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THE ARCTIC  
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OF NORWAY

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

## Remembering Apartheid

*Investigating Resistance in Mark Mathabane's Kaffir Boy*

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## Abstract

This thesis looks at how resistance is performed in Mark Mathabane's autobiography *Kaffir Boy*. The post-colonial theoretical framework theorists such as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Chimamanda Adichie provide helps this thesis analyze how social actors are able to provide resistance against the apartheid regime. It becomes evident that these resistances are layered, and fundamentally more complex than simple binary oppositions. Terms such as ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity aid this thesis in explaining the social mobility Mark experiences through his education. Mark's resistance toward apartheid is layered internally and externally of *Kaffir Boy*, his resistance is seen from within the narrative, in addition to the book itself being the product of his resistance toward the apartheid regime. Mathabane's autobiography gained recognition in the United States and therefore helped enlighten the Western population about the atrocities that took place in apartheid South Africa. The thesis will further discuss how *Kaffir Boy* can be used in VG3 Social Studies English. The Bantu Education Act apartheid enforced will stress the importance to be critical of Education Acts, especially the Knowledge Promotion Reform and its components in regards to the student's curriculums. Lastly, the thesis will look at how one should approach taboo topics that are very sensitive for many students and teachers.



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## 1. Introduction: why *Kaffir Boy* matters in a Norwegian school context

In this thesis I will critically examine the various types of resistances against the apartheid regime present in Mark Mathabane's autobiography *Kaffir Boy*. I choose this topic because apartheid caught my curiosity when I re-visited it during a course in crime fiction. The class had read Gillian Slovo's *Red Dust* which deals with the Truth and Reconciliation trials in post-apartheid South Africa. Previously I had only encountered the gruesomeness of apartheid in school through history textbooks dealing with racism, but I had never been able to experience the pain and suffering at a personal level the novel offered its readers. At that moment I realized I wanted to continue working with apartheid but I understood quickly that dealing with the post-apartheid era would possibly be too abstract or advanced for VGS students to find an interest in the topic. As I kept researching novels I stumbled upon the autobiography *Kaffir Boy* and I instantaneously grew quite fond of it. Not only does it tell a gripping story that keeps the reader on his or her toes, it also encapsulates the seriousness the systematic oppression of the apartheid regime enforced in normal everyday life. With that in mind I think *Kaffir Boy* is an excellent book to teach in Norwegian upper secondary schools, especially the English VG3 subject Social Studies English. The important message of *Kaffir Boy* remains relevant today as it deals with racism based on the assumption that there are biological differences and that they form a biological hierarchy.

The thesis is structured into three main layers which looks at: The analysis on a narrative level, where the thesis will pay close attention to the main characters' key-characterization seen through their resistance against the apartheid regime. Secondly, it will inspect how *Kaffir Boy*, as an autobiography is used as a political tool against the apartheid regime. As the book gained recognition the awareness of apartheid's gruesomeness spread. The final layer of the thesis will look at how *Kaffir Boy* is useful for VG-3 level Social Studies English students. The text is superb to raise intercultural awareness and empathy.

*Kaffir Boy* is an excellent book to represent apartheid to Norwegian VGS pupils, for it conveys Mark's upbringing through the Alexandra ghetto and flawed apartheid educational system. Mathabane's educational perspective will most likely contradict most of the students' own experiences. The realization will hopefully help the students become more self-reflected about their own Education Act and the Knowledge Promotion Reform, and their intentions. The autobiography also deals with serious taboo issues which definitely need addressing in the classroom. Topics such as adolescent suicide and child prostitution might lead to powerful emotional reactions, and should be dealt with professionally by the teacher. Another reason that apartheid is relevant to the VGS students is that even though apartheid was abolished before most of them were born, is that apartheid shows the length humans and societies are able to go because of prejudice and hate, even in modern times. The concept of apartheid might not seem relevant for some VGS students, and they would gain more knowledge learning about a current on-going conflicts in terms of racial matters. I continue my discussion of that issue in Chapter Four Using *Kaffir Boy* in VG3 Social Studies English.

