Naguran (1985) for more information on the historical development of UDW.

³ The Bantu Education Act of 1953 proposed a separate education for the non-White group. This Act was meant to ensure that the Black people of South Africa are given a separate inferior education that would prepare them for manual work other Whiteman's supervision.

⁴ In line with the other non-White University Colleges, the University of South Africa was made academic guardian of the Indian University, and its students were prepared for the degrees and diplomas of the University of South Africa. See Naguran (1985) on this issue. Student numbers through the 1960s were low as a result of the Congress Alliances' policy of shunning apartheid structures whose control and influences were so apparent in the institutions of higher learning. This policy gave way in the 1980s to a strategy of "education under protest" which sought to transform apartheid institutions such as Universities into sites of political struggle (Samuel and Pillay, 2002).

students. The campus was therefore later moved into its modern campus in Westville, where it became a site of major anti-apartheid struggle. Following an increase in the level of enrolment of students from different racial groups, the protest against apartheid policies intensified as students became more united.

In the 1980s, UDW was granted autonomy status as an institution to offer its own degrees and diplomas. This autonomy enabled UDW's School of Educational Studies, for instance, to offer both undergraduate and post-graduate degrees in teacher education. Despite the rapid increase in the number of students enrolled with the University, research evidence reveal that in the 1990s to 2000, UDW experienced a decline in the student intake for the undergraduate programme (Samuel and Pillay, 2003). As a result, the School of Educational Studies faced the challenge of discontinuing undergraduate initial teacher education programme for first-year students. On January 1 2004, following the amalgamation of higher learning institutions in response to the socio-political changes of the country, UDW merged with the former University of Natal to form the new University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). In the process, the UDW School of Educational Studies was incorporated with the former Edgewood College of Education (to which I turn in the next section) to form the Education Faculty of UKZN. This incorporation also called for major changes in these two merging Education and Faculties.

3.2.2 A Look at the Historical Developments of Former Edgewood College of Education

Edgewood College of Education⁵ (Edgewood as it is commonly referred to in this report) was a teacher training institution reserved for English-speaking White students and is located

⁵ The history of literary teaching at Edgewood prior to the establishment of the UKZN is presented below.

on the outskirts of Durban. Edgewood College, according to Reddy (2003), was designed to offer teacher education in three and four year programmes. However, along with the demand from the white sectors that universities and colleges be linked together under the control of one educational authority, Edgewood College joined forces with the former University of Natal, Durban (UND), which offered Higher Diploma in Education (HDE), Master of Education (M.Ed) and Doctor of Philosophy in Education (PhD) degrees (Naguran, 1985) (Reddy, 2003). This affiliation suggested that while Edgewood College, on the one hand, offered four-year primary and secondary certificates and three-year secondary and junior primary diplomas, UND awarded the degrees and secondary diplomas (Reddy, 2003; Naguran, 1985) . The result was that there had to be a mutual utilization of academic staff by the university and the college. The university staff also played a very important role in the development of college curricula and in the moderation of college examinations. All these developments enabled the university to accord recognition to the college work and standards (Naguran, 1985). This collaboration and independence, however, lasted until February 2000 when the National Education Minister announced that from 1 January 2001, Edgewood as a college would be incorporated into the UND as part of a national incorporation programme (Reddy, 2003). In January 2004, Edgewood, now as part of UND prior to the merger, became incorporated with the UDW School of Educational Studies to form one Faculty of Education as shown in the preceding paragraph.

3.3 PART TWO

3.3.1 The Teaching of Literary Art in Teacher Education: A Case of Former UDW and Edgewood College of Education

Research by Balfour (1995, 2000; Reddy, 1995) conducted in the former UNDA regarding the teaching of literary works revealed that the teaching and learning of literature in South African universities cannot be treated in isolation from the socio-political influences that shaped the country. Balfour (2000), for example, argues that within the context of South Africa, the ideological intent of the teaching of literary works was informed by theoretical developments in the United Kingdom. This view relates to Culler's (1997) argument that the teaching of literature in the colonies of the British Empire was charged with giving the natives an appreciation of the greatness and culture of England as part of civilising enterprise. In light of this view, Reddy (1995, p.6), argues that the teaching of literary works in South Africa served as a means to:

... [Import] the metropolitan norms, especially the "Great Tradition" to South Africa, its proponents assimilated it into the Apartheid system. ... [T]heir importation into this country served the specific ideological purposes (despite protestations to the contrary by liberal-humanists of the time) of foisting a particular cultural heritage which ignored the cultural hybridity of the nation.

The importation of this tradition as shown above also influenced literary curricula in teacher education, and this led to the stage of an inward-looking which resulted in the promotion of Cultural Heritage (Singh, 2003; Ashley, 1989) as discussed in Chapter Two. This inward-looking also led to a tradition of assimilation of cultural values and norms disseminated through literary works and the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literature. Within this context, this study argues that the pedagogic practices informed by a tradition of assimilation does not empower student teachers in ways that would present them as, to use Samuel's (1994, p.2) words, "...future teachers of literature ...sufficiently prepared to exploit the potential of literature study as a force to liberate the creative and critical potential of their learners."

Against the above background, Samuel (1994) draws our attention to the possible causes of this rather passive engagement with literary art in the process of teaching and learning by referring to the teaching of literature and teacher training in the School of Educational Studies at UDW. He points out that the Education Faculty co-ordinated the programme with other Faculty Disciplines that were more academic than professional in nature. An example of this co-ordination is shown in the teaching of literary art initially by the Faculty of Arts, English Department, and then by the Education Faculty. In this context, Samuel's (1994) points out that student teachers registered for a four-year degree Bachelor of Pedagogy majoring in English were required to register for modules English I, II and III, offered by the English Department before the completion of their degrees, and would then be introduced to the teaching of literary art in the classroom context in their fourth year of study through the Education Faculty. This simply suggests that the pedagogic practice in the teaching of literary art in the English Department treated theory and practice as two separate entities whose acquisition ought to take place at different times and education levels.

According to Samuel (1994), the approach to literary teaching as shown above was not without problems in the teaching of literary art in the classroom context. Such problems include the fact that in their teaching of literary art, student teachers tended to rely more on their ability to recall what their lecturers presented to them in the lecture halls than critically engaging with the text through the use of the acquired skills offered during lecture workshops. In relation to this, Samuel (1994, p. 15) refers to the teaching of literary art to student teachers at UDW's Faculty of Education:

...despite the supposedly liberatory content of what ... students engage[d] with during their study of the English language, the dominant pedagogical engagement

with that content still reflect[ed] a generally passive, uncritical and uncreative learning character.

This provides insights into the nature of the pedagogic practice that dominated the teaching of literary art to student teachers. It reveals that the teaching and learning of literary art in the context of teacher education at UDW was characterized by the ability to recall the appropriate content and critical analysis presented in the lecture halls. This characterisation simply suggests that students were unable to extend their understanding and critical analysis of a particular text to inform the way in which they treated other literary texts (Samuel, 1994). Samuel (1994, p. 15) writes:

Students...attend[ed] the lectures and tutorials to become au fait with the appropriate package knowledge that particular lecturers display[ed] so that when they [had] to write examination the students select[ed] for regurgitation the appropriate content which lecturers ... presented within the lecture halls. ... [O]ne might see a student display a detailed Marxist critique of a particular text simply because the lecturer concerned had engaged with this kind of analysis within the lecture hall; yet the student [was] unable to provide alternate readings...of the same text....

Drawing from the above situation, Samuel points to dangers that faced these student teachers when they moved out to their professions as teachers. He reveals that these students “emerge from a course in English literature at tertiary level with only a piecemeal and fragmentary knowledge of the complexity of writing and reading skills” (Samuel, 1994, p.16). He reveals, furthermore, that the traditional role of the English departments did not conceive of their role as developing their students to become potential analysts of literary art for the purpose of understanding the country’s social reality.

Moreover, the above passive tradition meant that the literary curriculum and its accompanying pedagogic practices were founded to alienate⁶ students from their subjective-selves. Within the context of this alienating tradition, the teaching and learning of literature serves to promote the development of vocabulary and language in its rhetorical form rather than as a means to inculcating and extending critical and creative thought. The result is that the student teachers do not come to see the teaching and learning of literary art as a tool geared towards communicating, facilitating and arousing the particular thoughts, ideas, and ideologies that shape their views of the material world as members of the social group (Culler, 1997; Marx, 1986). Rather than simply perpetuating this rather mechanical and passive approach to literary teaching, Samuel (1994, p.20) urges that the teaching of literature in the then UDW's English Department needed to make student teachers realise that "Literature study [was] not about reading texts; instead it [was] about being able to read how we live, how we communicate using language as a means of negotiating thought, ideas, feelings, etc...."

Contrary to the UDW situation as presented above, the teaching of literature at Edgewood College of Education took a different direction. At Edgewood, student teachers, regardless of their specializations, were required to do English literature modules and some independent students' reading activities (SRA) from their first year of study to final year (ex-Programme Director (PD), personal and e-mail communication, May, 07, 2008, p.1⁷). The ex-PD points out that the teaching of literature at Edgewood was in line with the school curriculum, and

⁶ Please refer to Chapters One and Two on this concept and the extent to which it manifests itself within the context of teaching and learning in the schooling system.

⁷ Please note that this section is not part of the data collected with regard to the teaching of *The Madonna of Excelsior*, to be analysed in Chapter five, rather it represents the unavailability of literature on the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art at Edgewood College of Education. Refer to appendices D on this.

that literature served as "...an excellent way to prepare teachers as it encourages and develops critical thinking, analysis, evaluation interpretation, as well as a wide variety of language skills" (PD, e-mail communication, May, 07, 2008, p.1). The above situation reveals that the teaching of literature at Edgewood serves two special functions: on the one hand, literature as a means to developing and deepening language skills and, on the other hand, literature as a tool for developing critical thinking in students teachers. Writing about the teaching of literary art as language developing tool, the ex-PD (e-mail communication, May, 07, 2008, p.1) explains:

In the first year all students, both L1 and L2, were required to do SRA once a week to develop their reading speed and comprehension skills. They were required to plot their progress each week and we expected to see an improvement. Those students who were weak readers were encouraged to do SRA in their free periods and certainly did improve their reading. ...This was to develop their reading of longer texts as many of the came into Edgewood from schools without resources and reading material and were unaccustomed to reading independently....

The above quotation highlights the extent to which the teaching of literature at Edgewood prepared student teachers in terms of language and literacy development. It must be mentioned, however, that the teaching of literature at Edgewood was informed by the need to ensure that student teachers are able to engage critically with literary art independently as it would assist them in the classroom setting. To achieve this, students were introduced to the methodologies of language teaching which was a separate component from literature modules, and was offered to the students from their first to third year of study. The ex-PD (E-mail communication, May, 07, 2008, p.1.) explains:

Edgewood College operated on a time table that was more like a school. Students came at 8.00 and lectures went on until 4.40 with a tea and lunch break and little free time. Our students did English for 3 years--first year students had 8 periods a week, which became 6 period a week in the 2nd and 3rd year. This did not include language teaching methodology which was a separate component or English

Communication which was a first year course run by the Drama Dept and was meant to develop their English speaking skills.

The above scenario points to the fact that this early exposure to the language teaching methodology from first year could have given the students an in-depth understanding of what is expected of them during their teaching practices in the classroom context. This early exposure also deepened students' understanding of the role of teaching literature in the classroom context. This understanding was achieved through a stress on the need to engage with literature as a teaching resource and, as a result, this developed and deepened students' abilities to apply different literary theories on literary criticism in the classroom situation.

Writing about this, the ex-PD (E-mail communication, May, 07, 2008, p.1) states that:

...not all the literary text [in the college curriculum] set were taught texts. Students had 2 texts in a year that were not taught but were tested. This was to see if they were applying the critical analytic skills to privately read and studied texts. It was also a belief that students who were going to be educators should ... have read widely. The primary students were also required to read about 10 children books a year We tried to get them to buy those books because we believed they would be resources for them when they started teaching.

Unlike UDW, where students were introduced to these methodological approaches in their 4th year of study which, I would like to argue, must have had a direct bearing on students during the practical application of those teaching methodologies, Edgewood held the belief that an early exposure to independent analytic reading of literary art along with the teaching methodologies would lead to better understanding of how literature should be taught in schools. On this basis, it is not surprising to note that in their teaching practices in the literature class, the then UDW's student teachers' dominant pedagogical engagement with the content still reflected a rather generally passive, uncritical and uncreative learning character (Samuel, 1994). These two different approaches to teacher training in the teaching of literary art are totally different from the pedagogic practice regarding the teaching of

literary art at Edgewood Campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, English Education Discipline, to which I turn in the next section.

3.3.2 Teaching Literature for Social Transformation: A Look on the Pedagogic Practice in the Teaching of Literary Art in the English Education Discipline, Edgewood, UKZN

Driven by the need to respond to the socio-political changes within the confines of education and society in general, there is a need to offer a variety of more critical and interpretive strategies in the teaching of literature to student teachers to better their understanding of the socio-political realities of South Africa. On this basis, the teaching of literary art in the English Education Discipline at Edgewood Campus has taken a new direction in comparison with those of the former Edgewood College of Education and UDW. The pedagogic practice in the teaching of literary art in the English Education Discipline is derived from the need to meet the purpose of teaching literature to student teachers. The Course Outline for English Major 310⁸, for instance, provides the purpose and outcomes that serve to provide the rationale of the Module. Such purposes include to:

- Develop critical thinking, aesthetic appreciation and insight into selected works of literature;
- Provide students with an awareness and perspective of the various approaches to literary analysis; and
- Develop critical discourse.

Drawing from the listed purposes of the module, it is expected within the English Discipline that by the end of the module students would have achieved and fulfilled the expectations of the module. In the context of this study, the purposes listed above play a very important role in determining whether or not students have mastered the pedagogic practices, critical

⁸ BEd. ENGLISH Major 310, University of KwaZulu-Natal, School of Languages, Literacies, Media and Drama Education; English Education Discipline. See appendix E

literacy skills, and sound knowledge for social critique. Most importantly, this study stresses that the purposes provided relate to the changing character of the university system, and UKZN as an institution, whose Education Faculty 's goal (UKZN, 2007, p.1) is to:

[Provide]...an education that is accessible and relevant to the full range of learners, appropriate to both national and global context, that is of quality and that contributes to lifelong learning in a South Africa characterized by social justice and sustainable economic development. [And]...being a faculty that is located within an African university which is socially inclusive, contextually relevant and has as its primary function the generation of knowledge need in the society that its serves.

On this basis, it is my intention by means of the critical questions presented in the opening Chapter of this study, to see what happens or not when such a philosophical approach to literary art pedagogy is put in place within the reconstituted teacher education institution in South Africa. To achieve this, what is needed is the establishment of a new set of criteria in which formulating educational objectives, literary curricula and study materials (relevant to students' lived experiences) can be undertaken with the objective of developing critical spirit.

