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DECOLONIZING APARTHEID IDENTITIES: LEWIS NKOSI'S *MATING BIRDS*

APARTHEID KİMLİKLERİNİ SÖMÜRGEÇİLİKTEN ARINDIRMA: LEWIS NKOSI'NİN *ÇİFTLEŞEN KUŞLAR* ROMANI

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to analyze Lewis Nkosi's famous novel *Mating Birds* as a text that deals with the question of how to decolonize the colonial identities constructed by the apartheid regime in South Africa in the twentieth century. In this respect, the paper demonstrates how otherness, difference, and identity are constructed in this postcolonial novel. Moreover, it also explores how writing is used as a postcolonial strategy in the novel to deconstruct the identities of both the colonized and the colonizer and to reconstruct them as authentic decolonized selves. On the surface, *Mating Birds* is the story of a strange love affair between a black boy and a white girl, which eventually leads to the conviction and tragic execution of the boy. On a deeper level, it is a narrative about South Africa, apartheid and anti-apartheid resistance. As a novel that deals with such themes as knowledge and power, the *cul-de-sac* of the colonized as a consequence of the horrifying physical and mental prison apartheid created in South Africa, the forced silence and lack of communication between cultures, and the irresistible desire to get rid of any restrictions placed against dialogue between people who differ only in skin color, *Mating Birds* embodies the desire to view all cultures and people as different in nature, but equal in value. Education and writing open people's eyes and enable them to question, criticize, and dismantle oppressive authority. Apartheid considers the education of non-white peoples as something corruptive, which causes their deviation from being noble savages. The protagonist Sibiya, a university student, is the first-person narrator and writer of this tale, which he writes in prison in the form of an autobiography. As a defying response to apartheid, his writing enables him and his readers to decolonize both their minds and identities.

**Key Words:** *Lewis Nkosi, Mating Birds, Apartheid, Decolonizing, Identities.*

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## ÖZ

Bu makale, Lewis Nkosi'nin ünlü romanı *Çiftleşen Kuşlar*'ı, yirminci yüzyılda Güney Afrika'daki apartheid rejimi tarafından inşa edilen sömürge kimliklerinin nasıl sömürgecilikten arındırılacağı sorusunu ele alan bir metin olarak analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu bağlamda, makale, ötekiliğin, farklılığın ve kimliğin bu sömürgecilik sonrası romanda nasıl inşa edildiğini göz önüne sermektedir. Dahası, makale, romanda hem sömürgeleştirilenin hem de sömürgecinin kimliklerini yapıbozuma uğratmak ve onları sömürgecilikten arındırılmış otantik benlikler olarak yeniden inşa etmek için yazının sömürgecilik sonrası bir strateji olarak nasıl kullanıldığını da incelemektedir. Yüzeyde, *Çiftleşen Kuşlar*, siyahi bir gençle beyaz bir kız arasındaki garip bir aşk ilişkisinin hikayesidir ve bu ilişki, sonunda o gencin mahkum edilmesine ve trajik bir şekilde idam edilmesine yol açar. Daha derin bir düzeyde bu roman, Güney Afrika, apartheid ve apartheid karşıtı direniş hakkında bir anlatıdır. Bilgi ve güç, apartheid rejiminin Güney Afrika'da yarattığı korkunç fiziksel ve zihinsel hapisanenin bir sonucu olarak sömürgeleştirilenlerin çaresizliği, zorla dayatılan kültürler arasındaki sessizlik ve iletişimsizlik, sadece ten renkleri farklı olduğu için insanlar arasındaki diyaloga getirilen her türlü kısıtlamalardan kurtulma arzusu gibi temaları işleyen bir roman olarak *Çiftleşen Kuşlar*, tüm kültürleri ve insanları doğası gereği farklı, ancak değeri açısından eşit olarak görme arzusunu temsil eder. Eğitim ve yazma, insanların gözlerini açar ve baskıcı otoriteyi sorgulamalarını, eleştirmelerini ve ortadan kaldırmalarını sağlar. Apartheid, beyaz olmayan insanların eğitimini, asil vahşiler olmaktan sapmalarına neden olan yozlaştırıcı bir şey olarak görür. Üniversite öğrencisi olan başkahraman Sibiya, hapisanede bir otobiyografi biçiminde yazdığı bu hikayenin birinci şahıs anlatıcısı ve yazarıdır. Sibiya'nın apartheid'e meydan okuyan bir yanıt olarak yazdığı bu metin, kendisinin ve okuyucularının hem zihinlerini hem de kimliklerini sömürgecilikten arındırmalarını sağlar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Lewis Nkosi, Çiftleşen Kuşlar, Apartheid, Sömürgecilikten Arındırma, Kimlikler.*

## I. Introduction

The South African writer Lewis Nkosi's *Mating Birds* (1986) is a famous postcolonial novel examining many significant themes related to the history of colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. This paper aims to analyze *Mating Birds* as a novel that deals with the question of how to decolonize the minds and identities of the colonized and the colonizer constructed by the apartheid regime in South Africa in the twentieth century. Moreover, the paper demonstrates how people and cultures should establish healthy relationships without falling into the trap of the colonialist ideology and discourse is at the heart of the novel. In this respect, *Mating Birds* describes how otherness, difference, and identity are constructed under the oppressive apartheid system and suggests that all people are equal regardless of their differences and identities.

Postcolonialism is an endeavor to understand the colonial experience and decenter the West as it is constructed by the imperialist or Orientalist discourse in the imagination of the world and to decolonize the minds of both the Western and the non-Western individuals. It is a consciousness that embodies the desire and need of the once-colonized peoples to comprehend the experience of colonization which redefined and reconstructed the identities of both the colonized and the colonizer for its hegemonic, imperialistic, capitalistic, cultural, and political interests. Obviously, postcolonialism is also the embodiment of the colonized people's desire to become completely decolonized, not only physically but mentally. As Nandy affirms, "colonialism is first of all a matter of consciousness and needs to be defeated ultimately in the minds of men" (Nandy, 1988, p. 63). All in all, postcolonialism marks the disillusionment of the colonized with the Western civilization, which was said to have civilized, enlightened and modernized them.

A pioneering postcolonial critic who has contributed to this process of disillusionment immensely is Edward Said. Through his masterpiece *Orientalism*, he has woken up people from their deadening slumber of naively believing in "the hierarchy of spaces" (Said, 1993, p. 58) and the illusion that identities and races are essences. He has demonstrated that knowledge and power have always been inseparable allies in the imperialist discursive practices which have invariably placed Westerners over non-Westerners in hierarchical binary oppositions. According to Said, the East (Orient) and the West (Occident) are imaginary constructions of the Western epistemology that have been used to legitimize the colonization of other peoples. Another thing Said has taught humanity is that there has been a group of so-called scholars, scientists, and intellectuals called 'Orientalists,' who have compiled a vast body of knowledge on non-Western peoples and injected it with inhuman biases to serve colonialism and imperialism. This poisonous body of knowledge has been disseminated to the Western audience and shaped their perception of other peoples for centuries. As Said states, "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient'" and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said, 1979, p. 2). Undoubtedly, Orientalism and other elements of the imperialist discourse have shaped minds and identities all over the world.