The purpose of Mark Mathabane's autobiography *Kaffir Boy* is to tell "the true story of a black youth's coming of age in apartheid South Africa" or so it says on the cover of the book and one might expect a saddening story of Mathabane's harsh childhood. Upon reading and studying the autobiography it becomes apparent that the book carries a heavier weight than only Mathabane's own story – Mathabane is responsible for several young South African boys' stories, but he tells them through his own experience growing up under the strict South African apartheid regime. While he does not explicitly tell the other boys' stories, we catch glimmers of other South African families' lives through Mathabane's narrative and through that we are able to relate to the social injustice many Bantu South African families experienced. The autobiography's objective is then not merely to tell Mark Mathabane's story of growing up in South Africa. Rather, the book is a product of resistance towards the



apartheid regime in itself. When Mathabane published his autobiography in 1986 in the United States there were perhaps a few notions of how it was to live in South Africa, a country that systematically enforced racial segregation based on race and ethnicity. However few knew about the actual trauma that child prostitution, contemplating suicide at the age of ten and witnessing murder that Mark experienced growing up in South Africa affected Mathabane. It should be stated that there is a parallel between the racial injustice that took place from the 1800's to 1950's in the United States and apartheid South Africa. Recently there have even been racial riots in Baltimore, which just goes to show that racial injustice is an ongoing problem. It is perhaps for that reason the book was introduced into some high school curriculums in America, for it is an effective book thematically-wise to teach students.

*Kaffir Boy* received its fair share of support and criticism in its book reception. It was simultaneously praised for its realism, and banned for teaching at the same time due to a child prostitution scene. Mathabane edited an abridged version so that it could be taught to high school students with a more conservative take on books. *Kaffir Boy* was as recently as 2010 challenged in San Luis Obispo High School by concerned parents (Pemberton, Patrick). The new purpose of the book is perhaps to fight against the ignorance promoted by censorship, for *Kaffir Boy* speaks of social injustice in the highest degree, and by denying students the ability to engage in battling injustice the censorship endorses ignorance. Nanette Asimov interviewed Mark Mathabane after his book was banned from Burlingame High School, and he responded to the criticism: "You know, the freedom we should jealously guard is the freedom of our conscience. If that's taken away, that's the worst kind of bondage. So I applaud you." Mathabane's response encourages readers to acknowledge the real hardships many young black children have experienced, and continues to experience, in a South Africa that still suffers from social injustice. Portraying an illusion of the real events that took place only produces ignorance.

The thesis is going to use post-colonial theory to investigate the effect the apartheid regime had on its colonial subjects. Post-colonial theory is useful when attempting to understand the reasoning, effect and outcome of situations such as apartheid, the post-colonial field provides several frameworks to understand colonial conflict. Some have argued that apartheid is not a colonial conflict, for it is a sovereign state by itself and no other countries had ties to it during apartheid. Mathabane, on the other hand support the view that apartheid is a result of the colonial process that took place with the Boer colonization in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

This thesis is going to focus on the originally intended purpose of the book - which is to promote resistance against the apartheid regime - both externally and internally in *Kaffir Boy*. For it is not only external resistance *Kaffir Boy* promotes, while being fortunate enough to be able to read Mark's story because of his resistance towards apartheid - we are also able to see how families and its individuals resisted the apartheid regime in South Africa from 1965 to 1978 inside of the autobiography *Kaffir Boy*. By doing a key-characterization it becomes evident that there are several forms of resistance within the autobiography itself, we can read it through Papa, Mama, Mark, Granny, Uncle Piet, Aunt Bushy, in addition to the several white liberal persons who tries to help Mark succeed in tennis. Each of the characters approach to resistance is different, and while it becomes obvious that some resistances are more effective than others, together they make a strong moral and political statement against the apartheid regime. Even *Kaffir Boy* the autobiography itself is a product of the collective resistance, for it is Mathabane's voice telling his audience of the horrors of apartheid. Mathabane wrote his autobiography in 1986, so there were eight years between *Kaffir Boy* and apartheid's downfall in 1994. Due to Mathabane's participation in the resistance against apartheid he had to change his name due to possible retaliation from the apartheid regime.

Mark's real name is Johannes, but he changed it to escape the wrath of the apartheid regime (TeacherWeb editorial team).

In this thesis I will examine the various means of resistance that the main characters are able to promote and trace it back to the family institution for the simple reason that the various characters live together in the same home. The home becomes an arena where some of the forms of resistance conflict with each other. Papa's and Mark's approach toward resistance are fundamentally different. Depending on the perspective through which we look at their individual resistances Papa and Mark approaches would seem to contradict. Together, they appear to be counterproductive in fact.