To return to a concern with the interpretive strategies in the study of literature, the study argues that as the University seeks to produce a better quality of teachers as potential agents for change, these interpretive strategies will provide student teachers with theoretical lenses that sharpen their vision and provide alternative ways of seeing the world they find themselves in. Such strategies will assist student teachers to cultivate critical skills in learners, and make them realize their part in the struggle for power between different ideologies. This realization will educate student teachers to become aware of significant elements of their own ideology, and understand why they hold certain values unconsciously. Most importantly, such strategies will ensure that students are able to fulfil the outcomes

listed above. One way to achieve this realization is by introducing literary theories which, as Desai (1997) in Appleman (2000, p.22) points out:

...remind us that we do not live in isolation nor do we read and interpret in isolation. We understand what we read through some combinations of our-selves as readers and the text with which we interact, but this is never free of the multiple contexts that frame us.

Within the context of this study, I would argue that literary theory as an approach to literary criticism, can provide student teachers with the tools necessary for interpreting social realities, and allow them to recognize the cultural forces that are at play in their lives and their learners as members of the social group. To elaborate, this study argues that literary theories can become critical lenses to guide and inform student teachers about different ways of reading their world. Such lenses offer students particular ways of seeing the socio-political realities that shape their own world view and the assumptions they make as they evaluate the perspectives of others.

To achieve the above, Singh (2003) when referring to Prinsloo (2002) introduces the concept of Critical Literacy in the field of literature and its role towards achieving literary criticism. Singh (2003) adds that Critical Literacy is an approach to the teaching of literature in which learners and educators exist as co-investigators of messages, ideas and meanings in textual studies. According to Singh (2003), Critical Literacy is informed by 'critical pedagogy', which views the system of education as socially constructed, and rooted at the centre of power relations. Critical Pedagogy, Singh continues, acknowledges the inequality of power in the exercise of literacy. It notes that certain types of knowledge legitimates gender, class

and racial interests and can therefore be disempowering. This claim is also shared by Reid (1982, p.6), who argues that:

Critical literacy ... prepares ... [students] from all classes in such a way that they are able to receive education in its fullest sense and to the fullest sense of their capacity to cope with themselves and the society they find themselves in, to gain a proper understanding of their environment, their culture and its systems.

Reid (1982) further asserts that Critical Literacy as an approach to teaching literature develops the potentialities of each individual, in such a way that the educated individual is able to realize him or herself, make judgments and think critically. Within the context of this study, one way to achieve these abilities is to take into account ethnicity and cultural diversity along with the relevance of students' lived experiences so that no group should feel excluded (Hofmeyr and McLennan, 1992). Most importantly, pedagogic practices in the teaching of literature should encourage students as future teachers to explore various sources of knowledge that will enable learners to learn to reflect critically on the society they find themselves in. For such an ability to be realized, the English Education Discipline called for the establishment of particular set of criteria in which educational objectives (as listed above) are undertaken with the objective of illuminating the socio-political realities of South Africa.

3.3.4 Conclusion

This Chapter explored a section on literature review which exists in two parts: Part One and Two. While Part One, on the one hand, introduced a section on teacher education in South Africa with reference to the historical development of the former UDW and Edgewood College of Education and their incorporation to form an new institution, UKZN, Part Two, on the other hand, focused on the teaching of literary art in the above mentioned institutions.

This exploration, furthermore, revealed that although both of these institutions were sites for teacher training, their pedagogic practices in the teaching of literature differed considerably.

On this basis, the study argued that the goals for which literature was taught in these institutions differed in terms of the curricula and the purposes they were destined to serve. With regard to curricula, the study argues that the teaching of literary art at Edgewood College, for instance, was in line with the school curricula. On the other hand, student teachers trained at UDW had to do modules offered in the then English Department, Faculty of Arts, and would then do modules on the teaching of literary art in their fourth-year of study under the Faculty of Education. This study argued that the training offered to the students trained at UDW was not enough to prepare them with the knowledge and skills for teaching literary art to learners in ways that would make them understand the relationship between literature and society.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 STRATEGIES TO UNDERSTAND PEDAGOGIC PRACTICES IN THE TEACHING OF LITERARY ART

Introduction

Details concerning the historical development of the former UDW and Edgewood College of Education offered in Chapter Three highlight the extent to which these institutions differed in their pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art. The Chapter also showed how the teaching of literature at UKZN's Faculty of Education, English Discipline at Edgewood Campus took a new direction in comparison with former two institutions mentioned above. On the basis of the above, Chapter Four presents discussion of the methodological choices employed by the researcher as well as the sources of data collected for this study. The first section describes a methodological design used for data collection. This section clarifies the reason for the choice of methodology used in this research and, in the process, introduces the structural design of the stages involved in the research process. More importantly, the structural design assisted me in establishing the interaction between the sources of data collection and the purpose of the study. Chapter Four also highlights issues related to validity, reliability, quality checks and ethical considerations.

The second section of this Chapter describes the kind of data this study gathered. The type of data described in this section is qualitative. The section further offers the nature of, and the context from which, data are gathered for this study. This section also shows the extent to which the nature of data gathered is important in fulfilling the purpose of this study. Finally,

the third section of the Chapter introduces and discusses the design of, as well as the purpose for, the use of research instruments selected for data collection. The section also offers a description of the research participants in this study. This section clarifies how and why the qualitative narrative recounts were chosen as an approach to data collection. Furthermore, the section also shows the research activities such as specific time frames within which data collection processes and analysis were conducted as part of the methodological choices. The concluding section of this Chapter offers a reflective summary of the Chapter and later presents the limitations of the study by drawing from different sections.

4.1.1 Research design, paradigm, and methodology

This study used a qualitative research design which, according to Cohen *et al* (2000), allows for the incorporation of different methods and methodologies of interpreting data in order that the research is able to yield a relatively high degree of consistency and accuracy in its findings. It locates itself within the interpretative paradigm defined in Neuman (2006; 1997) as a basic standpoint with an orientation to theory and research. Neuman (2006) observes that the central aim of an interpretive paradigm in a qualitative study is to understand the subjective world of human experience. According to this view, an interpretivist researcher makes an "...effort to get inside a person and understand from within" (Cohen *et al*, 2000, p.38). Cohen *et al* (2000) share this view with Neuman (1997), who holds a belief that an interpretivist researcher often uses interviews, participant observation and field research, all of which require that the researcher spends time in direct personal contact with the subjects being studied to ensure consistency in the research findings.

In order to yield research findings with a greater degree of consistency and accuracy, this study employs a literary analytical approach as a methodology. According to Langham (1991), a literary analytical approach is a critical approach to reading a literary text in which readers use their mental or cognitive strategies in a cyclical process to establish their own interpretations and constructed meanings by sampling a text. Within the context of this study, the critical engagement referred to above provides an in-depth understanding of how students reflect on their full potential and understanding of the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary texts. Their reflection was accessed through the use of narrative recounts as a primary source of data for this study. The next section provides the qualitative data deemed relevant and necessary to meet the purposes of the study.

4.1.2 Identifying data relevant to the study

This section presents the nature of the qualitative data which the study seeks to gather. The primary sources of data for this study are narrative recounts by English literature 3rd year students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) enrolled for the Bachelor of Education (BEd degree). These narrative recounts are based on pedagogic practices in the teaching of *The Madonna of Excelsior* to BEd 3rd year students. Such narrative recounts assist this study to determine the extent to which students reflect knowledge about the novel. This is accompanied by an examination of the extent to which their critical understanding of *The Madonna of Excelsior* and its significance to the South African socio-political reality is made clear during students' narrative recounts. Such a critical engagement is important in that these are prospective teachers whose role in society is to contribute intellectually to social transformation.

4.1.3 Research site, survey, and sample

As indicated in the previous sections, this study is located in an institution of higher learning. More particularly, the context within which this study is located for the purpose of data gathering is the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Faculty of Education in the Edgewood Campus, during the early phase of major transformations made after the merger of former UDW and UND, 2004. To establish the interrelations between the purpose, topic, and critical questions of this study, I chose a sample which represents the 3rd year English literature population. Such a sample is chosen in terms of the following characteristics: an area of specialization, year of study, gender, as well as race. The reasons for selecting this category of students, that is, third year students, include: first, these are the students for whom *The Madonna of Excelsior* is prescribed, second, these students are expected to have achieved and fulfilled the purpose of the module as stated in the Chapter three, and, lastly, these students are likely to be more mature than those in the 2nd year, where the English Major course commences.

The reasons for selecting the above novel as one of the sources of data include the fact that the novel has the potential to represent the socio-political complexities of the apartheid regime and simultaneously allows readers to imagine the narrative as occurring in post-apartheid South Africa. The novel's situation within a particular place and at a particular period of time has the potential to evoke students' experiences of the social arrangements and the cultural diversity (and the influences thereof), which have given rise to the emergence of multi-culturalism and multi-racialism in South Africa. Also, *The Madonna of Excelsior* is one of the prescribed texts in the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) for Bachelor of Education (BEd) third year students.

Against this background, the study identifies a sample of eight participants to represent the English literature 3rd-year student population. The selection of such participants follows a random sampling which, according to White (2001, p.61), "...is split into layers or strata, on the basis of variables chosen by the researcher, such as gender, age and ability". In the context of this study, the selected group was chosen according to race, ability (measured by the researcher according to students' responses to the interview questions), and gender in order to reflect, as far as possible, a range of interaction between culture, race and gender in establishing varying degrees of interpretation of the text (Lingham, 1991). In this context, the sample's varying degrees of abilities in terms of identifying themes in the novel plays a very important role, for it assists this study to determine whether or not the teaching of *The Madonna of Excelsior* has fulfilled and achieved the purpose and learning outcomes of the module as presented in the previous section of this Chapter. Figure 4.1 illustrates the sample comprising four males and four females: African (Black), Coloured, White and Indian. This choice is made to ensure racial representativeness that would reflect the multiracial and multicultural nature of the population being studied and, more importantly, the cultural diversity of South Africa as a country.

Figure 4.1 List and the criteria used in the selection of research participants.⁹

Level of study and specialization	Code name	Race	Gender
3 rd year level English Literature	Nelly	White	Female
	David	White	Male
	Sipho	Black	Male
	Zama	Black	Female
	Vaneshry	Indian	Female
	Kenny	Indian	Male
	Peter	Coloured	Male
	Susan	Coloured	Female

⁹ The names used in this study are pseudonyms, and are in line with the agreement between the researcher and the participants. See Neuman (2006).

The reasons for selecting participants from different races and genders is two-fold: first, the novel selected as one of the data sources reflects two sets of issues concerning racial attitudes which dominated apartheid South Africa in all aspects of life: first, issues regarding schooling; secondly, issues regarding gender inequality, racial stereotypes, sexuality, patriarchy, as well as sexual exploitation, which are still prevalent in South African society. These are often treated as taboo matters in the teaching of literature by the old regime (Balfour, 1998). While the first set of reasons provides an opportunity to express individual feelings about issues of racism that are highly emphasized in the novel, the latter assists the researcher to invite views drawn from different racial, cultural, personal and gender backgrounds regarding issues of oppression evident in the novel. In other words, the use of such characteristics is an attempt to make the sample of this study reflect the relationship between culture and race. Given the fact that this study uses a novel charged with controversy in our society, I am aware of the dilemmas and debate such characteristics as race and gender inequality can create on issues regarding representative reliability¹⁰.

Neuman (2006, p.311) writes about such limitations:

An interviewer's visible characteristics, including race and gender, often affect interviews and respondents' answers, especially for questions related to race and gender.... In general interviewers of the same racial-ethnic group get more accurate answers. Gender also affects interviews both in terms of obvious issues, such as sexual behaviour, as well as support for gender-related collective action or equality.

In the context of this study the above considerations were addressed through informing the sample that they may withdraw whenever they felt they needed to do so, given the nature of issues raised by the novel.

¹⁰ Please see Neuman (2006).

To return to the criteria used for sampling, the selection made in terms of the level of study and area of specialization is that this is the level which is, as clearly stated in the module outline, expected to have achieved the requirements of the module. Such expectations included being able to respond to cultural and social values revealed through the text. In the context of this study, these values would assist the researcher in determining the extent to which the selected sample has achieved the outcomes of the module through their critical engagement with the novel as a result of pedagogy. More importantly, because this study is largely qualitative, the selected sample as well as the novel would make for an effective source of data that would provide rich and varying historical knowledge about the past practices raised in the novel. This is so because the selected sample, as highlighted in the module outline, will be able to ‘make and negotiate meaning’ by engaging critically with the text. This critical engagement with the text would help this thesis to establish the extent to which the selected sample has developed critical thinking, aesthetic appreciation and insight into selected works of literature. The next section provides the types of research instruments used in the data collection process.

4.1.4 Research instruments for data collection

In the attempt to determine the extent to which the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art in the English Education Discipline could be said to be preparing student teachers with the knowledge and skills for critical thinking for social transformation, this study uses tape-recorded face-to-face narrative and open-ended interviews to make available data drawn from cognition. While face-to-face narrative recounts help in offering possibilities for a comparative analysis of the literary interpretation provided by the sample, the open-ended

interviews allow for a further elicitation of responses given during the narrative recounts (Walcott, 1988).

Furthermore, an open-ended interview is important because it assisted the researcher to make follow-up questions on the narrative responses given. This was achieved by ways of questioning and probing with the intention of determining the extent to which students mastered the pedagogic practices, knowledge and skills necessary for preparing learners as critical thinkers of our society. Writing about face-to-face interviews when conducting research, Neuman (2006, p.301) states:

...respondents often do not have a clear conception of what is expected of them.... As a result, they substitute another role that may affect their responses. Some believe the interview is an intimate conversation or therapy session.... Some view it as a citizen referendum on policy choices, some view it as a testing situation, some see it as a deceit in which interviewers are trying to trick or entrap respondents.

Given the fact that the study was conducted during the examination period, the sample thought that the interview required that they re-read the novel in order to provide 'correct' responses in order to satisfy the expectations of the interviewer. Due to lack of time for re-reading the novel as they supposed necessary, many students were not interested in becoming participants in this study. Eventually an access to eight students was made possible, and the process took two months. The important questions which necessitated careful selection of research participants of this study were as follows:

- To what extent would you consider yourself to have mastered the knowledge and understanding of the role of literary art in education and society?
- How did your acquired knowledge influence your attitude towards the socio-political realities raised in *The Madonna of Excelsior*?
- How would you consider the pedagogic practices in the teaching of *The Madonna of Excelsior* as effective in assisting you manifest the knowledge and skills you have acquired in the teaching of literature to learners?