What are identities? Are identities essences? Or are they culturally, socially, economically, and geographically constructed? Do human beings have a common identity? What would be a classification of identities? Beginning with the last question and answering the others later is logical. Accordingly, there are three types of identities: biological, man-made, and a common human identity. All human beings share the last identity, which can also be called the ethical identity, whose abode is the human soul. The moment people ignore this common ethical identity and put it in a lesser position than the biological or man-made identities, there occurs injustice, oppression, colonialism, imperialism, and the like. This immutable common human identity perpetually disrupts a person who has done something morally wrong until he or she compensates for it. That is why, the colonizers have always tried to justify and legitimize

colonization by declaring that it was the expected consequence of their holy mission of bringing the light of civilization to primitive peoples (Boehmer, 2005, p. 21, 23, 35; Said, 1993, p. 131).

The categorization of identities above can also be regarded as a spectrum. On this spectrum, the biological identities are at the lower end, the man-made identities in the middle, and the ethical identity at the higher end. The identities in the middle are constructions, narrations, and representations primarily based on power relations. National, cultural, political, economic, scientific, and scholarly identities are in this category, and they are vulnerable to constant change because they are shaped by the relations between human beings. Biological identities are based on inborn differences such as skin color, race, class, sex, geography, etc. As Ngugi wa Thiongo declares, “No man or woman can choose their biological nationality. The conflicts between peoples cannot be explained in terms of that which is fixed (the invariables)” (wa Thiongo, 1986, p. 1).

Obviously, no culture is pure because people’s interaction naturally leads to mutual influence between cultures. The significant thing is in what shape and character that influence has been generated. Two terms, namely, imposition and acquiescence, capture attention here. If it is imposition that shapes the relationship between two cultures, then that means there is a power-dominated and unethical interaction, which is against human nature. If, on the other hand, acquiescence embodies the relationship, then that is something ethics and human nature already ordain. The relationship based on acquiescence is a prerequisite of what could be termed as ‘the ethics of co-existence,’ which demands human beings to establish their relations on impartiality, which necessarily makes them feel responsible for each other.

What the ethics of co-existence decrees is that man-made identities should be constructed or reconstructed not by means of coercion but by the reciprocal acquiescence of both the interlocutors of a disinterested relationship. The more these identities approach the ethical identity, the happier human beings become; on the other hand, the closer they are to the biological identities, the more alienated human beings become. In other words, if, instead of the ethical identity, the other two types of identities are placed in the center, then alienation and schizophrenic attitudes will inevitably shape their relationships. The outcomes will be colonialism, imperialism, racism, fascism, oppression, slavery, and so on. Thus, which type of identities should determine relationships? Obviously, the ethical identity, not the biological or the man-constructed identities. There would be no oppression on earth only if the common ethical identity of humanity governs the biological and man-made identities. Only if the ethical identity shapes the relationships between people can they have a peaceful world in which all human beings view each other as equivalent in value and different in nature.

## **II. South Africa, Apartheid and Lewis Nkosi**

South Africa is one of the most brutally and violently colonized territories. The tragedy began in 1652 when a group of workers and their leaders of the Dutch East India Company constructed a station on the Cape of Good Hope for trading ships that carried labor force and commodities from and to colonized lands. The colonialist way of seeing the others only as enemies and uncivilized savages again operated in South Africa as well. Although the Bantus, another name for the indigenous black peoples in South Africa, had welcomed them because they did not have the cynical concept of othering in their cultures, the Dutch, who later called themselves Afrikaners, warred with those peoples to get their land by force. In the epistemological systems of the Bantus, there was hospitality, equivalence, mutual respect and mutual enmity between the rival nations but no concept of othering as in the colonial discourse of Europeans, who saw the others as inferior, “in need of civilization,” and only worth dominating (Boehmer, 2005, p. 49).

Those nations of South Africa continued to fight for centuries against Afrikaners and the British, who settled in South Africa after the Dutch. Still, there was no way they could triumph against the modern weaponry of Europeans. As time elapsed, they lost more and more of their land and were obliged to live in certain areas. The victorious white colonial settlers founded a tyranny taking its energy from slavery and the forced labor of Africans and Asians. Asians were brought to South Africa after the British abolished slavery in 1834. Wars took place not only between the colonizers and the colonized, but also between the two colonizing forces: the Dutch and the British. In the final war between them, the British vanquished the Boers (another name for the Dutch) in the famous Anglo-Boer War between 1899 and 1902. In 1910, the territory took the name the Union of South Africa, a white-settler country belonging to the British Empire. In 1961, it separated from the British Commonwealth and renamed itself as an independent republic.<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, persecution, oppression, and segregation against the African majority continued. They were forced to live only on 10 per cent of their own land. Naturally, all these injustices fuelled the inextinguishable fire of resistance against the oppressors. In 1912, an organization called the African Native National Congress was established by a band of influential South African leaders and intelligentsia. It later became the well-known African National Congress (ANC). ANC did its best to resist the strict policy of racial segregation based on the privileged position of a minority of white settlers and the humiliating situation of the non-white majority. The government put into practice every kind of violence ranging from arrests, detentions, and torture to murder, to demolish ANC along with all the other protest organizations. However, these movements continued their opposition against injustices through boycotts, demonstrations, protests, and strikes incessantly. In 1948, Afrikaners' Nationalist Party came to power and promulgated the official apartheid system through laws. Although apartheid, which means “apartness” in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/umkhonto-wesizwe-mk-exile>

Afrikaans – the language the seventeenth-century Dutch settlers developed in South Africa –, was fully in power with all its afflictions, it became official only after 1948.<sup>2</sup>

Apartheid, which was also frequently defined as “separate development,”<sup>3</sup> was a system that segregated the diverse ethnic elements from each other racially, economically and politically, enthroning a very small group of whites and emasculating all the others living in the same country. The non-white South Africans were not allowed to the white residences, businesses, political and social organizations, restaurants, markets, schools, and so on. Within the country, non-whites could only travel with pass documents. They could not go to the side of the whites without these passes. They were doomed to live in slums and shantytowns while the whites lived in the most modern areas and buildings.<sup>4</sup> Being stricken by poverty and unemployment and most important of all, by the nonstop psychological propaganda of the supremacy of whites and inferiority of non-whites, South Africans were immensely self-alienated.