### 1.1 Contextualizing apartheid

To define apartheid we need to separate its intended purpose from the actual effect it had. Apartheid translates to "apart-hood" and was a political system based upon segregation used in South Africa from 1948 to 1994. The stated purpose was for it to racially segregate the races in South Africa so that South Africans could live without having to mix with each other. The different races and tribes were assigned an area or homeland where they were supposed to reside within. Black South Africans were placed under a Bantustan (a tribal homeland) designed to their tribe (Zulu, Tsonga, Shangaan, Venda etc). Within the apartheid system the government tailored the educational curriculum to each tribe, in *Kaffir Boy* the primary schools are strictly Venda, Zulu, Shangaan or Tsonga for instance. While the personalized homeland and tailored education might seem good and well-intended at first, they were merely tools to control the population.

The actual effect apartheid had was brutal toward the different factions, when the National Party (NP) gained governmental power in 1948 they officially implemented apartheid as the official political ideology in South Africa. They divided all the races into four categories: *black, white, colored and Indian*. Within the four categories there were several

sub-categories such as: European/British/Afrikaans within *white* and all the Bantu tribes within the *Black* category. The *colored* factions were people with mixed ethnicity between black and white and lastly the *Indian* faction were the remnants of British traders from colonial India. The racial hierarchy was like this: white, Indian, colored and lastly black (Baldwin-Ragaven et al. 18). I am going to focus on the African faction in this thesis, and as they were on the bottom of the hierarchy they received the worst treatment. As for segregation blacks were not allowed to use the better public amenities because they were the white's property and marked with "European Only" signs, while the inferior amenities were often given "Non-European Only" signs. The assigned Bantustans were barren and infertile and living conditions were harsh, to survive many fathers had to go live in city ghettos to work so that they could support their family back home. Due to pass laws the fathers' families were not allowed to live with the father, for it would be illegal unless they had their own jobs and passes to prove it at all times. The education Bantu children received was intentionally worse than their fellow white South African's education. While there was much more injustice within the apartheid system I am going to continue looking at the various acts and laws that legally allowed Africans to be subjugated to vile treatment.

The racial segregation that apartheid imposed started long before the legal system was established in 1913. The introduction of the Land act forced Africans only to live in reserves and denying them the possibility of working as sharecroppers, they had to pay hut tax for every hut in their communities and poll tax for every male adult African (Apartheid Museum). While apartheid had not yet been introduced, we can see the introduction of it slowly introducing itself through tax structure and the Land act. As apartheid was introduced by the National Party we are able to witness how the rigid apartheid legislation affected everyday life for Africans as they were many and unjust. The most important laws present in *Kaffir Boy* are: Population Registration act, land act, Group Areas act, Pass laws, Bantu Education act,

Reservation of Separate Amenities act and Bantu Homeland Citizens Act (Boddy E., Alistair). The aim of these acts was to racially profile, spatially segregate the various races, force black people to carry passes for identification, limit the educational possibilities to Bantu children, force segregation in all public amenities (hence the “European Only” and “Non-Europeans Only signs), and lastly assign barren homelands to the various tribes, while revoking South African citizenships to Blacks, regardless to their connections to their homeland. The acts were meant to limit the African possibilities of independent freedom and force them into increasing the material wealth for the white population. The apartheid laws will be present later in the analysis chapter of *Kaffir Boy*.

## 2. Post-Colonial Theory

Post-Colonial theory aims to analyze and explain to literary works that deals with colonial or post-colonial periods. The post-colonial theory is then a wide field incorporating literature from many parts of the world. Traditionally colonial/post-colonial literature originated in the non-Western world - examples being: India, Middle-East, African countries - however it has also originated from Western countries such as Ireland because of its past with England.

There is no specific date or time that makes colonial/post-colonial theory relevant. The theories are applicable from the colonization period to the present. Colonialization often brings change to a pre-existing community, the pre-existing community then realizes that their way of living no longer corresponds with their notion of their supposed life. They might experience economic, social or cultural changes that forces them to live differently than they had previously done. While the change might be abrupt or gradual it produces ripples that carry onto the following generations within the set communities. In the case of South Africa it is very clear that the Boer wars and colonization of the country has affected its ideologies and rule set.