Answering the above set of questions called for the use of a narrative-style interview technique to enable the study to identify salient themes that emerged during the narrative recount. Furthermore, this type of interview allowed for probing through a series of questions which would lead towards a solution of the phenomenon under investigation. The design as shown in the questions involved three categories. The first category addressed issues of symbolic representation of South Africa in *The Madonna of Excelsior*. The second category was aimed at eliciting personal feelings that were informed by the different racial and cultural backgrounds of the participants. The third category was concerned with the teaching of the novel, especially when considering its symbolism in terms of racial attitudes, socio-politics, multiracial, and cultural diversity. Finally, this category was also concerned with the extent to which the novel, through its symbolic representation, can be used as a tool for reflecting past practices for social transformation. Figure 4.2 illustrates how the above categories were presented.

Figure 4.2 Categories and Examples of questions of questions under each category

Categories	Examples of Questions asked
Symbolism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could you give me the extent to which you think the teaching of the novel makes explicit the symbolic representation of South Africa’s politics? • What aspects of South Africa’s politics make it more representative? • How did the teaching of the novel make explicit the aspects of South Africa’s politics presented in the novel?
Cultural, gender, and racial backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a (an) white/black/coloured/Indian student, how do you feel about such aspects of politics raised in the novel? • As a female/male student, how do you feel about such aspects raised in the novel? • What makes you feel that way?
Pedagogic practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What knowledge have you gained from the teaching of this novel? • To what extent is such knowledge important to you as a prospective teacher? • Why is such knowledge important to you? • How would your knowledge gained from the teaching of this novel relate to your teaching of literature to learners in the classroom context?

Appointments were set up with participants to find suitable times that would satisfy all the parties. Prior to the interview process, students were given an informed consent from the interviewer in which they specified their feelings about the study during the interview process. They were assured that the data collected would not be linked to their personal identity as only pseudonyms¹¹ would be used for security reasons. Writing about the importance of the informed consent, Neuman (2006, p.313) correctly points out that:

Researchers should treat all respondents with dignity and reduce discomfort. They are also responsible for protecting the confidentiality of data. ... They give “informed consent” to participants to participate in research.... [Researchers] need to ask well-developed questions in a sensitive way, treat respondents with respect, and be very sensitive to confidentiality.

¹¹ Please read Neuman (2006) on the use of pseudonyms (false names) when conducting research.

To satisfy the above recommendations, the interview process took place at different times, places, and dates due to students' daily commitments. In most cases, interviews were conducted in students' rooms and the library. The reasons for conducting such interviews in students' rooms included the fact that students felt more comfortable in their rooms than outside, and enabled them to avoid interruption from their peers during the interview process. For those students who did not live in the University residences, a library's sound-proof room set aside for group work was a convenient place for their interviews.

Writing about the problems associated with face-to face interviews, Neuman (2006, p.309) points out that "The social context in which interview occurs can affect answers, including the presence of other people". In the same way, the interview process that took place in the library was dominated by interruptions as other students would come and interrupt the process by wanting to talk to their peers. However, in several instances such interruptions were properly handled and, as such, students were asked not to interfere with the whole process for the sake of the tape-recorder. Realising the inconveniences they were going to make, such students would simply walk away to allow the flow of the interview process. As a result, the data collected during the interview were not affected.

In addition to using interviews as research instruments, this study also deployed documentary evidence such as book reviews¹² based on *The Madonna of Excelsior*, tutorial materials and assignment question papers¹³ designed for teaching purposes, as well as the above novel itself in order to corroborate generalized responses made by the research participants. The use of interviews and documentary evidence in this study facilitated an

¹² See appendix F

¹³ See appendix E

effective and critical engagement with students’ understandings of: the text under study; pedagogic practices, and skills for teaching critical literacy. Skogerbø’s (1998) research on *Conflicts and Compromises in Norwegian Media Politics (1980-1993)* relies on documentary evidence as research instruments to illustrate the major changes made on issues regarding the state control of media. Likewise, Singh’s (2003) study of pupils’ responses to the teaching of English literature in secondary schools used documentary evidence (assignments) as sources of data. Skogerbø’s and Singh’s choice of documentary evidence in their respective studies illustrates that documents can play a very important role in research, as will be shown in Chapter Six of this thesis.

The documents to be analysed in this study are: a novel and book reviews, as well as interviews. To ensure the effectiveness in the use of the above documents, a document analysis worksheet is designed to illustrate the nature of the documents and the relevance they display in relation to the topic. Figure 4.3 illustrates how the document analysis worksheet was designed.

Figure 4.3 Document analysis worksheet¹⁴

1	Type of Document:
2	Date(s):
3	Name and Status of the Author of Document:
4	Position Held:
5	For which Audience is the Document Written?
6	Document Information (there are many possible ways to answer A-E) A. List three things the author said that you think are important within the context of the study: B. Why do you think this document was written? Quote from the document. C. What evidence in the document helps you understand the relationship between literary art and society? D. List aspects of the document that tell you about the socio-historical realities of South Africa? E. Identify any theme(s) in the document that you feel is (are) also made explicit in the novel.

¹⁴ Adapted from Document Analysis Worksheet designed and developed by Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, 20408 (In Mgwashu, 2008).

The above worksheet is used to examine critically the information presented in the documents, and to relate to the verbal responses from the research participants. Such documents also help in identifying salient points emphasized in the novel in comparison to those presented in the verbal responses. The identified salient points are coded and categorised into themes through the use of both first- and second-order interpretations. The former refers to interpretation of data from the point of view of the people being studied, and the latter to the interpretation of data from the point of view of the researcher who conducted the research (Neuman, 2006).

In this context, the first-order interpretation of data assisted the researcher to understand (in varying degrees) the extent to which the research participants reflect an in-depth mastery of the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art capable of inculcating critical skills for social transformation. From their understanding and insights, the second-order interpretation helps me as a researcher to provide possible interpretations of the data embodied within the participants' narrative recounts. To this extent the use of document analysis in this study helped in dealing with issues surrounding validity, relevance, and reliability in terms of the data collected and interpreted.

The study thus makes use of documentary evidence, a novel, study materials (question papers and tutorial materials) and interviews, as data sources to assist this study to establish *triangulation*, which in its most basic meaning refers to the combination of different sets of data, methods and theories in order to obtain new information (Skogerbø, 1998). Triangulation is a strategy for obtaining different types of data, as a method for *verification* of data already gained by other methods, and as a combination of many different sources that

supplement one another (Syvertsen, 1992). The main reason for choosing triangulation is the belief that a combination of strategies yields a more complete picture of the research area than would be obtained by using a single strategy. The next section deals with the limitations of the study.

4.1.5 Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study refers to the choice made of Marxism as a theoretical vantage point which forms the basis of this report. While it is true that there are several theories which may include, amongst others, feminism, socialism, literary deconstructivism, realism, post-modernism and many more, in understanding the relationship between literary art and society, this study is located within the confines of Marxism¹⁵ as discussed in more detail in Chapter Two of this study. However, this study does not claim that Marxism is the *only* perspective through which the relationship between literary art and society can be established, nor that the narrative recounts (which form part of data to be analysed in Chapter Five) should relate to Marxism if they are to be considered relevant in this study. Instead, this study does acknowledge the fact that there are different approaches to, and perspectives for, understanding the relationship between literary art and society, but only chooses Marxism to highlight certain ideologies that shape(d) South Africa during and after apartheid rule, and how such ideologies are presented in *The Madonna of Excelsior*.

Given the fact that the narrative recounts to be analysed in the next Chapter may not necessarily be related to Marxism as shown above, such narrative recounts are considered

¹⁵ Read Chapter two for more information regarding the reasons that informed the choice made on Marxism for this study.

relevant and important in determining the extent to which the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art at Edgewood, English Education Discipline, could be said to be preparing student teachers with the knowledge and skills for understanding the relations between literature and society.

The second limitation refers to the unavailability of literature for certain sections covered in this report. Given the nature, context, and the purpose of this study, it was important for the researcher to get relevant literature and other related information regarding the pedagogic practices and the underlying objectives that informed the teaching of literary art at UDW and Edgewood College of Education. While it was relatively possible to find relevant literature on the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art at UDW, it was too difficult to locate any literature or information related to the teaching of literary art at Edgewood College. As a result, this study relies on narrative interviews (as discussed briefly in Chapter Three) with the then Programme Director of the English Department at Edgewood College. Such narratives offered a detailed insight into the nature of, and purpose for, the pedagogic practices employed in the teaching of literary art to student teachers at Edgewood College of Education.

4.1.6 Ethical Considerations

While this study uses as one of the data sources for the narrative recounts a novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, which raises such sensitive issues as racist attitudes, stereotypes, sexism and strong language, it was necessary for the researcher to consider the effects of such issues on the part of the research participants and the resultant influences of the

participants' reactions towards such issues on the findings of this study. As such, the researcher adhered to the principles underlying research ethics which, according to Leslie (2002, p.39), refer to "a set of widely accepted moral principles about correct conduct and behavioural expectations towards those being researched and towards other researchers." While it is true, according to Leslie (2002), that the principles governing research ethics are universal and concern such issues as honesty, respect for the rights of individuals and permission to enter certain areas, the researcher in this study issued consent to, and requested from, relevant persons and authorities the permission to conduct this research project.

4.1.7 Reflections

The main purpose of this Chapter was to discuss the methodological strategies employed in the data collection process for this study. The above discussion was presented in different sections, where the first section clarified the reasons for the choice made about the methodological strategies employed in this research project, and how such strategies assisted me as a researcher in establishing the interaction between data sourced and the purpose of the study. The second section of this Chapter offered a description on the kind of data this study gathered, and showed the extent to which the nature of data gathered plays a role in fulfilling the purpose of this study. The third section of the Chapter introduced the design of, as well as the purpose for, the use of research instruments towards data collection and how such instruments help this study in dealing with issues related to validity, reliability, quality checks and ethical considerations. Finally, this section presented the limitations and ethical considerations of this study. The former in this regard offered the basis for the development of further research using different theories, as will be discussed in Chapter Six of this study, and the latter highlighted the principles which the researcher adhered to for the

completion of this research project. The next Chapter critically analyses the data collected as discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION: STUDENTS' NARRATIVE RE-COUNTS ON THE PEDAGOGIC PRACTICES IN THE TEACHING OF *The Madonna of Excelsior*

Introduction

Chapter Four described and explained the methodological choices and procedures employed towards providing data that would meet the purpose of this study and, furthermore, clarified the reasons for the choice made about the nature of research methodology used in this research. The Chapter specified the research participants and provided reasons, which guided the selection of such research participants. Chapter Five presents the analysis of qualitative data discussed in the previous Chapter. Such analysis is set against a brief overview of potential Marxist theories in relation to literary criticism, documentary evidence such as book reviews and, most importantly, an in-depth critical engagement with students' narrative interviews on the novel. The use of documentary evidence in this study is aimed at showing how other literary critics relate *The Madonna of Excelsior* to the socio-political realities of South Africa. Such documentary evidence help this study to make comparisons, contrasts, evaluations, assessments and to supplement the data collected towards determining the extent to which the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art to student teachers at Edgewood could be said to be preparing student teachers with knowledge and skills for teaching literary art to learners. The Chapter will, after analysing the data collected, offer a reflective evaluation to determine the extent to which the research findings of this study answer the Critical Questions and meet the purpose of this research project.

To do so, the study adopts the Proppian model¹⁶ to analyze and categorize the themes identified in the novels during the narrative recounts. In this context, the application of the Proppian model is an important one, for it establishes the narrative structure of the novel in relation to the identified themes from different sources of data (Singh, 2003). Such identified themes will, to a particular extent, provide and define the socio-structural and political ideology which characterized apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa's socio-political realities. Figure 5.1 below presents the themes identified during the analysis of the narrative recounts made by the students.

Figure: 5.1. Themes identified according to Proppian Model of literary analysis on *The Madonna of Excelsior*

Critical Framework	Book Readings	Interviews	Code name	Race	Gender
Literary expression Historical Materialism Ideology Dialectical Materialism	Racial Conflict	Gender	Nelly	White	Female
	Polarity	Racism	David	White	Male
	Stereotypes	Religion	Sipho	Black	Male
	Ideologies	Racism	Zama	Black	Female
	Political History	Gender	Vaneshry	Indian	Female
	Gender relations	Gender	Kenny	Indian	Male
	Textual expression	History	Peter	Coloured	Male
		Racism	Susan	Coloured	Female

The above table presents a variety of themes identified from different sources of data. These themes represent the attempts made by students in their critical engagement with Mda's (2002) *The Madonna of Excelsior*. Their attempts to analyse critically the above novel are dealt with individually as separate themes. To do so, these themes are further categorized in terms of how they relate to one another as this helps in avoiding repetition during the analysis process. This categorization gave rise to the following themes: literary art as a social expression, historical and dialectical materialism, apartheid and religion as political ideologies, democracy as a political ideology, gender relations, and racial conflict, all of which seek to reflect the extent to which students have mastered the pedagogic practices for

¹⁶ A Proppian Model used to analyse the Narrative Structure adapted from Singh (2003).

the teaching of literature, and how such mastery will assist them in inculcating knowledge and skills for social transformation to learners. These themes are then analysed by looking, first, at the major themes of the theoretical framework in relation to those revealed through the narrative recounts and, secondly, by relating these two sets of themes to those identified from book reviews on the novel. The next section offers this presentation.

5.1.1 Literary Art as a social Expression

The issue of the relationship between literary art and society as presented above is further revealed by the students during their narrative interviews on *The Madonna of Excelsior*. During the interview process, most students revealed that in Mda's attempt in *The Madonna of Excelsior* (2002) to tell the truth and reproduce things affecting the lives of the greater number of people in South Africa, he uses a mimetic approach and presents to his audience the evils of the apartheid regime and its effects that are so evident in post-apartheid South Africa's society. For example, asked whether or not Mda's novel is symbolic of the socio-political realities of South Africa, Peter ¹⁷(personal communication, October, 26, 2006, p.1) has this to say:

Peter: The novel like *The Madonna of Excelsior* symbolises the lived experiences of most South African people under apartheid. It provides a very good grounding of the apartheid rule. It shows that even though the White people of South Africa were the ones who were responsible for the pass Laws, they were at the same time contradicting themselves, they were the ones who were sleeping with their maids and that was against what they believed on. So the novel tells us of the evils of apartheid government. And you see, these things are still there today in South Africa, we still see those things as the remaining evidence that is why I say it is symbolic.