In such a country under the perpetual oppression of such a regime, even any tiny democratic protest was brutally dealt with. But the spirit of resistance never died. The desire to obliterate apartheid in South Africa never ceased to breathe into the souls of Africans the hope of having a country free of racism and injustice. In a peaceful and democratic protest against the pass laws in Sharpeville in 1960, sixty-nine people were brutally murdered by the police. This event led to ANC’s subsequent promulgation and commencement of armed struggle, which was to be carried out by a branch called the “Umkhonto we Sizwe” (Spear of the Nation) (Jones, 1994, p. 32). In 1962, Nelson Mandela and other members of ANC were arrested and two years later, they were sentenced to life imprisonment. After another massacre in Soweto in 1976 of a group of schoolchildren protesting a regulation that prescribed education to be conducted in the Afrikaans language, the armed struggle proportionately gained more momentum. In 1977, the founder of the South African Students’ Organization and the theoretician of the Black Consciousness movement, Steve Biko, died under the systematic torture of police.<sup>5</sup> The struggle continued until Nelson Mandela, after his 28-year prison life, was released in 1990. In 1993, both Mandela and President de Klerk won the Nobel Peace Prize, and in 1994, the first democratic non-racial elections were held in South Africa. The elections resulted in Mandela’s victorious presidency. Finally, in 1997, a non-racial constitution was accepted as the social contract of the country. However, despite the eventual emancipation of South Africans from the rusty chains of apartheid, its negative effects continue to haunt their lives especially in the economic sphere.<sup>6</sup>

What were the motives behind apartheid against other human beings who just did not have the same skin color as their white brethren? One of the causes was the white

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-National-Congress/Internal-dissent>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.britannica.com/bcom/eb/article/6/0,5716,8086+1+7978,00.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-National-Congress/Internal-dissent>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Consciousness-movement>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/African-National-Congress/Internal-dissent>

people's reluctance to share the rich mineral resources (gold, diamonds, gems, etc.) and the land with the non-white population of the country. However, the most important cause was the colonialist ideology and discourse that had occupied a permanent place in the minds of the white people. According to that ideology and discourse, any non-European person was an Other, who was primitive, uncivilized, irrational, apelike, and urgently in need of European civilization and domination. The remarks of an apartheid supporter, who gave a speech to the Rotary Club in London in 1953, materialize this point of view:

...every millimetre of progress in all that vast area is due entirely to the White Man. (...) May I point out that African colonies are of comparatively recent date. Before that time Black Africa did have independence for a thousand years and more and what did she make of it? One problem, I admit, she did solve most effectively. There was no overpopulation. Interminable savage intertribal wars, witchcraft, disease, famine, and even cannibalism saw to that.<sup>7</sup>

Where is the evidence? Who can prove that without the presence of the white man there would be no development or progress in Africa? Can it not be that Africa would be much more developed than it is now if no intrusion by the white man had occurred? And after all, the idea that there has been progress in Africa is a big lie when so many problems like hunger, poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, civil wars, and unbearable foreign debts are seen on the continent. As a result, no scrupulous man can deny that the underdevelopment of the peoples of Africa was something caused by Europeans. This man, at the end of his speech, claims that apartheid is the best system for all the races in South Africa, because it would give all the races the chance to achieve their development in accordance with their own pace.

However, in a country where the best of everything and its control is in the hands of a privileged minority, and the majority is only in a subordinate position who can survive only by serving the white men, then such a claim is obviously baseless. His idea that separate development is essential for South African peoples is something that has been put in his mind through apartheid's nationalist education and brainwashing, but that idea is not something created by apartheid. It belongs to the ages-old Orientalist, colonialist, and imperialist discourses which had always imposed upon Europeans' minds the idea that they were the perfect form of humanity because of their wisdom, rationality, technology, and many other things, whereas the others were not as much evolved as they were.

Lewis Nkosi, a leading South African writer, critic, essayist, dramatist, novelist, and academician, was born in 1936 in Durban, South Africa, as the son of a Zulu family.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1953geyer.html>

After his first education at a missionary boarding school, he attended a technical college in Durban for a year, and then he began to work as a journalist. In 1961, he won a fellowship to Harvard University for journalistic studies, but this brought about his exile and loss of South African citizenship. He was obliged to sign a document not to come back to South Africa.<sup>8</sup> Evidently, the apartheid regime feared that the black students returning from abroad would cause disruption in the country.

After his short stay in the United States, he went to England and continued his studies at the universities there. He wrote brilliant essays and articles for many American, African, and British periodicals. In 1965, he published a collection of his critical essays under the title *Home and Exile*, which gained fame as one of the most widely accessed sourcebooks on African literature. His other outstanding works are *The Rhythm of Violence* (1964), a drama about race relations in Johannesburg, *The Transplanted Heart* (1975), a collection of essays on South Africa, *Tasks and Masks: Themes and Styles of African Literature* (1981), *Tasks and Masks: An Introduction to African Literature* (1982), *Home and Exile and Other Selections* (1983), and *Mating Birds* (1986), his first novel, which brought him worldwide reputation, and which was translated into many languages. His harvest has greatly enriched modern African literature and entered the curricula of many universities internationally. His second novel was *Underground People* (2002) and his third novel, *Mandela's Ego* (2006).

The common themes in his work are directly related to the inhuman acts of the apartheid regime. Accordingly, silence, anti-apartheid resistance, control over the means of communication, censorship, the lure of trespassing racial borders, protest, satire, prejudices, injustices, oppression, dehumanization, politics, social commitment, identity crises, self-construction, othering, and the relationship between knowledge and power, language and power, and writing and power are the central themes in his works. Nkosi, in *Tasks and Masks: Themes and Styles of African Literature*, points out the special situation of South African literature reflecting the social and political conditions of the country directly and stressing the necessity of social commitment on the issue of anti-apartheid resistance. To him, while the artists of other African countries were willing to discover the pre-colonial African customs, folklore, and orature and bring them to the use of African societies, South African literature did not have the time and focus to pursue such an endeavor. "With very few exceptions," the main theme in South African literature has been "struggle and conflict," because of the incessant almost three hundred-and-fifty-year-old racial strife and "because very often colour provides the ultimate symbols which stand for those larger antagonisms which Southern African writers have always considered it their proper business to explain" (Nkosi, 1981, p. 76).

### III. Decolonizing Apartheid Identities in *Mating Birds*

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/lewis-nkosi>



*Mating Birds* is a postcolonial novel that embodies the desire of the colonized non-white people of South Africa to get rid of the colonial identities imposed on them by the oppressive apartheid regime. To be able to do this, the colonized individuals must decolonize their minds and identities shaped by the colonialist ideology and discourse of apartheid. The novel shows that the way to achieve this is to adopt the idea that people and cultures have different natures but equal values and that they must interact in a disinterested manner. In other words, looking at identities in an unbiased way is the perspective that will enable the colonized and the colonizer to consider all people and cultures equal. As the analysis below indicates, the novel evidently endorses this perspective.