South Africa lives in the wake of apartheid and while the fight against apartheid finally has ended there are still problems in post-apartheid South Africa. Social issues are still present in South Africa, the wealth is unevenly spread (ICFI) and the unemployment rate was at a massive 25.2% in 2014 (Taborda). As for the relevance to post-colonial theory in this example we can assume that it seeks to explain the uneven wealth and high unemployment rates in current South Africa. The relevant post-colonial literature addresses the issues facing communities living in harsh new conditions because of the previous colonization that has taken place. Traditionally we are given the perspective of the oppressed and their horrors, post-colonial theory is able to nuance the situation and also show how a community can also be thriving today as a result of the previous colonization. Examples of that can be better infrastructure or perhaps the acquiring of the English language. Better infrastructure has helped communities with their business trades-routes, while English allow them to communicate with the same language.

The key point is that the post-colonial field deals with literature that has been created both directly and indirectly as a result of colonization. Conventional Western literary theories have been unsuccessful in providing a sufficient framework to analyze the new literature that was being produced. Doing a post-colonial reading has been described as “A way of reading and rereading texts of both metropolitan and colonial cultures to draw deliberate attention to the profound and inescapable effects of colonization on literary production; anthropological accounts; historical records; administrative and scientific writing. It is a form of deconstructive reading most usually applied to works emanating from the colonizers (but may be applied to works by the colonized) which demonstrates the extent to which the text contradicts its underlying assumptions (civilization, justice, aesthetics, sensibility, race) and reveals its (often unwitting) colonialist ideologies and processes” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 187-8). The clashing of cultures influence the literary production because the two

cultures have traditionally been very different. The conflicting cultures have challenged each other, and cracks in the literature becomes evident. One example where the crack is exposed is Jane Austen's very metropolitan Mansfield Park, the setting is set in the interior of England and we never meet any of the colonial subjects in the play. The only contact is through the father figure and his son who has been at their cotton plantations in Antigua. So their economic condition and lifestyle at Mansfield Park relies upon the wealth they are able to accumulate through colonization. The colonizers' social interactions are also affected, it was imperative that they had full control over their colonial subjects in the orient. Their exceeding control leaks into the occident and in Mansfield Park we witness Edward controlling Fanny exceedingly through enforcing his highly moral opinions upon her. The parallels between Edward's controlling and colonial control is painstakingly obvious.

In the case of Mark Mathabane's *Kaffir Boy* we are presented with a perspective that is critical of Western stereotypes that attempts at generalizing the Africans. Simultaneously Mathabane takes a stand against his own culture by pointing out its flaws. We also witness Mark acquire his oppressor's culture; he embraces their culture by learning how to read, he does well in academia, enjoy classical music and learns to speak a plethora of languages. Mark is able to transcend to a status of hybridity where he is empowered by the wisdom of both his cultural luggage - his Bantu heritage and Western education. The duality of his position is explainable by deconstructing his various roles in a post-colonial manner, and it is one of the questions I'm going to answer in the analysis chapter.

I am going to elaborate on post-colonial concepts that are most relevant to my analysis of *Kaffir Boy*. The key concepts I am going to discuss are: resistance, the single story, ambivalence, mimicry, hybridity and language.

## 2.1 Resistance

Before I start writing about the various resistances that spring out from *Kaffir Boy* I think it will serve this thesis well in defining the term resistance itself. The Oxford English Dictionary defines resistance in a very general way as: “The ability not to be affected by something undesirable” The definition is as unspecific as possible, and while it might make it more correct, it does not serve its purpose in clarifying what resistance is. Scholars Jocelyn Hollander and Rachel Einwohner have conceptualizes resistance, stating: “Different authors who use the language of resistance may not in fact be talking about the same thing. Scholars have used the term *resistance* to describe a wide variety of actions and behaviors at all levels of human social life (individual, collective, and institutional) and in a number of different settings, including political systems, entertainment and literature, and the workplace. Indeed, everything from revolutions to hairstyles has been described as resistance. Given this variation, it is not surprising that there is little consensus on the definition of resistance.” (533-4). The following examples Hollander and Einwohner have chosen might shed some much needed light on the term. They’ve used Nina Gregg’s, Norma J. Proffitt’s, Lynn C. Carr’s, and Modigliani and Rochat’s definitions of resistance to clarify their point, examples are given in the same order as the naming: “acting autonomously, in [one’s] own interests”, “active efforts to oppose, fight, and refuse to cooperate with or submit to... abusive behavior and control”, “engaging in behaviors despite opposition and lastly “questioning and objecting”. Some resistance is direct while other resistances are subtle, it can be radiated passively, but also actively performed. Resistance can also be perceived very differently, it depends on several factors such as: the resisters’ own behavior, how the oppressor experiences the resistance, lastly third parties observing the resistance between the two main parties.