Peter's views and interpretation of the relationship between literary art and society reveal the contradictions that dominated South Africa during apartheid rule. As a prospective teacher

¹⁷ The name Peter is used as a pseudonym in this study, and all the names used through out this Chapter are used in similar ways as that of Peter in order to avoid revealing the names of the research participants

himself, Peter's interpretation shows he is able to relate the textual world created in Mda's novel to that of a real life context. This is clearly shown in the sense that Peter's assertion is able to identify and relate to the pass Laws and Acts of apartheid South Africa. Amongst the Acts presented in the novel is the 1953 Immorality Act, which forbade sexual relations between Whites and non-Whites. Peter's interpretation of the role played by *The Madonna of Excelsior* is made clear in the sense that Mda accurately attempts to depict life and its problems within the context of apartheid South Africa. Peter's critical engagement with the above novel, one may argue, is strengthened by the way in which he and other students engaged with the critical questions based on the novel in the tutorial contact sessions, lectures presentations and assignment topics offered to them. An example that serves to testify this claim is the assignment topic offered to the students:

The Madonna of Excelsior can be classified as a successful historical novel. Write a well-structured essay of 2-3 pages in which you critically evaluate this statement by referring to incidents and characters in the novel¹⁸.

On the basis of the above assignment topic, it can be argued that Peter's ability to see the novel as symbolically representing South African history is grounded on the pedagogic practices, nature of the questions formulated for critically engaging with the novel, and a strong need to establish the relationship between literary art and society's history. Furthermore, Peter's ability to identify historical facts in the novel that relate to South Africa's social realities is also supplemented by Mda's interview in an article reviewing his novel, *The Steamy Past of a Free State Town* written for the *Mail & Guardian* (2002):

I have recently become a frequent visitor to Excelsior, since I am writing a novel in this Free State platteland town about 100km northeast of Bloemfontein. The people are friendly and always welcome strangers like myself with open arms. It has not always been like that. In 1971 South African Newspapers bewailed the fact that the

¹⁸ See appendix E(a) question 2

residents of Excelsior had become withdrawn and hostile to strangers. A scandal had broken out, and both black and white townfolk rallied around one another to keep their shame away from the glare of the world.

In relation to the above quotation, the review points out that Mda uses observation and documented evidence to establish accurately the truth of South Africa's history. The book review, furthermore, reveals that Mda used a face-to-face interview with the people of Excelsior and those who were directly involved in the scandal of 1971. In his interview with one of the Excelsior residents involved in the scandal, *Mail & Guardian* (2002, p.1) writes:

First to be arrested under the Immorality Act was Elizabeth Ramasedi, a 22-year-old beauty from the nearby black township of Mahlatswetsa. She confessed she had had relations with Johannes Calitz, the town's only butcher and member of town council. She, however, added that she had not been the only black woman who had done this. She mentioned a number of others.

Through the above techniques, Mda (2002) establishes the objective or absolute existence of political influences in South Africa which shaped the current state of post-apartheid South Africa. In other words, he shows the reading public how the historical influences have given rise to the present state of South Africa's socio-political realities, and how those influences are still witnessed today. On this basis, his novel makes it clear that without understanding the historical materialism of South African politics, to which I turn in the next section, it will be difficult one to understand how the country has come to be the way it is today.

5.1.2 Historical and Dialectical Materialism

Mda (2002) provides a comprehensive picture of modern life informed by a change in the political history of the country. In his depiction, however, Mda does not provide one view of life, but attempts to show the different classes, manners, and stratification of life during and after apartheid rule in South Africa. He achieves this by combining a wide variety of details

derived from historically observed and documented facts to approach the norm of experiences amongst South Africans in order that his writing is well situated within the confines of the country's history. In relation to the narrative recounts, not only does Peter view the novel as symbolic of the South African realities as discussed above, rather, he also contends that the teaching of this novel at Edgewood Campus in the English discipline offered him a chance of understanding some of the historical factors that led to the existence of the Coloured nation in South Africa and how those reasons shaped the current South African situation. For example, asked whether the teaching of this novel, given its historical component, equipped him with knowledge and skills for preparing learners as potential agents for socio-political change in South Africa, Peter (personal communication, October, 26, 2006, p.1) comments:

It teaches us how things were during those days, it does so by also educating our learners that 'look, this is how things were' during apartheid. So these kind of things need not to be repeated. It teaches children about history and why South Africa is the way it is now. For example, it tells us that those past laws of racial discriminations...were wrong ...now...things have changed, if you want to do something you are free to do so. If I want to marry a black person for instance nothing should stop me from marrying that particular person ...the race should not be an issue I am free to marry who I want. The novel teaches learners to accept each other, not to be racists, and not to be prejudiced.

Drawing from the above comments, Peter makes reference to the past practices and the evil of racial discriminations by putting more emphasis on the fact that these are things not worth repeating both in learning institutions and society at large. Peter achieves this by discouraging the racial discrimination that dominated white-ruled South Africa, while embracing the principles of democracy that condemn racism and racial prejudice. Moreover, Peter's use of emphasis that "...these kind of things need not to be repeated", and that the novel teaches us "... not to be racists, and not to be prejudiced" reveals the unevenness in the life of South Africa's society, and how other members of the country were treated.

Peter's ability to engage critically with the novel can be linked to Mda's (2002) technique in examining human beings objectively, by refraining from a closer scrutiny of his characters. Instead, he leaves readers to draw their own conclusions about the kind of life he presents through his portrayal of South Africa's politics. This claim is also shared by Vaneshry (personal communication, October, 26, 2006, p.1) who, when asked about the extent to which Mda's narrative techniques allow her as reader to see the novel as re-telling aspects of socio-political history of South Africa, has this to say:

Vaneshry: The writer writes his novel not as an insider, but as an outsider, but not as far outside that he cannot identify, but through an inward look that enables him to identify with the subject of the story he is trying to tell. I am saying this because he always does not make himself part of the victims of the apartheid, but as someone who observes it as it happened to those whom he is writing about. He always says 'we', 'we', 'we', in order to show that even though he may have observed or have not gone through all that, but some people have experienced it on our behalves.

Vaneshry's understanding of the techniques employed in the re-telling of South Africa's history is an important one, for it provides an insight that the evil practices identified by Peter in the preceding paragraph may not have been felt or experienced by all Africans, but still represents a collective feeling of the non-White people of South Africa.

Once again, the literary interpretation and critical understanding of the novel presented by Vaneshry above reveals the extent to which the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art at Edgewood, and the nature of the assignment topics and questions asked on the novel, prepared them to engage independently with the text. The following assignment topic confirms this:

"The Madonna of Excelsior (my emphasis): a representation of life in all its hues and shades, a picture of humanity more fully resolved than anything found in a history book" (Chris Farah). Write a well-structured essay of 2-3 pages in which you critically evaluate this statement by referring to incidents and characters in the novel¹⁹.

¹⁹ See appendix E(a) question 4

This type of an essay topic allowed Vaneshry to see the novel as presenting historical events through a narrative frame to render South Africa's socio-political realities more comprehensible and real. Through her skill in revealing the narrative frame used in the retelling of this history, Vaneshry is able to identify the symbolism established through the novel. Moreover, through this understanding of symbolism, one can see how Vaneshry looks at the way Mda portrays characters in the novel to represent more effectively and symbolically, the collective experiences of African people who suffered racial oppression and prejudice under apartheid. To achieve this, Vaneshry presents Mda (2002) as a writer who takes a pessimistic view to portray a kind of life that centres on the negative part of human existence, and critiques with sensitivity the fraught nature of race and power relations in apartheid South Africa. She further states that through such a narrative technique, Mda writes more openly about South Africa's political problems and by trying to document the corruption and disenchantment caused by apartheid South Africa and its imposed policies of racial inequality.

According to Marx (1975), the effects of inequality such as those identified by Peter, as well as the experiences highlighted by Vaneshry, are fundamental aspects of the socio-political realities which literature seeks to expose, and need to be changed through neo-Marxist notion of democratic struggle. It is in relation to this same mode of inequality that Ritzer and Schubert (1991) in their presentation of neo-Marxism (as discussed in Chapter Two) call for a unifying force to ensure a democratically organized system free of inequalities. On this basis, both Peter's and Vaneshry's claims as presented above relate to Mda's (2002) observed facts of life of South Africa's history, where he exposes and criticizes the society's immorality and ethics, but still manages to portray life accurately as it happened. The next

section focuses on political ideologies as one of the themes evident in the narrative recounts and book reviews.

5.1.3 Apartheid and Religion as Political Ideologies

The novel highlights that one of the factors shaping the present day South Africa is the use of Christian religion (which discouraged racial mixing) as an ideology to divide, control and exploit African people. Through Mda's (2002) use of religion to reveal certain contradictions which dominated apartheid South Africa, one can see how ideologies may function as powerful tools for controlling and shaping people's view of the world in which they live. In the context of this study, Mda's portrayal of the Afrikaner nationalists as religious people who defy their belief is an important one, for it reveals certain ideological contradictions which dominate(d) apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. Mda (2002, p.87), for instance, presents Reverend Bornman as one of the men charged with miscegenation:

The devil had sent black women to tempt him and move him from the path of righteousness. The devil had always used the black female to tempt the Afrikaner... The devil made the Afrikaner to covertly covet the black woman while publicly detesting her. It was his fault that he had not been enough to resist the temptation. The devil made him do it. The devil had weakened his heart, making it open to temptations. And he made things worse for himself in the eyes of the Almighty by attempting to take his own life. He was therefore praying hours that God should forgive him.

In relation to the above quotation, the white Afrikaner community sees itself as being the upholders of the Christian religion, charged with the task of ensuring that all Christian doctrines are kept in place under constant surveillance. Mda (2002, pp.29-30) confirms this when he makes reference to the speech by former Prime Minister of South Africa from 1954-1958, J.G. Strydom:

[T]he Lion of the North ...who made certain that he did not make equal what God had not made equal. He who confirmed to his people that: As a Calvinist people we Afrikaners have, in accordance with our faith in the Word of God, developed a

policy condemning all equality and mongrelisation between White and Black. God's word teaches us, after all, that He willed into being separate nations, colours and languages.

This notion of racial inequality between Whites and Blacks in South Africa on the basis of religion is also revealed in Sipho's (Personal communication, October 24, 2006, p.) narrative recount where he states that:

Sipho: The Afrikaner nationalists in the novel created their super power station in the name of religion to correctly justify their evil doings. I mean all the things that they did to Black people were believed to have been taken from the Bible. You know you would wonder how the Bible could ever promote such an evil act. To show that it was some kind of a personal belief or ...I am not sure if I will be right to call it an ideology..., but those kinds of things. They thought if all African people believed that they would respect them, fear them ... so that they will be in power for as long as they live. You see what I mean...that's why they were also the ones who contradicted their own beliefs, raping Black women, exploiting their husbands

The exploitation of black women as shown in the quotation above also exposes issues related to gender relations (to be discussed latter in this Chapter) where women were subjected to sexual exploitation and physical torture, harassment and humiliation. To avoid these forms of exploitations, neo-Marxism suggests a radically democratic system made up of a number of democratic struggles which may include, amongst others, women, children and other subordinate members in order to deal with all social inequalities in different spheres of society (Ritzer and Schubert, 1991). The next section offers an exploration of democracy as a political ideology.

5.1.4 Democracy as a Political ideology

The ideological contradictions that existed during the apartheid regime as shown in the preceding section prove to be the major shortfall in the socio-political transformation processes of South Africa. These contradictions tend to continue and dominate South African politics even in its democratic rule. In his novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, Mda reveals these contradictions by presenting Viliki as the revolutionary Movement's stalwart, the patriot, and the first Black Councillor in Excelsior, whose success as the Chairperson of the council shook the whole of Mahlatswetsa²⁰ location, which saluted him as the "ruler of all. Ruler of even the mightiest and the richest of Excelsior. He who holds sway over ... the rest of the genteel people of Excelsior" (Mda, 2002, pp.173-4). As a political leader entrusted with the task of establishing equity and equal distribution of resources such as housing as a step towards social transformation:

Viliki had allocated himself a second house, which he was renting out to some homeless family. He felt that as the mayor, he deserved a second house in order to supplement his meagre income from the council...when there were still so many people on the list, desperately waiting for government-subsidized houses.

In the context of this study, the portrayal of Viliki and other members of the council as representing the people's interests and demands is an important one, for it exposes the contradictions that characterise political transformation in South Africa. This characterization of socio-political transformation and its contradictions is also revealed by Kenny (personal communication, October, 27, 2006, P.2) who, when asked to comment on the contradictions which dominate South African politics comments that:

... if you look at what happens when the election comes [politicians] come and make promises and when they get into power, they will only deliver to their own provinces. You see, you go to other provinces in South Africa; there is no running water, electricity, houses, schools and many other things. But go to the homes and townships of those political leaders, you'll be surprised. They are doing things for

²⁰ An Orange Free State settlement allocated for black people in South Africa during the apartheid regime.

themselves and forget about the people who voted for them. And this thing is not good, that is why many people don't want to vote any more, it is because they have been fooled. So I can say there are contradictions.

In the context of this study, the above quotation shows a need for collaborative efforts towards establishing political trust and stability if effective socio-political transformation is to be realised. To do so, Mda (2002) manages to establish a textually-constructed rainbow nation, by bringing in characters of different races and cultural backgrounds. He achieves this by involving characters from the Afrikaner and African communities, representing many shades of personalities, allegiances and political posturing on both sides. With regard to the African community, he includes characters who serve as sell-outs of their own people (symbolically represented by Sekatle), who enjoys his life by helping those who joined the Movement and operate “underground”, after a long time of betraying them. The next section discusses issues on gender relations

5.1.5 Gender Relations

The portrayal of women in the novel is one of the aspects which did not go unnoticed. The interviews during the narrative recounts with the students show that, although the role of women in the novel is presented as strong, having the power to manipulate and seduce as the only weapon for self-defence, it is also true that the representation of women in the novel reveals issues regarding gender inequality, which perpetuate gender stereotypes. When asked, for instance, about her feelings as a female student regarding aspects raised in the

novel and what makes her feel way she does, Susan²¹ (personal communication, October, 26, 2006, P.1) comments:

Susan: ... [The] issue of women as sex subjects and looked down upon is more emphasized in this novel ... remember during the sex scandal all women end up in jail and the men get away with it. So, you can see that although they are black women, they are women you know what I am talking about, the fact that they are women is what matters most in this novel. You know it always happens in this country that you find that if a man has got five girlfriends it is okay, it is not okay, but it is okay because he is a man. But if a woman has got five boyfriends then she is a “bitch” So you clearly can see that in many cases men are getting away with things they are not supposed to do and a woman is charged....

The issue of women portrayed as sex subjects as shown in the quotation is a critical one. In the novel, women’s sexuality is constantly exploited by men, especially by the White Farmers. The novel, in most cases, portrays women in their naked bodies and as sex objects only to satisfy men’s sexual desires. Men are often portrayed as insensitive, inconsiderate and ignorant. This same issue of women’s portrayal in the novel is also highlighted in some of the assignment topics set for the students:

1. In *The Madonna of Excelsior* Niki is seen as the central character and Mda uses her to explore “the Madonna/whore” concept. (Laurice Taitz). Write a well-structured essay of 2-3 pages in which you critically evaluate this statement by referring to incidents and characters in the novel.