In the opening scene of the *Mating Birds*, the narrator-protagonist Ndi (the name his mother uses) or Sibiya is waiting for his execution in his death cell in front of the small grilled window. His sentiments immediately evoke sympathy in one. His first sentence, "In a few days I am to die" (Nkosi, 1986, p. 1), makes it clear that his writing marks the beginning of the end for him. He has been given some dirty prison paper by the prison officials to write his autobiography, and the text the reader is reading is this manuscript he has been writing since he was arrested and put in jail. Beginning from the present moment, he goes back and relates his life and the events that led to his miserable end. Although some critics have shown the cause of his pitiful end to be the *rape* of the white woman, and indeed the prosecutors and the woman allege this in the court, Ndi's account claims that it happened by mutual consent. The ambiguity of which account is true pervades the whole text, and the reader can never learn whether it was a rape or a reciprocally voluntary lovemaking because Ndi tries hard to make the reader believe that the woman is lying. In fact, Ndi's story seems to be more convincing because the aura of the novel demonstrates that everything in South Africa is under the strict control of the oppressive white regime, which has made it impossible for whites and non-whites even to communicate, let alone lovemaking. All relationships are controlled by apartheid through legislative acts, and it is conspicuous that the woman is quite aware of the legal and psychological pressure she would have to undergo if she told the truth. Thus, though the superficial cause of Sibiya's destruction seems to be that incident of lovemaking, the underlying cause is apartheid itself.

As an expelled university student due to a demonstration he has led, and as someone who is looking forward to an opportunity to leave the country, Sibiya first encounters the girl on a beach, which was designed and partitioned for "Whites Only" and non-whites. While sunbathing on his part of the beach, he is attracted to the beauty of the girl who is also having a suntan rather in an obscene manner on the white side. On the first pages of the novel, he speculates on what would have happened to him if he had not seen the girl on the beach:

Oh, I have often wondered (as most men are apt to wonder, when it is too late and the game is already lost) how my life would have turned out had I

not gone to the beach that hot October day, or, having gone to the beach, if I had stayed well within the limits of my side of the beach instead of poaching so close to what is known as the "Whites Only" bathing area. Would I be languishing in this prison cell now, awaiting death by hanging, or would I have lived to fulfill my ambition of becoming the first truly great African writer my country has ever produced.... (Nkosi, 1986, p. 4)

He is prone to believe that he has made a great unforgivable mistake, and this has caused his destruction. Ostensibly, if he had obeyed the prohibitions imposed on both his life and the lives of white people by apartheid that controlled the means of communication, the social life of individuals, and the spatial boundaries, he would not have been in jail now, but on the way of "becoming the first truly great African writer" (Nkosi, 1986, p. 4). However, it is something doubtful whether he would be permitted to be a writer in such a prison as South Africa. Ironically, Sibiya begins to write not outside but inside prison, and this indicates that, indeed, South Africa itself is a much more oppressive prison where one cannot feel free enough to engage in any artistic activity. In addition, Sibiya's desire to escape abroad from South Africa is a part of his dream of being a great writer because he feels that the only atmosphere in which an artist can activate his or her creative powers is a realm of freedom.

The novel depicts how the ideology of apartheid has impacted the self-perception and identity of individuals. An ideology that considers differences only as a threat represents the colonizer and the colonized as enemies that should not be allowed to have the same status due to the differences in their identities. At the heart of racial discrimination there is the idea that the Other is ontologically inferior, and therefore, deserves to be subordinated. As Edward Said, depicting the perception of the Other by Orientalists, suggests: "...the traditional Orientalist...conceive[s] of the difference between cultures, first, as creating a battlefield that separates them, and second, as inviting the West to control, contain, and otherwise govern (through superior knowledge and accommodating power) the Other" (Said, 1979, p. 47-8). Accordingly, the way apartheid conceived of others was the same as Orientalists did. Such a representation of the Other binds both the colonizer and the colonized, because it appoints both with certain responsibilities, manners, attitudes, and ways of thinking. Any attempt to get out of their roles causes problems, as Said further points out:

Being a White Man was...an idea and a reality. It involved a reasoned position towards both the white and the non-white worlds. It meant—in the colonies—speaking in a certain way, behaving according to a code of regulations, and even feeling certain things and not others. It meant specific judgments, evaluations, gestures. It was a form of authority before which nonwhites, and even whites themselves, were expected to bend. [...] Being a White Man, in short, was a very concrete manner of being-in-

the-world, a way of taking hold of reality, language, and thought. It made a specific style possible. (Said, 1979, p. 227)

The identities of both the white and the non-white are constructed and preserved by the petrified discourse of Western colonialism and imperialism. That is why the white woman Sibiya has made love to will never tell the truth. She has to behave as she is expected to by the racist and fascist regime. That is why Sibiya himself regrets even having seen the girl. He should not have behaved in opposition to his identity which dictated him never to get involved in the ways of white men or women. As he reasons, he also makes it clear that he defied apartheid by violating its laws and adopting an outlook that aims at decolonizing minds and identities:

I suppose I should have looked away then. Perhaps it was what she expected: to browbeat me into losing face. At any rate, I should have acted as all "good natives" do in the presence of a white woman, above all one who is without any clothes on. I should have kept my eyes, as they say, where they belong. But I did not; I did not act like a black who knew his place. I doubt if this was a simple case of boldness or defiance. I was compelled by something in the girl's eyes that was ludicrously simple, open, naked, and undemanding, a sort of acknowledgment of myself as a person inhabiting the same planet as herself. (Nkosi, 1986, p. 8-9)

On the one hand, Sibiya's sentimental and remorseful words above suggest what happened to the non-whites who behaved against the identity imposed on them; on the other, he tells the reader that he deliberately challenged apartheid by not "act[ing] like a black who knew his place" (Nkosi, 1986, p. 8). Since the colonialist and racist construction of identities by apartheid is against human nature, when Sibiya senses a sign of approval in Veronica Slater's face, he responds to her through facial expression. Human face is something one cannot stand before without responding to it. It nonverbally but directly tells the Other that both interlocutors are the same and yet different, the difference being a stimulant of interaction. This non-verbal communication through the face dictates to both the communicants that their difference cannot be a parameter of superiority. As Emmanuel Levinas contends, the relationship that occurs through the face is an ethical relationship (Levinas, 1994, p. 87). Such a relationship shatters all the obstacles preventing the two parties from getting into interaction, even if they cannot communicate verbally. Such a relationship is based on the common ethical identity of the two interlocutors. That is why, Sibiya sees the look in the girl's eyes as something "ludicrously simple, open, naked, and undemanding, a sort of acknowledgment of myself as a person inhabiting the same planet as herself" (Nkosi, 1986, p. 9).