Miller argues that “Most studies of resistance are problematic because “they begin by dividing the population into the powerful and the powerless.” Yet dichotomizing resisters and dominators in this way ignores the fact that there are multiple systems of hierarchy, and that individuals can be simultaneously powerful and powerless within different systems” (qtd. Einwohner and Hollander 550). This signals that resistance can be performed in a number of ways and that it has a very complex nature. One can not only see resistance as a product of a dichotomy, but rather the product of an interrelated problematic relationships between several factions in *Kaffir Boy*. One example is the resistance Mark needs to perform against Papa, even though they both desire the same abolishment of apartheid. They have the same goals, but different paths of getting there. Another example is how the superintendent thinks he is in a position of power when talking to Mark, while in reality he is not, for Mark is duping him. Mark casually bypasses the African translator by speaking fluent Afrikaans, thus seizing the superintendent’s attention. The superintendent assumes he is in charge because of his institutional authority, when in reality he is actually being duped by Mark’s quick tongue and wit; for Mark speaks the words the superintendent wishes to hear. The superintendent is duped by Mark because he is condescending toward Mark, the superintendent is unable to comprehend that a simple boy as Mark is able to outwit him. The African translator seems fully aware of the ongoing scam, but is unable to voice a complaint out of fear of the superintendent’s authority. The guard has two choices, either speak out and embarrass the superintendent, or remain silent and allow Mark to dupe the superintendent. This complex three-way play of resistance goes to show how complicated the notion of power and resistance can be.

## 2.2 The danger of a single story

The relationship between the Western world and its colonies has generally been thought as a singular one; the West has dominated its colonies and along with that notion follows the ideas

of supremacy and inferiority. The West was synonymous with civilization whilst its colonial subjects were perceived as savages. We have a more nuanced view of inter-cultural and national relationships today. It is important understanding why and how we have come to these cultural understandings. The post-colonial field rapidly started to grow after theorist Edward W. Said released his book *Orientalism* which described the relationship between the West and East (Middle East, Asia and North Africa), Said writes about the patronizing manner the West has depicted the Eastern societies. *Orientalism* was met with much criticism, mainly where people disagreed with Said on the topic of relationship between the Orient and Occident – Said presents the East as victims, while ignoring the rest of their traits. Critics noted that Said had done the same thing as the colonizers; he had written a singular story about the East as victims. Said deals with the criticism he received in *Orientalism*'s successor *Culture Imperialism* where he states: “What I had left out of *Orientalism* was that response to Western dominance which culminated in the great movement of decolonization all across the Third World. Along with armed resistance in places as diverse as nineteenth-century Algeria, Ireland, and Indonesia, there also went considerable effort into cultural resistance almost everywhere... There was always some form of active resistance and, in the overwhelming majority of cases, the resistance finally won out” (XII). Said had maybe been equally guilty of portraying the colonial subjects wrongly, but by doing so he had opened up a debate and discussion among scholars. As post-colonialism gained momentum, a number of other academics and writers started to contribute to the field. One writer whose insights are especially pertinent to my analysis is Chimamanda Adichie.

Adichie challenges stereotypes in her Ted Talk lecture “The Danger of a Single Story”, in it she tells her story of how being a storyteller can be more complicated than it seems at first. As a child she was given a single explanation and story about their house-helper Fide, that he was simply poor and did not have any other qualities worth mentioning.