3. *The Madonna of Excelsior* focuses on the lives of two women –Niki and Popi-but it also reveals difficulties experienced by men in this society. Write a well-structured essay of 2-3 pages in which you critically evaluate this statement by referring to incidents and characters in the novel²².

From these topics, it is clear that the manner in which the topics were phrased made students engage with the novel in ways that would make them realise that the novel represents real issues and events that took place in real society. The depiction and presentation of women’s experiences as shown in the above topics is also revealed in Whipple’s (2004, p.1) review on *The Madonna of Excelsior*, which includes the following:

²¹ Susan is a pseudonym given to a female-Indian student who participated as a research informant or participant in this study. All the pseudonyms used in this study are coined in mutual agreement between the researcher and the researched as a way of not revealing their personal identity.

²² See appendix E (a) for these questions 1 and 3.

Niki, the mother in this painting and the main character in this novel, poses often for Father Frans Claerhout, an artist whose expressionistic paintings in bright colors feature native South Africans as the models for religious paintings. Niki, who posed originally because she desperately needed the money and was willing to travel thirty-five kilometers to Fr. Claerhout's studio, often on foot.... Through Niki's story, the reader sees black women regarded as chattel, raising the children of the whites (often at the expense of their own black children), while being paid barely subsistence level wages to do jobs no one else will do. Often mistrusted and humiliated by employers, and regularly harassed and even raped by their bosses, town officials, judges, and even clergymen, they are victimized again and again, yet we see in Niki a woman who never yields to self-pity, maintaining her pride even when she and eighteen other women and the men who have used them are put on trial for violating the Immorality Act, a violation which produced Niki's daughter Popi.

This quotation clearly reveals the exploitation of black women's sexuality under apartheid South Africa. The above quotation, along with Susan's narrative recounts, identifies particular ideology that is highlighted through the novel. These interpretations create vivid scenes of South African life, both good and bad, from the 1970s to the present. They do so by revealing how women were portrayed in South Africa's social formation. They further reveal the spectacular ugliness of the South African situation in all its forms: the brutality of the Afrikaner nationalist role, the terrible farm conditions, the phenomenal hypocrisy and disillusionment of the past Laws, poverty of African life, crime, and a host of other social ills such as gender discrimination and inequality. For instance, Susan's use of the emphasis "...it is okay, it is not okay, but it is okay because he is a man" in the quotation above is suggestive of the need to establish an unbiased society in which gender roles and relations are redefined with the intention of creating equality in both social and political domains.

To meet this need, Mda (2002) provides an initial step towards establishing equality between gender roles by creating a clear-eyed vision of South Africa's transition from a restrictive white-ruled government to a democratically elected government which, to a certain extent,

tries to deal with issues such as racism and gender inequality. He presents Black women as more real than fictional, not idealized, but people with real hopes, dreams, and strategies for survival, and capable of evoking enormous sympathy from the readers or audience, especially as their personal limitations and faults become clear (Whipple, 2004). He presents women as people who, although faced with several hardships, are able to stand on their own and move forward towards political change equality, unity and political stability. In this regard, Whipple's (2004, p.1) review shows how:

Mda recreates Niki's life, showing her day-to-day struggles under the apartheid government of the Afrikaners while also depicting her as Fr. Claerhout sees her in his paintings-as a colorful Madonna figure, the mother of children who will eventually change the world. Without resorting to melodrama or clichés, he portrays Niki as an imperfect, sometimes angry, and often calculating woman determined to hang on to her pride while using the only power she has, her sexual power over the men who would control her.

Mda's presentation is important in this study, for it provides to readers with a variety of ways in which issues of gender and racial inequalities are to be resolved.

In her narrative recount, Susan confirms the attempt made in dealing with gender inequalities when she says that the novel "...strengthens the role of a woman in her identity and how a woman comes to terms with that. It shows that, for a person to be accepted in society, one has to first accept himself/herself" (Personal communication, October, 26, 2006). This view is also shared by Nelly (personal communication, October, 26, 2006, P.1) who, when asked, "What knowledge have you gained from the teaching of this novel? How does your knowledge gained from the teaching of this novel relate to your teaching of literature to learners in the classroom context?", responded:

Nelly: the novel teaches us about how women during those days were treated, women had no say to their husbands but now things have changed, women now also have their voices in society, they are no longer expected to be quiet and

comply...[and] to be silent, they have to participate in society. So [we] can also teach children that ‘...look...this is how women were treated, now things have change, women must also learn to have a say’.

The above quotation makes it clear that throughout the novel, Nelly reveals that Mda (2002) retains his sympathy for African women because of the abuses inflicted on them by those few abusive Afrikaners mentioned in the novel to reveal a broader vision of South Africa’s future; a society in which all races and gender groups work together. Mda achieves this by concentrating less on the national violence and battles for survival that characterized the apartheid rule in the 1970s. Instead, Mda (2002) focuses more on the individual, internal racial conflicts of people in Excelsior, and how such conflicts are resolved to effect social changes and the rainbow nation better.

5.1.6 Racial Conflict

The novel exposes issues of racism between Blacks and Whites in apartheid South Africa by carefully juxtaposing them as two separate groups of the human species with no common beliefs and origins. It presents Afrikaners regarding themselves as a nation charged with the task of maintaining racial purity in South Africa. Although the novel presents this scenario in a small township in the Free State, the presentation is symbolic of the racial conflict that existed across South Africa as a country. The issue of racial conflict is also raised by Zama who points out that the novel “...indicates that South Africa was a racist country, a country where everyone who was not white was treated as if he/she was a visitor ...everyone was not free except for Whites because they thought this was their home only” (Personal communication, October, 27, 2006). This view is also shared by David who states that “during apartheid ...things were too difficult such that one can only imagine how Black people, especially women, felt when they were abused and raped simply because they were

not White..." (Personal communication, October, 27, 2006). In relation to this symbolism, Whipple (2004, p.1) writes:

The small town in which the action takes place is a microcosm of the larger country of South Africa. The reader becomes acquainted with the townspeople of both races in Excelsior, develops sympathy for some and abhorrence of others, and sees South African life as it affects fully-developed and realistic characters of both races. It is the "colored" people, like Popi, who belong to no culture, who have the most difficult lives-they are too white for the black society in which they try to live, and far too black to be part of white society, even if they wanted to be.

The lack of belongingness shown in this quotation also relate to the racial conflict that exists within South Africa today. This shows how people of different races find it too difficult to accept people who do not share the same cultural backgrounds, beliefs and racial identities as part of the same community. However, Nelly (personal communication, October, 26, 2006, P.1) makes an interesting comment on this when she writes:

Nelly: The novel has given us some skills of knowing where we are coming from and where we are going. In terms of a classroom room situation, [the novel] provides an understanding as to how we as teachers, must be able to understand the differences of the learners we are teaching in the class, as well as being able to identify sensitive issues which may not be friendly to students who are not of the race cultures as ours. ...and the novel teaches us of what was happening during apartheid and what is happening now. ...In fact what was happening before was a disgrace so things now have changed, what is happening now is normal. We have the rainbow nation. It's sort of ...prepares us to teach our children about the way in which they should accept and appreciate others, ...although it teaches us about the past, it simply shows us of how things were during those days and how change is important in our society.

The rainbow nation referred to in Nelly's assertion is one that leads to multi-culturalism and multi-racialism as a positive step towards social transformation. In the context of this study, the teaching of literature can serve one of the ways of create an awareness of the socio-political problems which characterize South African politics, and possible alternatives for dealing with such problems.

5.2 A REFLECTIVE EVALUATION ON DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents a critical evaluation by reflecting on the data analysis discussed in the preceding sections of this Chapter. This reflective evaluation seeks to respond to the critical questions that guide this study as shown in the opening Chapter. These critical questions are:

- To what extent have students mastered the knowledge in understanding of the role of literary art in society?
- What kind of knowledge do students manifest in their understanding of the role literary art can play in society?

The evaluation process also assists this study in determining the extent to which the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art in the English Education Discipline at Edgewood Campus of UKZN could be said to have prepared student teachers with the knowledge and skills for understanding literary art as an expression of social realities.

To answer the first question: *To what extent have students mastered the knowledge in understanding of the role of literary art in society?*

Critical analysis of the data analysed in the preceding sections reveals that the students were able to identify particular themes which they considered salient in the novel. They identified themes including, amongst others, the re-telling of South Africa's history, gender inequality and racism under apartheid. The students were, furthermore, able to relate the identified themes to the socio-political realities of current day South Africa. Their ability to engage with the novel in the process of identifying themes also revealed that the students' individual differences in terms of races and gender identity had, to a certain extent, influenced their understanding and interpretation of the novel. As a result, this study concludes that the students have acquired skills and knowledge to interpret critically the relationship between literary art and social-political realities.

With regard to history, for instance, Peter, a Coloured student, pointed out that the teaching of *The Madonna of Excelsior* offered him the kind of knowledge that serves to ground his understanding of what South Africa looked like under apartheid. He emphasized the fact that the teaching of a novel of this nature provides readers with an idea of the historical realities of the country they find themselves in. He further points out that the novel has the potential to assist those who were more affected by the appalling conditions of the apartheid rule to make peace with the past. As a Coloured student himself, for instance, this is what he has to say:

Peter: You see, I am Coloured myself, but I don't always see [those] Whites as bad people because they raped Black women, and I don't see them as racists now because they did not treat Coloured people as part of this country, I see them as the creators of our beautiful multiracial and multi-cultural society, so we don't have to be prejudice to each other because all these things are over. But I am not saying that what they did was correct, it was absolutely wrong and stupid, but it has passed with the time...and because it is now over, I can marry a white person, an Indian or Black, there is no problem in that because it is only love....

In light of the above, Peter's understanding clearly shows that he sees literary art as a textual expression, to use Culler's (1997) words, that seeks to articulate certain attitudes, feelings and realities in a given society.

To answer the second Critical Question: *What kind of knowledge do students manifest in their understanding of the role literary art can play in society?*

The kind of knowledge the students presented is such that they see a close relationship between literature and society and that the teaching of literary art serves as a means to foster an in-depth understanding of how certain ideology influence the ways in which a community of readers is able to view the world in which they live. This knowledge has a lot in common

with Marx's understanding of the relationship between literature and society. Marx (1976) points out to the fact that literary art as a product of social reality cannot be divorced from a variety of human experiences which it seeks to represent. In relation to this view, when commenting on issues of gender inequality as presented in the novel, for instance, Nelly, a White female student, Kenny and Vaneshry Indian male and female students respectively, point out that the novel exposes the extent to which women were treated, harassed, reduced to sex objects, humiliated and undermined in the hands of men. They further claim that gender inequality is still pervasive in the present day South Africa.

The above interpretations therefore offer an in-depth understanding of the relationship between literature and society as they are able to relate these themes to the lived experiences of women in the hands of men, both in the past and in present day South Africa. Most importantly, although the novel does not relay the suffering of White and Indian women, these students, regardless of their racial and gender differences, are able to see the novel as symbolically representing the collective experiences of all women in the hands of men during and after apartheid in South Africa. This interpretation is therefore suggestive of the fact that race and gender, as characteristics used in the selection of the research participants for this study, did not have a particular influence on the students' critical engagement with the novel. This is also made clear in *figure 5.1* where students were able to identify similar or related themes, regardless of the racial and gender differences, which they considered more representative of South Africa's political realities and lived experiences.

The students consider *The Madonna of Excelsior* as a novel that can make for an effective teaching tool in the classroom context. They point out that the teaching of this novel is very

relevant to the multi-racial and multi-cultural nature of the South African classroom context where learners from different social backgrounds can be made aware of the injustices of the past. This understanding also shows that, although these students are different in terms of race and gender identity, they are still able to realise the role the novel can play in the teaching and learning setting. Commenting on the relevance of the novel in the context of schooling, Nelly, for example, points out *The Madonna of Excelsior* plays a role in preparing teachers to be aware of the different attitudes that exist amongst learners as a result of their racial and gender differences. This view, furthermore, reveals the kind of knowledge the students hold in relation to the relationship of literature and society; how the teaching of literary art in schools may assist in making learners aware of the injustices suffered during the apartheid era; and that such evil acts as racism, sexism and prejudice need not be repeated (Peter, Personal communication, October, 26, 2006).

While it is interesting to acknowledge, on the one hand, the extent to which the students were able first, to engage critically with the text and, secondly, relate certain historically events to the socio-political realities they consider to have shaped South Africa's society, it is also important to note, on the other hand, that their engagement with the text does not necessarily draw from the two literary theories discussed in Chapter two of this study. This, as a consequence, does not make it clear whether or not their ability to engage with the novel was due to the fact that, first, the text analysed is a South African-based novel and raises issues that are already part of the students' generally known experiences and, secondly, whether or not the historical events captured in the novel already formed part of the history taught to the students from history classes. Most importantly, this uncertain situation makes

one wonder whether or not the students could have engaged critically in similar ways with, say one of William Shakespeare's books, *Richard II*, which deals with political issues far removed from the South African context.

The above situation, however, may be the result of the nature of the critical questions which guided this study. In other words, the critical questions arguably confined themselves only to the nature and the extent of the mastery of skills and knowledge in the teaching of literary art. These critical questions did not focus on the extent to which such mastery of knowledge and skills is dependent on their understanding of particular literary theories, which form the basis of their in-depth individual understanding of the relationship between literary art and society. Perhaps the selection of the novel, which formed part of analysis in this study also channelled students into making central the issues which they were able to identify with, rather than critically relating such issues to certain dominant theories of literary criticism and the role they play in exposing society's values, the ideologies and dominant beliefs which shape our understanding of the world. This area of weakness may be addressed in the future research projects as suggested towards the end of Chapter six.

5.3 Conclusion

Chapter five presented the qualitative data analysis as an attempt to meet the suggested purpose of this study. The Chapter did so by means of a careful realization of how the narrative discourses of the novel revealed the extent to which students are able to make use of their knowledge and skills in the teaching of literature for social transformation. The above is evident in that, while the novel presented several themes, which could serve to highlight the unjust practices of the past, the students were able to relate such themes to their everyday experiences as well as to the real life context of South Africa's politics. To this extent, Chapter Five throws light on the kind of knowledge and skills students have in relation to the teaching of literary art in schools for social transformation. The Chapter showed that students' understandings of the teaching of literary art in the school context make an effective tool for making learners aware of the role of literature in society. Chapter Five revealed that, although one may argue that students' ability to identify certain themes in the novel was simply because the whole content of the novel is the re-telling of the already known history of the South Africa's politics, it is clear that students these students do not simply consider literature as an entertaining piece of written work, rather, they see literature as having a special role to play in society. Chapter Six presents a concluding summary of all the Chapters presented in this study as well as recommendations for the future development of teaching literary art in the University of KwaZulu-Natal Faculty of Education and the need to further research on areas that relate to the teaching of literary art in teacher training institutions in South Africa.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In a country where education was used to divide and undermine certain political, social, economic and cultural interests, it would seem necessary for pedagogic practices and other related areas of teaching and learning to become central in the elaboration of educational reform and social transformation. Teacher-training institutions, on the one hand, must serve as sites for the production of sound knowledge and skills for eradicating the remnants of apartheid rule. Teachers, on the other hand, must be seen as agents charged with the task of ensuring the rapid achievement socio-political changes governed by the principles of South Africa's new democratic ideation. To do so, this study argues that the teaching of literary art in the context of schooling serves as one of the possible means of ensuring that the injustices of the past are not repeated in the present day South Africa.