The picturesque description of that first encounter on the beach gives the reader clues about the artificial society and the colonial identities apartheid created by means of power and oppressive methods:

That day on the beach, when I came across the English girl, I saw only what White Authority, with the aid of so many laws and legal penalties, had forbidden me to see. Another human being. A woman with a body that was soft and round and desirable. And within reach. That is what I saw. Separated only by a small stream from the non-white section of the beach, the girl was lying flat on her stomach, her brown head sheltered in the crook of her arms. I stopped in my path. It wasn't simply that her skimpy bikini covered very little of her generous curves; she seemed never to have bothered to conceal anything. In fact, her bra was unclasped from the back. She had then eased it down from her smooth shoulders so that once or twice when she shifted her body on the towel I was able to glimpse a pale wink of flesh from under her compressed bosom. I remember something else too: behind the girl's inert body was the inevitable notice board bearing the legendary warning: 'BATHING AREA—FOR WHITES ONLY'. A sign that immediately filled me with rage. (Nkosi, 1986, p. 6-7)

The boy violates the law by observing the girl, who is willingly sunbathing near the dividing line that separates the two sides of the beach, and feels self-confident just as an observer does. However, the sign "BATHING AREA—FOR WHITES ONLY" instantly diminishes his illusory power to null and reminds him that indeed both he and the girl are being observed. The all-pervasive authority of apartheid uses different strategies to brainwash people in overt and covert ways with the purpose of propagating that it is an omniscient power that has absolute control of everything including the means of communication. The world in South Africa, as it was the case in all colonies, was partitioned into two: the world of the modern white and the world of the backward non-white. The maintenance of the borders between the two realms was of utmost importance for the colonization and exploitation to continue. Any violation of these borders would mean disruption of the colonial relationship between the master colonizer and the servant colonized. Franz Fanon's striking observation, "The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations" (Fanon, 1974, p. 29), indicates how violently these borders were protected.

The situation of the discriminated non-white population is a *cul-de-sac*; they have only two choices: servitude or death. Sibiya opts for the second option. He chooses to resist the oppression of the apartheid regime although he knows what his act would lead to. What deserves praise is the act itself. It gives one dignity and honor which has been taken from him or her, and it would later naturally invigorate people's understanding of what the natural and honorable way of living is. In the end, this honorable deed destroys all the myths and mystifications used to justify colonization and imperialism.

The human face is something that does not need any mediator to generate meaning; it is itself meaning. As Levinas points out, "The face is signification, and signification without context" (Levinas, 1994, p. 86). The only part of human body through which one can

access purity and innocence is the face. By just looking at the face of a person, one can grasp whether he or she considers himself or herself superior, equal, or inferior to his or her interlocutor. Sibiya, by looking into the eyes of people, makes distinctions between faces which accept him as equal and degrade him. His fascination with a white girl he came across in a bazaar of blacks in his childhood on the day of his first trip to the city illustrates this perception of his. While Sibiya and his mother are shopping for Sibiya's school equipment, a white man, along with his wife and two daughters, arrives in the bazaar, and the non-white crowd is immediately driven into a turmoil because in a colony, even the most modest white man is considered as more privileged than the non-whites. Upon the arrival of the white family, the black (Zulu) crowd is torn apart in waves to give way to the family, and after their passing, the crowd restores to its previous form and jostles Sibiya to the front. Before he stumbles down to the feet of the elder daughter of the family, he comes face to face with the man. The man's face shows that he, as a representative of apartheid, feels superior to Sibiya; therefore, Sibiya detests the man. But the little girl, with all her childhood innocence, looks into his eyes affectionately, touches him, speaks to him, and helps him to stand up. Since this attitude of the girl is an indication that she sees Sibiya just as a human being equal to herself and that her contact with the boy is based on a disinterested interaction, the boy can never forget her. He consecrates the incident as "a kind of benediction that transforms the moment of contact into one of revelation" (Nkosi, 1986, p. 58). And that is why, Sibiya never relates this childhood reminiscence to Dr. Emile Dufre, the Swiss-Jewish-German psychoanalyst who has come to South Africa to do some research and clinical work on Sibiya's rape case. The only two experiences in which Sibiya could have an unbiased and nonhierarchical contact with white people are this childhood memoir and his love affair with Veronica. Unluckily, the second contact leads to his hanging.

Sibiya is the son of the last and youngest wife of an old man with five wives. The youth of his mother, Nonkenyazi, has made her his father's favorite wife. Taking advantage of this privileged position, she convinced the father to send Sibiya to school because she believed knowledge and writing would provide her son with magic powers just like the white men. While narrating his first trip to the city, he tells the reader his mother's feelings and her pride in sending him to school:

No doubt, she was convinced that an encounter, however brief, with books, would confer upon her offspring awesome powers of the occult, an almost miraculous ability to manipulate the universe at will. "Can you just see him," she asked laughing, "sitting behind those tables the white people use for writing on at Mzimba, driving his pen across the white page like some of those clerks you see at the government office! A real devil Ndi is going to be with a pen, you wait and see!" (Nkosi, 1986, p. 85)

Knowledge can turn into a destructive power in the hands of man although its real *raison d'être* is the benefit and prosperity of humanity. In colonial contexts, knowledge is that

kind of power which entitles the colonizer to subordinate the colonized and legitimizes all the injustice done to the colonized. What is more, in such circumstances, the desire to be like the dominating power, i.e., the lure of assimilating and imitating the colonizer, becomes an ambition among the colonized. However, possession of knowledge alone does not suffice for the colonized to become equal to the white man. He is never approved of as an equivalent; he is just considered a comic mimic of the white man (Bhabha, 1994). The reason is obvious: "...assimilation is...the opposite of colonization," which "tends to eliminate the distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized, and thereby eliminates the colonial relationship" (Memmi, 1991, p. 149-50). Always alert on the threat of the Other's becoming equal to himself and hence destroying the bondage of colonization, the white man never loosens the tight precautions he has taken against the progress and development of the colonized. Consequently, underdevelopment is considered to be the destiny of the colonized.

Thus, in South Africa, knowledge is a destructive power. The written word is the power that makes the white man powerful, rich, and dominant. Ironically, Sibiya's mother thinks the same is true for black people as well. But this is pure illusion. The control, hegemony, dominant values, and cultural legitimacy all belong to the whites only. What is more, the majority of white people think that endowing the natives with knowledge, writing, and education causes the moral deterioration of them, which in turn converts them to criminals. The jail commandant Van Rooyen in the novel reflects these views in his interviews with newspapers about the popular case of Sibiya:

He mentioned the soaring crime rate at home, especially crimes of sexual violence; he pointed me out as a tragic example of what white liberal education can do to simple, good-natured natives, stimulating as it was surely bound to do, not only love of western style of living but also an unbridled desire for white women. I saw one of these interviews in a yellowing copy of the *Daily News* in which my captor concluded by observing that the natives, left to their tribal environment, were all right, their morals were even superior to those of some whites, but given a smattering of education, they became spoiled and thought of themselves as equals of white men. He concluded by citing as an example the rapid increase of incidents of assault on white women. (...) He summed up by issuing a warning to white ladies, some of whom, he regretted to say, were in the habit of displaying themselves in the most provocative manner in front of black servants; it was time everyone recognized, Van Rooyen said, that we were here dealing not with normal men but creatures who were little above animals. (Nkosi, 1986, p. 82-3)