Much like Said's simple binary explanation of victim and oppressor relationship, Fide and his family was poor and that was all there was to it. As an adult Adichie acknowledges the problem with only the willingness to see Fide as the poor boy and therefore feel enormous pity for him and his family is that she was unable to see their other qualities. "Then one Saturday we went to his village to visit, and his mother showed us a beautifully patterned basket made of dyed raffia that his brother had made. I was startled. It had not occurred to me that anybody in his family could actually make something. All I had heard about them was how poor they were, so that it had become impossible for me to see them as anything else but poor. Their poverty was my single story of them." (Adichie). The single story aims at simplifying or understanding other people based on a simplified truth by distancing yourself from them physically, mentally or emotionally. There arises a "we and them" dichotomy where *we* are Adichie's family that is well-off, whilst *them* are Fide's poor family which has nothing in common with Adichie's family. To give an example from Mark's adventure, he distances himself from his father emotionally and mentally by speaking Zulu and Sisotho instead of Venda to his friends. He does not want to associate with his Papa's low income and sporadic inability to provide for his family at certain times. Mark is unable to see the external powers that denies Papa the possibility of providing for his family, and so Mark buys into the single story of his father's failure.

The stereotype is shattered when Chimamanda learns that Fide's family is not only poor, they have other qualities defining them as well. Adichie used her own example of assuming a single story to be true to make a point; everybody can be fooled into believing the single story for as she develops her presentation she also speaks of how her American professor is also duped by his perceived notions of what an *authentic* African novel should incorporate: "The professor told me that my characters were too much like him, an educated and middle-class man. My characters drove cars. They were not starving. Therefore they were

not authentically African.” (Adichie). The professor had been fed a single story about the poor Africans, yet he seized the power to question the authenticity of Adichie’s novel even though he had never been to Africa. It is audacious to claim a novel is not authentic enough if you have never experience the real authenticity, for everything Adichie has experienced is authentic because it happened to her. The professor is also the victim of a single story fed to him. The question that arises is why do we need to use the term authentic? To use Mark Mathabane’s *Kaffir Boy in America* (*Kaffir Boy’s* sequel) as an example we can clearly see that it is Mark’s South African experience of America that is the focus of the book. Mark’s experience in America is equally an African experience as venturing out in the wild forest, crossing barren desserts and fighting exotic wildlife animals in Africa would be (possible stereotypes). It is after all Mark’s (who is African) stories that are being made, even though the setting is not necessarily set in Africa. The need for authenticity does then seem as a product of colonialization, for it is to create an exotic and slightly mystic single story to appeal to a Westerner audience. Authenticity and the single story seem to be closely related in this case, and their job is to blurring the similarity between the colonizer and colonized.

### 2.3 Ambivalence, Mimicry and Hybridity

We have established that the single story is used to create an untrue dichotomy between colonized and colonizer to create a single story that misrepresents often both of the factions. To understand the relationship between colonized and colonizer we have to look at their relations through a different approach, namely through the terms ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity. These terms explain how the colonizer and colonized are alike and different at the same time, be it through similarities or differences; furthermore, the terms also attempt to explain how the colonial subjects acquire cultural capital from their oppressors. The colonized then uses the newly acquired knowledge to empower themselves within the colonial hierarchy by imitating the colonizer, eventually leading up to destabilizing or removal of the hierarchy.

Ambivalence is a term that stems from psychoanalysis, Robert Young describes it as: “a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. It also refers to a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 13). When used in post-colonial discourse theory ambivalence seeks to describe the mix of attraction and repulsion the colonizer and colonized have for each other. Ambivalence does not show the colonial subject as either complicit or resistant, but rather how these notions are in a state of flux within the colonial subject. The situation might seem a bit surrealistic for an outsider to see the colonized are both complicit and resistant at the same time, but it is because of the good and bad changes the colonization process implemented into the colonized’s society. Their relationship were both exploitative and nurturing at the same time, therefore many of the participants within the colonies had ambivalent feelings toward each other. Homi Bhabha suggests: “ambivalence disrupt the clear-cut authority of colonial domination because it disturbs the simple relationship between colonizer and colonized. Ambivalence is therefore an unwelcome aspect of colonial discourse for the colonizer. The problem for colonial discourse is that it want to produce compliant subjects who reproduce its assumptions, habits and values – that is, ‘mimic’ the colonizer” (Bhabha qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 13). However the problem is that if the colonizer and colonized become too equal, it would dramatically shift the social positions that allow the colonizer to exploit the colonized.