Chapter One offered the rationale which informed the purpose of this study. This Chapter also presented the historical development in the teaching and learning of literature within the context of schooling, by exploring the different functions literature performed in various social settings as seen by literary theorists and scholars. Chapter Two offered the theoretical framework of this study by looking at the dominant theories that relate to the teaching and learning of literary work and, in the process, provided an exploration of Cultural Heritage as a theoretical approach to literary teaching. This theoretical approach to literary teaching reveals the extent to which the teaching of literary art may play a crucial role in enhancing the rapid spread and preservation of dominant cultures through education as a system. The

theoretical framework offered an examination of two dominant literary theories: orthodox Marxism and neo-Marxism. The exploration was limited to these two theoretical vantage points because they provide insights in analysing, probing and exposing the underlying socio-political ideologies that influence the teaching and learning of literary art within the context of education.

Chapter Three presented an exploration of the historical development of teacher education in South Africa with reference to the former University of Durban-Westville (UDW) and Edgewood College of Education. This exploration reveals that the teaching of literature in the above institutions differed in terms of the pedagogic practices that informed their training of student teachers. In this regard, the study highlighted that the teaching of literary art at Edgewood College, for instance, was in line with the school curriculum and therefore required student teachers to be trained and prepared in ways that would render them as teachers capable of dealing with varieties of texts as sources of knowledge in the classroom context. This exploration, furthermore, showed that the merger between these two institutions to form the new University of KwaZulu-Natal's Faculty of Education, the English Education Discipline adopted a completely different approach informed by alternative outcomes and purposes as rationale to the teaching of literary art to prospective teachers.

Chapter Four discussed the methodological procedures employed as well as the sources of data collected for this study. The Chapter also clarified the reasons for the choice made about the methodology used in this research and, in the process, established how the structural design of the steps taken throughout the research process, assisted me in

establishing the interaction between the sources of data collection and the purpose of the study. The Chapter further outlined how research sample, site, and documentary evidence were selected and identified to yield the kind of data that would effect more useful findings for the study. In the selection of the above, the Chapter showed how the research instruments were designed and implemented with the selected research subjects. Chapter Four also highlighted issues related to validity, reliability, quality checks and ethical considerations

Chapter Five presented the analysis of qualitative data discussed in the previous Chapter and positioned the analysis against the potential Marxist theories in relation to literary criticism. The analysis included documentary evidence data such as book reviews and, most importantly, an in-depth critical engagement with students' narrative interviews on the novel. The use of documentary evidence in this study is aimed at showing how other literary critics relate *The Madonna of Excelsior* to the socio-political realities of South Africa and also helped this study to make comparisons and contrasts; to evaluative assessments; and to supplement the data collected. The Chapter provided a reflective evaluation that seeks to clarify responses to the critical questions which guided this study and, most importantly, meet the purpose of the study. This reflective evaluation highlighted that the selected students revealed a convincing potential knowledge of the relationship between literature and society. Their manifestation of this knowledge was made clear in their ability to discern the historical, political and socio-economic problems which shaped the current socio-political realities present in South Africa.

6.1 Prospects for the future

The work done in all the previous Chapters of this study suggest that there is still much research to be done in the teaching of literary works in post-apartheid South African teacher training and academic institutions. Drawing from the findings of this research report, countless questions are raised and left unanswered within the confines of the investigation undertaken. As a consequence, it is finally necessary that a line is drawn and ideas for further work need to be considered for determining the extent to which the teaching of literary art can make for an effective tool in equipping learners with the knowledge and skills for critical thinking. Given the above, this Chapter closes by providing a list of recommendations for contemplation and future examination of pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art to teacher trainees.

My first recommendation recognizes that while the purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art at Edgewood could be said to be preparing student teachers with the knowledge and skills for critical reasoning, more research is needed to investigate the extent to which these students, after the completion of the degrees, are able to put in practice the skills and knowledge acquired at university in their teaching of literary art to learners.

The second recommendation is that while this study was limited only to the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art at Edgewood, more research is needed to investigate *how* such pedagogic practices are implemented in other teacher training institutions in order to ensure that student teachers are able to acquire the required skills for critical literacy. This will assist in identifying areas of concerns, and developing other alternative means for

ensuring that the teaching of literature does not simply serve as a means to an end, or for deepening students' language skills, but as a tool for inculcating knowledge and infusing students' awareness of the role of literary art in schools and society.

The third recommendation refers to the argument in this study that there is a strong need to introduce pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art, rooted in, and informed by, a theory which seeks to enhance students' understanding of the fact that literary art is representative of the material world. Such a theory-driven approach will, I want to argue, form:

- first, the basis of students' understanding of the relationship between literary art and society,
- secondly, assist students in realising how literary theory is able to mediate between their understanding of the country's socio-political realities and the role literary art plays in societies they find themselves in,
- finally, create an awareness of what constitutes a just society.

These theory-driven possibilities will ensure that student teachers are made aware of the fact that, as Lukàcs (1978, p.74) puts it, "the aspiration of [certain] writers has been the artistic reproduction of reality; fidelity to reality, the unsparing effort to render reality comprehensively and realistically has been the real criterion of literary greatness for every writer...."

In light of the above, student teachers will understand that the aspiration to render reality more comprehensible and realistic is, in itself, an establishment of a close relation between literature and society. Within this context, a theory-driven approach would assist the students as prospective teachers to understand that the teaching of literature cannot be understood in complete isolation from the society which it seeks to reflect. From this view, the

interrelatedness of literature, theory and society thus neither admits the separation of human experiences, nor encourages the isolation of social historical processes. Instead, as factors contributing to societal development and human freedom, theory as a mediating tool and, literature, as a social expression, form a special and peculiar part of the whole historical context of the entire system. This suggests that both literary theory and art have definite and specific laws and aesthetic principles that define the structure of the social system. On this basis, the study argues that continuing the work that has begun through this research project is of paramount importance. This will benefit, amongst others,:

- Lecturers in the English Education Discipline with an interest in raising the critical awareness and consciousness of student teachers by providing them with the knowledge and skills to establish the relationship between literary art and socio-political realities;
- Lecturers in various educational disciplines with an interest in inculcating critical literacy skills to student teachers by engaging their knowledge and pedagogic practices in ways that will render them as critical agents who bring into the classroom a wealth of critical insights in learners;
- Student teachers with an interest in the teaching of literary works as sources of knowledge that will enable learners to learn to make judgements and think critically about the society they find themselves in, and
- Curriculum development specialists who prepare literary set works for South African learners.

These stakeholders, through their collaborative efforts, would contribute to the development, spread and maintenance of acquired abilities and skills for creative thinking, reasoning, probing and critical engagement with varieties of texts as sources of knowledge pertinent towards the establishment of a just society and human freedom.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DECLARATION

I..... (full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. To what extent do you consider *The Madonna of Excelsior* symbolic of the socio-political nature and racial attitudes of apartheid South Africa?
2. What aspects of South Africa's politics make it more representative?
3. How are such aspects of South Africa's politics presented in the novel?
4. As a (an) White/Black/Coloured/Indian student, how do you feel about such aspects of politics raised in the novel?
5. As a female/male student, how do you feel about aspects raised in the novel?
6. What makes you feel that way?
7. To what extent did the pedagogic practices in the teaching of *The Madonna of Excelsior* prepare you as a prospective teacher to respond to the socio-political issues and racial attitudes in the classroom context?
8. How would you consider the pedagogic practices in the teaching of literary art as effective in empowering you as a prospective teacher with knowledge of inculcating skills to learners for critical reasoning?
9. What knowledge have you gained from the teaching of this novel?
10. To what extent is such knowledge important to you as a prospective teacher?
11. Why is such knowledge important to you?
12. How does your knowledge relate to your teaching of literature to learners in the classroom context?

APPENDIX C

Interview between Thompson (Thom) and Peter

Duration: 15 Minutes

Place: University Residence

Time: 9h00-9h15

Thom: I would like you to introduce yourself and tell me what you are registered for in this University.

Peter: My name is Peter, I am doing fourth year in education and I majored in English as one of my specializations.

Thom: Did you do the novel "*The Madonna Excelsior*".

Peter: Yes.

Thom: As prospective yourself, trained to teach literature in school. To what extent do you think the teaching of the novel *The Madonna of Excelsior* has equipped you with knowledge and skills of empowering learners in school?

Peter: Well..., hmm, my main concern with the UKZN programme of teaching literature first of all is that they focus on reading or expect us to have read a certain amount of books at the end of the module. But in terms of implementing the teaching of literature in the classroom context they are failing. As teachers, we are not empowered to teach novels at all. In many cases, it is all about the kind of works we did in high schools, we do it the same way as we were doing at the high school level. I am saying this because the teaching of literature in this University is concerned more with reading than teaching it. That is why I am saying that they are failing to implement it in real practice. As teachers I strongly believe that the teaching of literature here does not equip us. Some of the students

who are doing literature do it because they already had good grounding of literature or language at school, or they are able to teach literature because their teachers were their role models at schools. I believe in the BEd programme there are nine out of ten students who are doing English literature and being able to teach in the classroom, who are inspired by their teachers to become the English specialists. But in terms of the BEd English programme, the UKZN is failing us. And a lot of students were complaining about the fact that we are always told to read the text, read the text, read the novel, but ...hmm...but the tool of ...the main component of how then do we teach is lacking, because we all know how to read. I think there are some important measures that need to be put in place in the English literature programme in the BEd programme really. The other thing that concerns me greatly is that we have English Second Language speakers in the classroom, but if the focus is only on reading, how are they going to teach when they come out of the University. How are they going to teach English first language and second language speakers? How are they going to teach those learners with special needs, learners who do not know how to read?. Look, I am not saying that we should do away with novels, but my concern is the tool, how do we go about teaching these children? What kind of practical examples can I give so that these children can understand? You know, the present high school generation does not want to read, and as a teacher, I must be able to find a way of making them love to read novels, but I also need to be taught how to make them develop that culture. So what I am saying is that, the English programme really needs a drastic change to cater for those students with special needs in the classroom situation.

Thom: I see, very important information you are giving. But let's look at this novel in particular; it is a novel which presents issues of politics especially racism in South Africa. From this point, most students felt that the novel is symbolic to the South African history. What is your comment on this?

Peter: Yes, I agree with them. The novel is a very nice one because it talks about the history of apartheid South Africa. It is able to show how things were during those days, it does so by also educating our learners that ‘look, this is how things were’ during apartheid. So these kinds of things need not to be repeated. It teaches children about those pass laws of racial discriminations that all those were wrong, they do not have to be repeated at this time period, it tells us that we are now free, things have changed, if you want to do something you are free to do so. If I want to marry a Black person, for instance, nothing should stop me from marrying that particular person, if I want to marry a White person, the race should not be an issue I am free to marry who I want. The novel teaches learners to accept each other, not to be racists, and not to be prejudiced.

Thom: That sounds like what I want to call ‘an access paradox’. This is because, much as the novel may be teaching the students about the pass laws, giving them access to understanding the evils associated with apartheid rule, it in turn, brings about the kind of knowledge that is likely to re-bring the kind of attitudes of hatred amongst students of different races. I mean to say, instead of the novel being able to serve as a healing tool, it seems to be triggering most of the forgotten and forgiven practices of apartheid South Africa. So don’t you think the writer and the teaching of this novel bring more hatred and racial attitudes than healing?

Peter: I agree with you to a certain extent, but as citizens of this country, citizens of this democratic country, we do not have to forget our past, it is because of the past that we are where we are to day. I understand what you are talking about, but let’s not forget our past. For example, you see every time the June 16 programme is presented on TV, lot of people complain, I am saying this from a non-White perspective, they sometimes feel that it is going to make the Black man to go and kill the White man because of what they always reminded of on TV, as those programmes do not make them forget their suffering under White man’s rule. We all need to be reminded that, it is through the past that we are here today so that we don’t repeat the past practices. The novel like *The Madonna of Excelsior*

provides a very good grounding of apartheid rule. It shows that even though the White people of South Africa were the ones who were responsible for the pass Laws, they were at the same time contradicting themselves, they were there ones who were sleeping with their maids and that was against what they believed on. So the novel tells us of the evils of apartheid government.

Thom: Tell me something about gender issues raised by this novel. Is there anything you want to tell me about the portrayal of some characters with regard to gender stereotyping and so on?

Peter: Yea, the roles of a woman as a sex slave is more emphasized in this novel, because you see in the past, women were expected to submit to the male figures in society and in their families. But now, the role of woman in society is changing. The novel therefore teaches us about the changes that are taking place in South Africa today. Women are no longer as they are portrayed in the novel, they are now able to stand their grounds. You see in the past women had no right to say no to a man; a man would say do this, they had to do it. But now things have changed. So women at this time period, I want to call it time period and not new generation, women should be able to stand their grounds and say no to the males. But, in order for that to happen, there must be a course, that is why in the novel the lady Popi, and her mother Niki, are able to represent the old and the present generation of women; a generation which submits and the one that does not.

Thom: Well, as a Coloured person and a prospective teacher yourself, how do you feel about the issues raced in the novel about the origin of the Coloured people?

Peter: You see, I am Coloured myself, but I don't always see Whites as bad people because they raped Black women, and I don't see them as racists now because they did not treat Coloured people as part of this country, I see them as the creators of our beautiful multiracial and multi-cultural society, so we don't have to be prejudiced to each other because all these things are over. But I am not

saying that what they did was correct, it was absolutely wrong and stupid, but it has passed with the time...and because it is now over, I can marry a white person, an Indian or Black, there is no problem in that because it is only love....

Thom: I think we have to stop here. Thank you so much for your time and good luck for your exam.

Peter: Thank you too, you are welcome.

Interview between Thompson (Thom) and Kenny

Duration: 15 Minutes

Place: University Library

Time: 13h00-12

27, October, 2006

Thom: I will like you to introduce yourself, the programme you are registered for, year of study, as well as your majors before beginning our interview.

Kenny: Well, I'm Kenny, doing my third year and majoring in English.

Thom: I understand you did *The Madonna of Excelsior* as part of the prescribed texts, didn't you?

Kenny: Oh! Yes, I did.

Thom: Good!

Thom: Several students have shown that the novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, is symbolic to South African politics and cultural diversity, what are your views on that?