Once one sees the Other as just "little above animals," the Other is eternally doomed to be inferior to the creator of such an image. The Other is represented by the Self, who never condescends to give the possession of the word to the Other. The subaltern can

never speak in such an enforced silence. Thus, as Said has quoted from Karl Marx, "They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented" (Said, 1979, p. 293). The right of observation, definition, control, administration, and representation belong only to the white man. If something needs to be said about the Other, the Other does not have the right to speak for himself or herself because s/he can never discern the truth. The truth belongs solely to the white man, and only if the white man speaks for the Other, there will be a true representation of the Other. The commandant's orientalist and colonialist discourse makes him depersonalize and dehumanize the Other. And this, in consequence, leads to the justification of all the inhuman treatment of the Other by the colonizer. Memmi's insightful observation confirms this fact:

What is left of the colonized at the end of this stubborn effort to dehumanize him? He is surely no longer an alter ego of the colonizer. He is hardly a human being. He tends rapidly toward becoming an object. As an end, in the colonizer's supreme ambition, he should exist only as a function of the needs of the colonizer, i.e., be transformed into a pure colonized. (Memmi, 1991, p. 86)

Related to the above remarks of Van Rooyen, Sibiya's father and in fact most non-white characters in the novel believe that the knowledge of the white man only corrupts the native. They agree with racists like Van Rooyen on this point. Like all the colonizers, Van Rooyen owns the consciousness that if the colonized obtained knowledge, that would generate inquiry, "which generates change" (Aschcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 1991, p. 85). This perspective is surely a result of the propaganda of apartheid that races must be segregated from each other, and each race must live in the climate of its own customs, culture, and economic structure. Sibiya's father says, "Our ways are not the ways of white people, their speech is not ours. White people are as smooth as eels, but they devour us like sharks" (Nkosi, 1986, p. 6).

A careful reading of the novel might render glimpses of Fanon and Memmi's influence on the writer. Fanon propounds that the colonized must leave Europe's values, theories, systems, structures, and metaphysics because wherever its civilization has reached, there has been death and underdevelopment (Fanon, 1974, p. 251). Memmi acknowledges that:

[The colonized] must cease defining himself through the categories of colonizers. The same holds true of what more subtly characterizes him in a negative way. For example, the famous and absurd incompatibility between East and West, that antithesis hardened by the colonizer, who thereby sets up a permanent barrier between himself and the colonized. What does the return to the East mean, anyway? Even if oppression has assumed the face of England or France, cultural and technical acquirements belong to all peoples. Science is neither Western nor Eastern, any more than it is bourgeois or proletarian. There are two ways

of pouring concrete—the right way and the wrong way. (Memmi, 1991, p. 152)

Memmi is highly aware of the contaminated and contaminating discourse of the colonizer. What must be done is to decolonize the minds of both the colonizer and the colonized. In this respect, it seems Fanon, Memmi, and Nkosi all share the same idea, and in a similar way Sibiya's father believes that non-whites must never get engaged in the ways of white men.

Being taken from the world of his idyllic childhood in a pastoral village, Sibiya is sent to the Lutheran Seminary at a town called Mzimba. The school belongs to Christian missionaries who, as a prerequisite, demand the conversion of children to Christianity before they enroll for the school. This is a small cost they must pay to gain the magic knowledge of the white man. Sibiya's father expresses his reluctance to send him to school by remarking that his mother wants him "to drink of the wisdom of the white man" and asks: "Did your people not have any wisdom of their own before the white men came?" (Nkosi, 1986, p. 53). Sibiya's mother persuades the father with her eloquent tongue that their son would be a wise man by the assistance of this education. Afterwards, the fascist government gradually confiscates the lands of Zulus in order to produce new settlement estates for white settlers, and the day comes when Sibiya's community is forced to abandon their village and fields for the same purpose. Any resistance is crushed brutally. Sibiya and his family take refuge in a relative's house in another town.

A short while later, being under the unbearable distress of homelessness, his father dies. He and his mother move to the city of Durban and settle in a black slum outside the city. The first job his mother takes up is washing white people's clothes. Later on, she becomes the owner of a pub where she sells a kind of strong narcotic drug to black workers. Ndi Sibiya begins to study at the University of Natal, from where he is expelled in his third year. After that, he begins to frequent the port and the beach in hope of abandoning South Africa for another country where he believes he would find freedom and welfare. But when he sees Veronica on the beach, he is "mesmerized" (Nkosi, 1986, p. 7), and the spell on him makes it impossible for him to even think again of leaving South Africa. Every day he goes to the beach to watch the girl for hours. The girl seems ecstatically happy with being gazed by a native, a representative of 'an inferior race.' But it seems she finds the sentiment exotic, and she is excited by the lure of breaking a prohibition. They both try to keep up their daily rendezvous on the beach although they can never utter a word to each other. Verbal communication is strictly forbidden by apartheid. All communication is carried out in silence through the face and gestures:

For minutes on end we stared deliberately into each other's eyes. Obviously, if we could not use words we could use our looks. Eyes. Meaningful gestures. It was all we had. With our eyes, we could make love as it soon became apparent. With our eyes, we could tell each other



stories. With our eyes, we could protest each other's infidelities, the misery of our separation, our being artificially kept apart. [...] That is how it was between Veronica and me. *Apartheid?* We had defeated apartheid. We had finally perfected a method of making love without even making contact, utilizing empty space like two telepathic media exchanging telegraphic messages through the sexual airwaves. (Nkosi, 1986, p. 146-150)

In a country where there are extremely cruel and despotic laws to prevent different peoples from coming together, human beings have to live in a world of taboos, which turn life to hell. In South Africa, there were laws like the Immorality Act and some others which very brutally forbade the interaction of different races. No non-white could dare to attempt to have a love affair with a white person; marriage between whites and non-whites was something that could occur only in dreams. What Veronica and Sibiya do is to create communication out of silence. Their very silence becomes their voice. And the outcome is the subversion and defeat of apartheid and the destruction of taboo.

Through his ceaseless pursuit of the girl, Sibiya once follows her up to a big house at night. There the girl gets engaged in a session of group sex in a very obscene and seductive manner. Being aware that Sibiya is trying to watch her through the window, she deliberately and seductively comes closer to the window so as to make it easy for Sibiya to see her. Thus, it becomes clear that the girl is in fact a stripteaser who entertains white men. She is not a virgin as the judges, prosecutors, witnesses, and the white audiences glorify her.