Kenny: Yes, I can say it is true because, you see, this novel talks about things that happened during the apartheid time, every thing in the novel is what we continue to see even today in South Africa, so I can say it is symbolic you see....

Thom: Still on the issue of symbolism, if you look at the novel, it does raise issues regarding the contradictions that dominated apartheid rule, are there any specific contradictions you may have identified concerning apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa as presented in the novel?

Kenny: Well, I'm not sure if I get your question very well. But if you are talking about

political leaders, then, yes, they are contradicting themselves. Because if you look at what happens when the election comes, they all come and make promises and when they get into power, they will only deliver to their own provinces. You see, you go to other provinces in South Africa; there is no running water, electricity, housing, schools and many other things. But go to the homes and townships of those political leaders, you'll be surprised. They are doing things for themselves and forget about the people who voted for them. And this thing is not good, that is why many people don't want to vote any more, it is because they have been fooled. So I can say there are contradictions.

Thom: I see, now going back to the novel, any thing you can refer to as an example of such contradictions?

Kenny: Hmm...I can tell really but you see there is somewhere at the end of the novel where that eer...what is his name...Vicky [Viliki], he gave himself two houses and made money by renting one of them, so you see there is no reality in South Africa, no trust. People out there do not have houses and someone has got more than one and is benefiting through them. So what do you call that? They contradict themselves, even in the apartheid time whites were the ones who slept with black women but they were against it. There are contradictions in politics, and not only here in South Africa, but everywhere.

Thom: The novel raises issues of politics and racism; to what extent do you think a novel of this kind is worth teaching in a multiracial context like a University's lecture hall ?

Kenny: Well, South Africa is a multiracial country, so this does not have any problem because it talks about the same country and therefore makes it clear to everyone who reads it that it represents our country.

Thom: The novel appears to be the re-telling of history in a literary form, and is likely to remind the victims of apartheid time of their sufferings under the White man's rule. Don't you think the teaching of a novel like this is more of opening the old

wounds and thus likely to cause tension and hatred amongst students of different races.

Kenny: No, no one needs to be reminded of that, all the issues raised in this novel are already known, so we know about these things. Otherwise the tension or hatred is already there; we cannot pretend and say it is because of the novel. We come to the University knowing that blacks and whites were enemies, you see, that is the tension.

Thom: The novel has been prescribed to you as a third-year student in the English Literature module as you have already mentioned. To what extent do you think a novel of this kind is worth prescribing to students like yourself who are going to become teachers?

Kenny: This is a very good novel, not only to us as English language teachers, but to all the teachers including those who major in History. It makes one understand that our country has a very long history which was often bad to most of the people of this country. But to know where we come from and why we are like this, this novel gives a good background. I think it also makes us treat our learners in the same way so that we don't repeat the past.

Thom: When you read through the novel, you tend to find that the writer uses expletives, I hope you understand what I mean; I mean he talks about sexual acts in a more explicit way. So as a prospective teacher, don't you think a novel of this kind is enriching you with the knowledge of using strong language when teaching learners, something which I, for one, do not think you are supposed to do in the classroom situation?

Kenny: Of course, I cannot use that language, but you need to understand that as a writer you need to record things as they were, you need to use all you have to make your message clear to the readers. Now, this is where issues of creativity as a teacher

come, I need to make sure that I use the language that is accepted to everyone, I must respect them. So I can use other terms in the class.

Thom: I think this marks the end of our interview, thanks very much for your time.

Kenny: No problem, you are welcome, cheers!

Interview between Thompson (Thom) and Sipho

Duration: 15 Minutes

Place: University Library

Time: 09h25 – 09h40

24 October 2006

Thom: I would like you to introduce yourself, the programme you are registered for, year of study, as well as your majors before beginning our interview.

Sipho: Okay, my name is Sipho, I am doing English as one of my majors, and this is my third year.

Thom: You obviously did *The Madonna of Excelsior* as one of the prescribed texts, not so?

Sipho: Yes, that's true.

Thom: To what extent do you think the Novel is symbolic to South Africa as a country?

Sipho: I think it is symbolic because it talks about South African politics, history and how people treated each other during the time of apartheid.

Thom: As a prospective teacher yourself, to what extent will you say the teaching of this novel gave you skills for understanding how literature relates to society?

Sipho: Well, I can say that I can now see that this novel tries to tell us about what happens in our society, so they are related because when I read it I can see how this country,...our country, is brought to where it is known.

Thom: It seems like the novel puts much emphasis on racism especially about apartheid government, but at the same time, it also reflects the transition between apartheid and democracy and, what is actually happening today. As a prospective teacher yourself, do you think the novel is like saying, look this is how bad Whites were?

Sipho: Yes, you see, this novel is about Blacks and Whites, so it is obvious it makes a person to see how Whites behaved and badly treated Black people. Even the Whites, they feel bad when they read this novel because just as you said it, it's like it accuses them of racism, which is true. But we just have to know the truth which this novel is telling. It is a fact we all know that apartheid was about Whites against Blacks. Even if the other races suffered, but for Blacks, it was too much and the novel says it clearly.

Thom: The novel does go to an extent of highlighting issues regarding gender. Do you think the novel perverts the traditional expectation of gender construction?

Sipho: Well, I don't think that one is highlighted too much like politics and racism because if you remember, there novel talks about the women who were raped by men, and there is role which the women played. They just do what women must do according to tradition and that is looking after the children and cooking at home. So it the same as in our tradition, may be it says something, but I don't remember, you know, I read this novel long time ago.

Thom: Is there anything you would like to say about religion as a tool for social control raised in the novel?

Sipho: The Afrikaner nationalists in the novel created their super power station in the name of religion to correctly justify their evil doings. I mean all the things that they did to Black people were believed to have been taken from the Bible. You know you would wonder how the Bible could ever promote such an evil act. To show that it was some kind of a personal belief or ...err...I am not sure if I will be right to call it an ideology..., but those kinds of things. They thought if all African people believed that they would respect them, fear them and they would free from challenges so that they will be in power for as long as they live. You see what I mean...that's why they were also the ones who contradicted their own beliefs, raping Black women, exploiting their husbands

Thom Why do you think a novel such as this one is prescribed to you as part of the syllabus than any other novels that are South African-based? Don't tell me to go and ask the lecturer....

Sipho: I think they just want us to know where we come from and that is what happened in the past should not be repeated especially because, as teachers we are trained to change things so that they all look better than in the apartheid time. So it is because may be they realized that if we can learn about those things in the novel we can see that apartheid was bad and we will try to teach our students or learners not to do the same to their classmates and other people who are not the same as them. Because if we don't tell them, these things like in the apartheid time can occur again and we don't want that to happen in this new South Africa. We need peace and appreciation of other races, even to marry we can marry each other unlike in the apartheid tie where it was seen as crime, a person was arrested or even killed for sleeping with a person who is not your race.

Thom: Well, thank you so much for your tme, I really enjoyed this conversation.

Sipho: Sure.

Interview between Thompson (Thom) and Zama

Duration: 15 Minutes

Place: University Residence

Time: 13h40-13h55

Zama 27 October, 2006

Thom: I would like you to introduce yourself and tell me what you are registered for in this University.

Zama: I'm Zama, I am registered for BEd, I'm doing third year and my majors are English and Life Orientation.

Thom: Did you do the novel "*The Madonna Excelsior*".

Zama: Yes, I did.

Thom: Could you please tell me briefly of what you liked about the novel.

Zama: What I liked about the novel is that it tells us about the relationship between Blacks and Whites and how they have come to give birth to a Coloured child. You see the novel also tells us that Blacks and Whites were enemies during apartheid that is why they were not put together. It was because they saw each other as very different from one another and there was no unity in our country because of that. So I can say that the novel indicates that South Africa was a racist country, a country where everyone who was not white was treated as if he/she was a visitor in the country, everyone was not free except for Whites because they thought this was their home only. What I also liked is the fact that although Black people were suffering during the apartheid, they persevered until things became normal. They really knew what they were fighting for. The other thing is that when women were raped humiliated, they all went on and persevered and at the

end they were rewarded. So for me as a woman, I can say that this novel teaches us to persevere even when things are too difficult to handle.

Thom: From what you are saying, I learnt that this novel is an important tool for you. So, tell me as a prospective teacher, what have you gained from the teaching of this novel?

Zama: Well, as I said, it teaches us to be strong as we fight for our rights and freedom. As a teacher, I can say it is a good book that teaches to make our learners realize that the things that happened to our parents during apartheid are extremely bad and are not worth repeating. As a teacher, I think I gained a lot from this novel because I can now see that it is my responsibility to make sure that our learners, I mean the new generation of South Africa, live together, appreciate each other, and accept their differences as citizens of this country.

Thom: Tell me something about gender issues raised by this novel.

Zama: You see, in our society, a man will always be seen as a strong person in the family. But this novel tells us that even women are strong because they could stand all the problems they faced during the apartheid time. So, not only men suffered, but all, including women. But you here people always say that men were the ones who suffered most, which is not true. Our parents suffered from racism, from oppression by their husbands and other white men. You see all the people of South Africa were equally affected. But one thing I would like to say is that we as teachers need to teach our children to realize that all people are equal, men, and women, Whites, Blacks, Coloureds and Indians. There is no race that is better than the other and that there is no gender group that is stronger than the other.

Thom: Is there anything you would like to say about the knowledge and skills acquired in the teaching of this novel, and how you are equipped in dealing with literature in general in your teaching of literary art to learners?

Zama: I can say that this novel made me understand that when you do literature, you can understand different things in different ways. You do not just rely on what is known, sometimes you can think more than that. As a teacher, this novel taught me to be a good teacher who is not racist, prejudiced, or even sexist. It made me realize that what happened during apartheid was very bad so I must teach my learners about love to one another so that we can avoid the past problems.

Thom: Thank you very much for your time.

Zama: No problem.

Interview between Thompson (Thom) and Susan

Date: 26 October 2006

Place: University Residence

Time: 18h45 – 19h05

Thom: I will like you to introduce yourself, the programme you are registered for, year of study, as well as your majors before beginning this interview.

Susan: I'm Susan and I am studying towards a BEd degree, and I am now in my 3rd year.

Thom: Several students have shown that the novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, is symbolic to South African politics and cultural diversity, what are your comments on that?

Susan: Yes, I also think the novel is symbolic, but for me its symbolism appears in the sense that it strengthens the role of a woman in her identity and how a woman comes to terms with that. It shows that for a person in society to be accepted, one has to, first, accept hi/herself.

Thom: You seem to be focusing on the role of women as being the only element of its symbolism, is there anything you can tell me with regard to race and multiculturalism of South Africa as a country?

Susan: Well, for me the issue of culture and race as elements of symbolism in the novel did not make any impact on me because from the beginning of the novel, it was always Black and White people and there was nothing about other cultures until towards the end of the book where a coloured race was introduced. That is why I feel that the novel is not symbolic as such.

Thom: The novel raises issues of politics and racism; to what extent do you think a novel

of this kind is worth teaching in the classroom context? I mean don't you think the racism element is likely to trigger some bad memories about apartheid practices?

Susan: Yes, really it does, especially that it shows how we..., how *us* Coloured people were treated and discriminated against during apartheid. You know the way the Coloured people are presented in the novel seems to suggest that they are all product of rape, and what I can tell you is that not all of them were raped or sexually exploited, sometimes there was love between them, and the Coloured child was born. So it does not really mean that we are all stupid just as we are presented in the novel. The novel does not make me accept what I am. I don't think that is right. I mean I just cannot change who I am, I am who I am and that will never change.

Thom: You talked about women playing a very important role earlier on in this interview, am I right? Fine, we read about the main character Niki who, at one point, used her womanhood to fight the White man who sexually exploited her. Can that be one of the roles that you referred to by important roles played women?

Susan: No, obviously not, I don't mean that. What I mean is that you can imagine that this woman was a mother of two children and she had to support the family all by herself, she managed to carry all the responsibilities of the family without the father of her children. So you can see how things were for her-especially when looking at other families with couples living together with their children. But Niki was able to survive with her children despite such a challenge. That is what I mean by the role played women.

Thom: The novel appears to be a re-telling of history in a literary form, and is likely to remind the victims of apartheid time of their sufferings under the White man's rule. Don't you think the teaching of a novel like this is more of opening the old wounds and thus likely to cause tension amongst races.

Susan: Definitely it will, but there is nothing we can do. Children need to be taught about their history so that they will know who they are and how they relate to other people of different races. This is a similar case to that of the *Truth and Reconciliation*, it opened several wounds to so many victims of apartheid, but something has to be said about it.

Thom: I think we will need to stop here. Thank you for your time.

Susan: You are welcome.

Interview between Thompson (Thom) and Vaneshry

Date: 26 October 2006

Place: University Residence

Time: 17h00 – 17h30

Thom: I would like you to introduce yourself, year of study, the program you are registered for, as well as your specialization in this University.

Vaneshry: My name is Vaneshry, I am doing 3rd year in the BEd program. I am specializing in English.

Thom: The novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, has been prescribed to you as a third year student in the English Literature module. To what extent do you think a novel of this kind is worth prescribing to students like yourself who are going to become teachers?

Vaneshry: Coming from an Indian race, I mean there is no representation of the Indian community in the novel, but I think for me it is very important to study the book like this especially considering the ways in which people respond to different situations. For me as an Indian, coming from the background which is not presented in the book, or as an outsider, if I can put it that way, it is important because it is kind of telling me about the backgrounds of people or my learners as a teacher, because children are raised in many different ways by their parents. Through this novel, it's gonna be easy for me to understand their backgrounds. I would not be able to relate with learners if I do not know where they come from and where they are going. This is because, although the novel presents the generation that is few years ahead of me, but I am able to follow their experiences and be able to relate with them in terms of our differences.

Thom: Other than the aspect of race as the highly emphasised element in the novel, is there any other thing you feel the novel is meant to present to the audience?

Vaneshry: Yes, there whole aspect of hmm... what it feels to be a women, hmm... that notion of feminism ...see what I mean? For example, remember during the sex scandal all women end up in jail and the men get away with it. So, you can see that although they are Black women, but they are women you know what I am talking about? The fact that they are women is what matters most in this novel. You know, it always happens in this country that you find that if a man has got five girlfriends it is okay, it is not okay, but it is okay because he is a man. But if a woman has got five boyfriends then she is a bitch. So you can clearly see that, in many cases, men are getting away with the things they are not supposed to do and a woman is charged, you know what I am saying, those kind of things.

Thom: From what you are saying, I am learning that you are actually saying that women are oppressed or treated in an unfairly manner than their male counterparts. Well, from the novel it appears that the main character Niki, was able to fight back such an unfair treatment using her womanhood, so what do you make of that?

Vaneshry: Look, we are living in different times, during those days a woman was seen as powerless. There was no weapon to use to fight back, and I am not saying that using your womanhood to fight is a good thing to do, but looking at the situation, the context where Niki comes from, that was the only weapon she had. Any one in her situation was likely to do the same thing. But like I said, I don't agree with it.

Thom: Well, this is the novel prescribed to students like you, South Africa students for that matter, given that the novel reveals other alternatives available for you as a woman to use to fight oppression, don't you think this novel is perpetuating this kind of behaviour of using your womanhood to fight back than being able to physically and psychologically stand your grounds?

Vaneshry: You are right, it certainly will, but I mainly believe that it depends on an

individual. Well, we always have to remember what we are here for, so this novel is mainly for professional purpose. In real life, one cannot do things such as that, so the novel is meant to make us think critically, to get deep into it to see how this can be good or bad. Unfortunately, the novel does this through a woman who is, in real life, situation considered as a weaker sex. So in cases like this, Niki had nothing to use as a weapon, but she has tried to use her body “as a weak weapon” to fight back. That was the only weapon she had at a time. But I don’t think an individual can really think that way. So, as teachers or as students we are taught to go further beyond the surface of the novel and try to find several ways of interpreting it so that we can understand the message the writer is trying to put across. The novel allows us not to read it only from a personal level, but to try to be critical as we read through and try to relate it to the present-day situation and how the role of a woman in society today is changed.

Thom: When you read through the novel, you tend to find that the writer uses expletives, I hope you understand what I mean, So don’t you think a novel of this kind is empowering you with the knowledge of using strong language when teaching learners?.

Vaneshry: In a way it does, but obviously that is part of being critical. The novel does not teach me insult, but challenges that when I am in front of the class, I must be able to use my own words. It makes me as a teacher to realize that, whatever I feel as a person, I must, before saying it out, go through the process of what is the next person going to feel about it. I must be critical of the context ...hmm...I must think deeply before saying what I say. On the other hand, if it reaches a point where I have to call a spade a spade, then let it be, because we want to bring up kids in the world that is transparent, and make sure they have all the information that they need to have. So in that case, I think I would ...I would call a spade a spade.

Thom: Drawing from what you are saying, you don’t sound sensitive about other people’

cultural differences, because as a teacher I believe you need to be aware of the challenges you are facing once in the classroom setting. You will need to adjust to the level of every child, and to that which makes up such a child. In this case, the cultural background of a child will need to play a role in the teaching and learning process, and you must be aware of that. So, by 'calling a spade a spade' as you put it, don't you think you are defying the cultural norms and expectations of the children you are teaching?

Vaneshry: Well, I think that is the reason why I have to read a novel like this, because I am made aware of your cultural backgrounds and beliefs. You know, in the process of teaching and learning, it is not what I, as a teacher, say that matters, but what you think and believe in. I do not have to convert you into my belief or my thinking, but I want you to be critical in all what you say. If, for example, I call a "spade a spade", it is your duty to tell me that I think that is a bad way of putting it, and tell me why you think otherwise, because I learn as I teach, and you teach as you learn.

Thom: To move to the next question, a novel like this one is full of politics in it, and most of its aspects bring about bitter memories into the minds of readers. So bringing a novel like this in the classroom situation is likely to infiltrate hatred amongst members of the class. What is your comment on that?

Vaneshry: Well, that is the situation you will never run away from. A novel of this kind is important because it becomes a constant reminder of how things were. The fact here is that we, when I say "we" I mean 'us' of the present generation, were forced to...I mean these things have been forced down our throats, we were not allowed to talk about these things openly. But as for our learners in the secondary and primary levels, they are so removed from experiences of the apartheid rule, all they are aware of are the remnants that are left with their parents or grandparents. They don't know anything about those things. So, they need to be taught about them.

Thom: The novel looks like a history book which seeks to tell about the practices of apartheid, at the same time, the writer writes about the present. In fact, the novel presents two separate worlds of South Africa; the 'then' and the 'present'. What is your comment on this?

Vaneshry: The writer writes his novel not as an insider, but as an outsider, but not as far outside that he cannot identify, but through an inward look that enables him to identify with the subject of the story he is trying to tell. I am saying this because he always does not make himself part of the victims of apartheid, but as someone who observes it as it happened to those whom he is writing about. He always says 'we', 'we', 'we', in order to show that even though he may have observed or have not gone through all that, but some people have experienced it on our behalves.

Thom: Thank you for your time.

It was very helpful and informative talking to you.

Good luck for you exam.

Interview between Thompson and Nelly

Date: 26 October 2006

Place: University Library

Time: 14h00 – 14h15

Thom: Before we start I would like you to introduce yourself, your specialization and the year of study.

Nelly: I'm Nelly, I am doing 3rd year and English is one of my majors.

Thom: *The Madonna of Excelsior* is prescribed to you as a prospective teacher majoring in English. To what extent do you think the novel has empowered you in such a way that you will be able to teach literature to learners?

Nelly: The novel has given us some skills of knowing where we are coming from and where we are going. In terms of a classroom situation, it provides an understanding as to how we as teachers, must be able to understand the differences of the learners we are teaching in the class, as well as being able to identify sensitive issues which may not be friendly to students who are not of the race cultures as ours. The novel teaches us of what was happening during apartheid and what is happening now. In fact, what was happening before was a disgrace so things now have changed, what is happening now is normal. We have the rainbow nation. It is sort of ...hmm... prepare us to teach our children about the ways in which they should accept and appreciate others. Although it teaches us about the past, it simply shows us of how things were during those days and how change is important in our society.

Thom: Your response to my questions seems to be moving towards multiracialism and multiculturalism. Is that what you referred to as a rainbow nation?

Nelly: Yes, it teaches us about how significant it is to live together although we are from different cultures and races.

Thom: You don't seem to be saying anything with regard to gender as also presented in the novel, are you to tell me that there is nothing you have learn about gender, especially in terms of changing the gender role in our society?

Nelly: Oh yes, the novel teaches us about how women during those days were treated, women had no say to their husbands but now things have changed, women now also have their voices in society, they are no longer expected to be quiet and comply, they have to participate in society. So you can also teach children that ...look...this is how women were treated, now things have changed, women must also learn to have a say.

Thom: The issue of multiculturalism. Well...I seem to understand that we are all from different cultural backgrounds with differing ideologies in terms of the role assigned to men and women in the families where we come from. So, if we are to say that the novel helps preparing learners to understand the change in the role assigned to women, for example. Don't you think a curriculum of that nature will be playing a destructive role of changing the expectations of different cultures than constructively help in moulding them?

Nelly: Perfectly, yes, we have different cultures because when you are in the class that is where you actually see that some cultures are different. For example, some of the cultures see a man as a bread winner, but some ...like ours [white], a woman can also be a bread winner so it is very different because a woman is seen as equal to a man. To answer you question, in the sense it does destroy some other cultures and tends to mould others in a constructive way, but when we look at South Africa today, things are no longer the same; women are playing a very important role.... Hmm...also in politics women of different cultures ...Black, White, Coloureds and everybody are now adjusting to the new ways of living. So as teachers, we can teach learners to be prepared to enter into this change which our

country is undergoing, we can teach them of how they should be proud of how they are and be able to stand on their own without fear of some kind.

Thom: To return to the issue of multiculturalism and racialism with particular reference to the novel, we have agreed that the novel is a symbolic representation of South Africa's cultural diversity, that is why you talk about the rainbow nation. But I don't seem to find anywhere in the novel where Indians are represented, don't you think the novel is sort of saying that, well Indians are Indians and not Africans or South Africans for that matter, don't you think the novel is excluding them in much similar ways which were used during the apartheid time?

Nelly: Well, it is true that Indians are not actually represented. But during apartheid, different races we separated from one another, there black townships, white locations, Indians locations...just like that. And all these were done according to that hmmm... what is that ...law?

Thom: Group areas Act?

Nelly: Yes, so the location where the novel is focused on was mainly Black and White people living there. There were no Indians, that is why the novel did not include Indians. The novel focused on Blacks and Whites, meeting to produce the Coloured child. And I remember that so many Indian students in the class were complaining saying that the novel does not represent them but the issue here is all the suffering of Black women in the novel could have also meant the suffering of Indian women because during apartheid, they were not classified as White people, they were...sort of...hmm ...nowhere. That is why they are not featuring in the novel but they are represented although not in similar ways as Blacks and Whites. I think the novel was trying to show the differences in terms of power relations between Black and Whites or non-Whites and Whites.

Thom: Well, bringing the novel in the classroom context. Given that the novel

emphasizes more racism than any other thing. I mean it talks about Black people visa vis White people and the friction thereof, bringing a novel like this in the classroom where there are learners of different races, don't you think it is more of inflicting hatred amongst learners of different races? I mean don't you think is more of saying, look, this is how your classmate's parents treated your parent during apartheid, and ...look..., this is how you were born as a Coloured person. It is so painful for a student or learners to be reduced and accused in front of the class, what can you say about that?

Nelly: Really it does trigger some hatred, but I think it depends on the teacher and the approach used by the teacher. For example, if you say 'just look how bad they were, just look how they tread us', that really is going to be bad. I think the best way of teaching this novel in the classroom is simply to say 'look this is how things were in the past, and this is how they are now. So, now tell me, what do you think could have been done to avoid this? What can you say about this kind of behaviour? What does it mean to the next person? What is the solution? And what do you think could have been the way to arrive to this solution? I say this because even some parents outside school are also reminding their children and say that Whites this, Whites that. So as a teacher, it is your role to teach them how to deal with situations like that. For example, in the history about Germany, you don't always say; look how Germany was, look how rude the Germans are! The best approach could have been to teach them about the evil of the kind of behaviour presented about the Germans, so that even if there is a German student, he or she would feel free in the classroom.

Thom: May be to conclude this interview, tell me which Phase you will be teaching after the completion of your degree as a teacher, and what do you make of the differences in terms of the way you were taught in the high school level and here at varsity? And what skills and knowledge did you gain from literature class which you think can make you the best teacher in the literature class?

Nelly: That's quite difficult to answer.

Thom: I am so sorry!

Nelly: (Laughter), well hmm. I am going to be dealing with the Intermediate Phase, unfortunately we will be dealing with very young children, and obviously a novel like this may not be appropriate for them? The skills which I have gained as a literature student and as a teacher are that, as a teacher I must be able to adjust to different levels when meeting with different people from different backgrounds

Thom: And the differences between high school and....

Nelly: Oh yea, I think the university is more critical, it allows you to think critically in your own, there is no right or wrong answer in literature as long as you explain why you think that way. In the high school, focus was mainly on the themes, and how they are presented, how characters are presented and was more sensitive to teaching about things like sex, racism, exploitation like the way *The Madonna of Excelsior* treats them.

Thom: Thank you, this was a really interesting conversation and was so informative.
I wish you the best for you exams, Good luck!

Nelly: Thank you so much.

Interviews between Thompson and David

Date: 28 October 2006

Duration: 10: 33 to 10:58

Place: University Library

Thom: Before we start with this interview I would you to introduce yourself and tell me the program you are registered for in this University.

David: My name is David, I am registered for BEd and I am doing my third-year. English is one of my majors.

Thom: Thank you. Well, as an English-major student and a prospective teacher yourself, do you think the teaching of the novel, *The Madonna of Excelsior*, is worth prescribing for students enrolled to become teachers?

David: Hmmm... I believe it is, however, my concerned is on the relevance of the Syllabus taught here in Edgewood, and how I can actually apply that as a teacher in schools. Because the idea of training teachers especial because I will be teaching FET in secondary phase...hmm, I don't believe it will help me.

Thom: To what extent do you think the Novel is symbolic to South Africa as a country?

David: Ok, well, hmmm...I believe there is an attempt; there is eehm ... on...ehmm... the institution of a child as a broadcast of multicultural education. However, I think the reality does not really matter or what matters is the ideal, I believe now we are in the process of making it more multicultural, but symbolic to South Africa, for example, according to the number of rural schools as opposed to a white and coloured-Indian schools, black schools are the majority, I believe we...in certain degrees, are being taught hmm...certain skills towards a more ideal school as opposed to what is actually happening in South Africa. For

example, we are taught in certain areas like Mathematics, using certain facilities or even ideas and principles and when take some of the ideas into an idealistic schools, which is more funded and have all the resources, while the majority of other African schools which are close to 89% do not have sufficient resources, then I think the curriculum or the syllabus here is not satisfactory.

Thom: I have heard you mentioning things like white, Indian and black schools. The novel does not seem to make reference to Indians, do you still believe that it symbolic in terms race and cultural differences in South Africa?

David: [hmmm..[PAUSE]] I think in any syllabus as much as we try the interesting thing is that we are working on what they know and developing it on the foundation that they know, and that foundation was predominately white...hmmm...now things have changed and we were in apartheid and now in post-apartheid government, there is a quick shift to Blacks now and try to make compensation for the Black because they were oppressed, so the whole focus is not in the Indian race may be because religion ...hmmm...I don't know.

Thom: It seem like the novel puts much emphasis on racism especially about apartheid government, but at the same time, it also reflects the transition between apartheid and democracy and what is actually happening today. As a White person yourself, do you think the novel accuses other races of being culprits of racism?

David: hmm... I don't think there have been voices as much, but it has been definitely alluded to, for instance, certain White students felt that it is a reverse of apartheid where the whole idea of affirmative action has led to the extreme of segregation and focus on one particular race, but on my view the whole issue of education is becoming a more black dominated ...black initiated system.

Thom: The novel does go to an extent of highlighting issues regarding gender. Do you think the novel perverse the traditional expectation of gender construction?

David: Well...I think that is one of the debates I think {laugh}...we have heard so many views about that, especially because the novel also mentions that during apartheid years things were too difficult such that one can only imagine how Black people, especially women, felt when they were abused and raped simply because they were not White. But things are now changing, if you look at schools now we have the female gender; looking at the life orientation here at Edgewood in the NPF what they are pushing forward is the equality of gender as opposed to the traditional view. The traditional view being...I mean...when we look at the African perspective, the Christian view leaves a man with a superior role, not so much as a dictator but as a leader. I think the confusion, the emphasis is being put on why a woman can't have the same capacity, the same power, the same dominance and being able to achieve. So definitely there has been a huge shift; a huge switch, it becomes threatening and at the same time liberating [laugh].

Thom Why do you think a novel such as this one is prescribed to you as part of the syllabus than any other novels that are South African-based?

David: Hahn...[I think you have to ask the co-ordinator about that]{laugh}, but is a valid question, is hmmm...they are trying to educate the hmm ...or for the best I know, to equip us into going to the field or the final goal or the out-come is to educate us in a most diverse manner, diverse format, if sometimes you get something contrary to what we believe. I mean in some syllabuses there are certain things that are contrary to what I believe, so it is not gonna work when I teach. So if I am taught in a more diverse format, I will try to compensate the way in which someone talks to me, I think that is one of the biggest problems also.

Thom: I think we need to end here. David, Thank you so much for your time.

David: Sure, you are welcome.