The climax, through the perspective of Sibiya of course, culminates when Sibiya and Veronica are both on the beach gazing into each other's eyes as usual. Through their nonverbal interaction, they decide that they can no longer stand being separate physically. The girl leaves the beach signing to Sibiya that she wants him to follow her. Sibiya follows her to her bungalow which is far behind the beach in a forest. The girl, leaving the door open, gets undressed in the middle of the bungalow to exhibit her body. Sibiya takes this as an invitation and when he goes in, Veronica does not scream; on the contrary, she welcomes him. Till the last moment when they make love, as Sibiya later recalls, everything goes normal, but their love-making generates noise. Some passersby hear the noise, and when they enter the bungalow, Veronica screams and blames Sibiya for raping her. Sibiya is arrested and put in jail. Later on, he is brought to the court and sentenced to death. He says, "Even before they had heard my side of the story, I knew they were going to hang me" (Nkosi, 1986, p. 29). Because everything in South Africa and in all colonies was designed for the benefit of the white man and identities were constructed by racist colonialist regimes, there was no way for Sibiya to win the case and be released. As Fanon reasons:

The native is declared insensible to ethics, he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil. He is the corrosive element, destroying all that comes near him; he is the deforming element, disfiguring all that has to do with beauty or morality; he is the depository of maleficent powers, the unconscious and irretrievable instrument of blind forces. (Fanon, 1974, p. 32)

Within this straitjacket, the colonized is always immoral, unjust, evil, criminal, and the worst of all. Although the woman is just a prostitute, in the colonial context, she becomes an angel whose chastity has been violated by an eternally corrupt devilish black man. Being white, which is just a biological quality, is enough to be virtuous and chaste, as Sibiya rebelliously asks, “Why believe the word of the girl against mine, for example? Except for the *whiteness* of her skin, a color that has caused more trouble and unhappiness in the world than the color of any other skin, what particular claim to virtue can this girl be supposed to have?” (Nkosi, 1986, p. 64-5) The answer is simple: the white color, which belongs to the powerful, is legitimate, and the others are illegitimate in the imperialist discourse. Such arbitrary manipulative constructions of identities are later imposed upon the colonized as divine and scientific facts that cannot be rejected. Fanon points out such a case in Algeria:

Before 1954 magistrates, policemen, barristers, journalists and legal doctors agreed unanimously that criminality in Algeria was a problem. It was affirmed that the Algerian was a born criminal. A theory was elaborated and scientific proofs were found to support it. This theory was taught in the universities for over twenty years (Fanon, 1974, p. 239).

While Sibiya is waiting for death in his prison cell, the psychoanalyst Mr. Dufre arrives to have some conversation sessions with Sibiya for the ‘honorable’ duty of producing “the full portrait of an “African rapist,” whose exploits have captured the imagination of the entire “civilized world”” (Nkosi, 1986, p. 70). During these sessions, Sibiya never speaks in complete frankness. He is well aware that almost all the disciplines of the West are tainted by values idolizing the white man. Indeed, this awareness gains a subversive quality throughout the novel. As a matter of fact, this subversive quality characterizes almost all postcolonial texts. In this respect, Sibiya mocks psychoanalysis as follows:

With this man, huge, white, bespectacled, friendly but remote, childhood stories are a speciality. Again and again he asks about my mother; he asks about my feelings toward my father. Did I ever wish to kill him, or perhaps did I not secretly hope that while my father was cutting the trunk of a tree, the tree would come crashing over his head. When I laugh, Dr. Dufre remains imperturbable. “You think it never happens?” he asks.

“You will be surprised how often children wish catastrophe to befall their parents!”

“Of course, it happens,” I say, unable to stop myself from laughing. “Only why should I wish it to happen? My father and I got along very well.”

I am sorry. I have gone to school. I know what the man wants. I have read a great deal that surprises and amuses me. Are these not, after all, the men who believe that feces are to a child what money in the bank is to an adult? (Nkosi, 1986: p. 18)

Having the idea of something and believing complacently that that idea is the only truth is the result of a totalitarian mentality. Sibiya is quite aware of this, and thereby, he never cares about the oedipal complex or anal eroticism of psychoanalysis. Dr. Dufre's only aim is to prove the hypotheses of psychoanalysis. He is never concerned “with discovering the true character of one man's passion for another human being,” as Sibiya furiously reasons (Nkosi, 1986, p. 75).

Once, being overwhelmed by the excessive incredulity shown toward him, Sibiya explodes to Dufre:

...it wasn't at all like that! In court, I tried to explain how it happened but no one would believe me. How many times must I tell you the girl invited sexual attention? Don't you believe me when I say whatever else happened, that girl wanted it to happen? Right from the beginning I could tell she wanted it as much as I did. Though neither of us spoke, those meetings at the beach took on the form of rendezvous. She waited for my arrival each day as keenly as I looked forward to hers. It was in her eyes, it was all over her face. A pact is what we had entered into, a silent conspiracy. Even on the day of the incident, although she could see me hanging about her front yard, she still left the door of the bungalow open! And what of the stripping, eh, doctor? How do you explain the striptease act? Right there before me, with the front door wide open, removing every bit of clothing until she was standing in full view with nothing but bare powder on her back! Can you explain that? (Nkosi, 1986, p. 72)

However, whatever he does, neither Dufre nor any other white person believes him. He is an inborn criminal in their eyes. Although later his attorney tells the jury and the judges that they have evidence in the form of videotapes and photographs of Veronica's group sex parties, nobody feels the need to see them. The decision of the court is always ready beforehand. This indicates that the courts under apartheid in South Africa were just formalities. Justice never appeared in those courts. As Sibiya delineates the situation illustratively:

Nothing is exactly like the gorgeous panoply of a South African court: the mock ceremony, the pretense, the play-acting. South Africa is a country in which every principle of justice has been tampered with, debased, even reversed; a country where truth, fairness, and magnanimity have been chucked out of the window, and only the shell of intricate procedure remains; a country of the memory of empty ritual, of “Mi-Lord,” “Your Honor”; a country of “My Learned Friend is pleased to cite the case of Neville vs. Kumalo, but what about Chief Justice Sommerville’s ruling in the case of Gubase vs. Lavabo?” Elegant form, gorgeous ceremony, empty ritual. (Nkosi, 1986, p. 165)

In a country where relations are based on the superiority of one race over the others; where only one race’s biological features, values, realities, culture, religion, language, tastes, structures, and ideas are at the center; and where races are manipulatively segregated from each other by legislation, justice becomes only air, and all the other things done in the court diminish to a game, a plaything, a leisure, “[e]legant form, gorgeous ceremony, empty ritual” (Nkosi, 1986, p. 165).

Sibiya begins to write his autobiography in jail instead of writing great works abroad. Writing gives him relief and even a character although he can never get out of the ambivalence of his imminent death, which interferes with everything he is excited about. His mother’s dream that her son, after drinking from the wisdom of the white man, would conquer empires with “a pen and a tutored mind” (Nkosi, 1986, p. 49) in the fashion of the white man, turns out to be an illusion. The white man is never willing to see the non-white sharing his privileged position. Veronica is a “metonym for white society and values” (Aschcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 1991, p. 85), and Sibiya, by his pen (by learning to read and write), which also stands for phallus, writes on the white page. Education and writing open people’s eyes and give them tools to ask questions, criticize, and therefore, dismantle authority. Apartheid considers the education of non-white peoples as something corruptive, which causes their deviation from being noble savages. Sibiya’s attempt is at the same time an attempt to construct an identity that would render him authenticity and dignity. However, it is impossible to go beyond the racist borders. One benefit of his writing is that it enables him to decolonize his mind and identity which have been shaped by apartheid. Eventually, he constructs himself an authentic identity.

When Sibiya is asked in the court whether he raped the girl, he cannot make his tongue speak. Being sure that nobody would believe his story, he contemplates that “Only the girl...could have supplied the missing links in [his] faulty and, no doubt, hopelessly affected memory” (Nkosi, 1986, p. 169). The ceaseless psychological pressure and the fear of death have begun to blur his memory. It is as if he has experienced partial amnesia. The fact that only the girl could complete the incomplete story makes it possible to interpret that Sibiya, being a metonym for the colonized, and Veronica, for the colonizer, can recover from that terrible situation only in cooperation with each other. In

other words, their histories are intertwined, and without their collaboration their history would not gain any complete meaning. It might be said that this also reflects the author's view.

Sibiya's remarks below, spoken in his final days, are full of high emotional density:

Death by hanging!

That is to be my crown of thorns. Death, at any rate, for the unpardonable crime of having been born black in a world where White Is Right and White Is Might. Better to have been born a beetle, crawling too close to the ground to notice the purity of the sky. Better by far not to have noticed that first mischievous gleam in the eye of that English girl. [...] No, I'll die of a vaster, deeper, more cruel conspiracy by the rulers of my country who have made a certain knowledge between persons of different races not only impossible to achieve but positively dangerous even to *attempt* to acquire. They have made contact between the races a cause for profoundest alarm amongst white citizens. (Nkosi, 1986, p. 179-80)

The "crown of thorns" immediately brings to one's mind the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and innocence. It is as if Sibiya considers himself a sacrifice for the redemption and salvation of humanity from apartheid's great sin of segregating human beings. His act will also be a revolutionary step on the way to freedom. He makes it clear that the cause of his death is apartheid's inhuman policies. While he is struggling with such dense feelings, he hears the voices of the political prisoners in the same prison. They sing freedom songs in unison. He mentions them in his last words:

Voices individually weak and at first very tentative, but once united combine into a single powerful sound rolling and thundering, shaking the very foundations of the prison walls. Yes, those voices keep me company. I couldn't ask for a better send-off to the next world than those voices announcing the near-dawn of freedom, and then, of course, the unruly birds, which I see daily mating in the sky! (Nkosi, 1986, p. 183-4)

Sibiya chooses to revolt against apartheid instead of serving it. This choice causes his death, but this is a dignified death that gives him an authentic identity that has been entirely decolonized. In other words, through violating the laws of apartheid, Sibiya rebels, and then through his writing and honorable death, he constructs himself a noble identity purified of colonial pollution. His death also suggests that an honorable death is better than a dishonorable life. Moreover, as the quote above mentions, when voices of the prisoners unite, they create a very strong sound that shakes the foundations of the prison walls. This suggests that only if the colonized unite can they bring about revolution and change. This song of freedom sung in unison is also a herald of the revolution that will end apartheid soon. Another thing that deserves mentioning in the

quote above is the mating birds in the sky that Sibiya watches every day through the window of his prison cell. The mating birds are a symbol of freedom and the mutual desire of the peoples and cultures of South Africa and those of the whole world to interact freely and in an unbiased manner. Evidently, the main character of *Mating Birds*, Sibiya, and the writer Nkosi both believe that “to break out of this [dehumanizing] structure...non-Western cultures must define their own future in terms of their own categories and concepts....” (Sardar and Van Loon, 1998, p. 88)

#### IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, *Mating Birds* is a postcolonial novel that portrays how identities were constructed by the misanthropic apartheid regime in South Africa, where differences were calcified into impassable walls between human beings. It also suggests that there are ways of overcoming these obstacles. Sibiya’s act, through which he subverts the preposterous policies of apartheid, is an exemplary way of constructing an independent authentic identity based on freedom. Sibiya dispossesses the identity imposed upon him, refuses to believe in the story narrated to him, creates his own story, and constructs his own authentic identity.

In fact, postcolonial literature in general expresses the desire of the silenced, negated, and dehumanized colonial individuals to construct authentic and dignified identities. Postcolonialism argues that differences between people and cultures never entitle any civilization or culture to claim ontological superiority over others and that they are all equal in value and need to be inspired by each other. Postcolonialism has also demonstrated that in the history of colonialism and imperialism, there has occurred an epistemic violence that has convicted all the non-Westerners to the negative representations produced by the Westerners. It aims to replace all these misrepresentations with truthful and authentic significations. In short, postcolonialism has always been in the service of both physical and mental decolonization of all humanity.

The colonizer has always idealized and idolized himself and his so-called mission of civilizing savages. While doing this, he has invariably devalued, depersonalized, dehumanized, and exploited the colonized. Moreover, the colonizer is someone who has a privileged status in the land of the colonized. Since he is powerful, his narrative, ideology, culture, philosophy, language, politics, religion, science, etc. are the only real values in the world whereas all the values of the colonized are the cause of their backwardness, primitivity, irrationality, and wretchedness. The colonized, being diminished to the level of a beast, undergoes an agonizing alienation and begins to hate and deny himself and his culture in order to assimilate the coercively imposed Western values. However, the colonizer never welcomes the colonized as his equal because that would mean the end of his privileged status and colonialism. In the end, the colonized is left with two alternatives: either to serve or to die through resistance and revolt. History is full of individuals who have chosen either the former or the latter. The fact that almost all

of the former colonies are now at least territorially independent indicates that most of the colonized peoples have chosen the second alternative.

The narrator-protagonist of *Mating Birds*, Sibiya, also suffers from alienation due to the constant negation, devaluation, and dehumanization of himself and his culture by the white regime in South Africa. Apartheid, the policy of segregating the whites and non-whites to continue the inhuman system based on the maintenance of the privileged position of the minority whites and the degraded situation of the majority non-whites, has made people fear the idea of interacting with others who differ from them only in skin color. Sibiya, after he has been educated in schools administered by whites and through his intimacy with their values, begins to question the system and crosses these racist borders between cultures by having a love affair with a white woman. This, of course, symbolizes his revolt against any policy or idea that tries to discriminate human beings on the basis of their skin color or any other difference they have. He is aware that his deed would cause his death, but he does not give up because his act is an attempt to construct an authentic and esteemed identity. He is executed in the end, but this is an honorable death because although his body is annihilated his honorable identity becomes immortal.

A central theme in *Mating Birds* as a postcolonial novel is the idea that relationships between people and cultures must be based on the common ethical identity of humanity. The ethical identity is what obliges human beings to accept that they share the same world; that they are all equal; that they absolutely need each other; that they must not kill, persecute, or oppress each other; that their differences are indispensable for their sense of meaningfulness; that they can have justice on earth only through a disinterested and nonhierarchical relationship; and that their happiness depends on feeling responsibility for each other. Any relationship based on coercion causes pain in the souls of people until they compensate for it. Such a relationship causes alienations. The moment people get away from their common ethical identity they begin to get engaged with inhuman practices in the form of colonization, imperialism, wars, slavery, and similar catastrophes. In his novel titled *Mating Birds*, Nkosi suggests that it is essential to acknowledge that human beings and cultures have the right to interact and inspire one another; however, this interaction must occur with the consent of both parties and on equal terms.

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