Mimicry describes the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized. The colonized is asked to mimic the colonizer’s code of conduct. They are to have the same “cultural habits, assumptions, institutions and values” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 136), for the colonizer’s way of life is seen as superior therefore. The problem for the colonizer is that he or she is unable to completely wipe out a pre-existing set of values, culture and way of life to replace it with new ones. The result is not a reproduction of Western traits, but rather a

hybridized version of those traits. The colonial subjects are then empowered by being able to act out both their own and the colonizer's behavior, and is therefore able to mimic and mock the colonizer by establishing cracks in their authority. Bhabha argues that: "This is because mimicry is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics. Mimicry therefore locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonized" (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 136). For the colonized it becomes apparent that they are able to challenge the colonizer's authority. The whole process of claiming superiority and then teaching the colonial subjects to accept it is part of what ultimately leads to the colonizer's downfall.

Post-colonial theory uses the term hybridity to describe: "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization" (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 114-5). The term explains the change that takes place in the colonizer and colonized as they interact with each other. During the colonization process the colonizer and colonized are subjected to each others' culture and lifestyles which leads to a change taking place in both factions. The premise set for the colonizers to effectively convey their culture and values is that they need to convey it in the colonized's discourse, namely through speech, writing and storytelling. Hybridity then stems from acknowledging the difference between the colonizer and colonized; and subsequently it is also the incorporation of that difference into their own discourse. Cultural differences might require the colonizer to infuse his language with the colonized's values to convey the importance of an abstract concept. At that certain point the colonizer's language shifts from being solely used for communicating between *us* colonizers, the group expands and merges colonizer and colonized into *us*. It is a hybridized and transcended English that has emerged. Bhabha stresses the need to look past the *us* and *them* perspective and exemplifies the complexity of hybridity with an example; the 'native' Bible and its dissemination in India. From an English perspective the Bible is the ultimate authority.

It is written in English which underscores its authority. However, the Indians met the translated Bible with critical questions: the knowledge it contains contradict their way of life, most Hindus are vegetarian while the Bible promotes eating meat, and as a result the Indians experience a cognitive dissonance where their values are being tested. The 'native' Bible also loses some of its authority when it is no longer written in English. The Bible then transcends from its wholeness into become something no longer perfect – the Indians had then exposed its hybridity and in doing so the authority it held was weakened (Childs and Williams 135).

## 2.4 Language

Within the post-colonial field language has been the source of much heated debate because language is not only a means of communication, it is also an arena where political and ideological opinions reside. Ideals, values and identities are often tailored into a language and the speaker might consciously or even sub-consciously associates him or herself with those ideals. Furthermore, seen from a historical perspective English has been enforced upon many of the colonial subjects and used as a controlling tool, by disowning their native tongue they strip the colonial subjects of their identity, their oral history and much of their ideas and values. The introduction of English has not necessarily worsened the colonial subject's situations, by acquiring English many tribes were able to communicate more freely with each other. Another positive outcome of the English language invasion were the Western ideals and values that came along with it, and while much of the African history, art and values were lost, the encounter between the clashing ideals and values served as a trigger to perhaps re-think their ideals and values for both parties. English has since then become the universal lingua franca and several countries have adapted to the English language's presence into their society. With it comes an Eurocentric view on language, textual discourses have somewhat replaced much of the African oral tradition. Many African students found themselves alienated because they were told Western works such as Shakespeare's were superior



compared to their African traditions. Some students were taught Shakespeare and it had very little relevance to their own lives, they could not relate to young lovers in Venice, nor could they picture prince Hamlet plotting his revenge against Claudius in Denmark. In terms of pedagogical principles it makes more sense to teach students knowledge based upon their surroundings. A curriculum suited for African students would include knowledge that builds upon their local surroundings, and at an appropriate learning tempo branch out to knowledge needed about the outside world.

Questions have been posed as to whether or not the new Western textual discourse can carry the weight of the African experience. Peter Childs and Patrick Williams states that:

“Culture as the potential area of control and site of resistance becomes even more important in the post-colonial period, as direct colonial domination is removed, and the title of Ngũgĩ’s best-known collection of essays, *Decolonising the Mind*, has become something of a rallying cry in certain areas of post-colonial studies. In line with this decolonizing aim, Ngũgĩ has campaigned for a fundamentally altered attitude to African culture – for it, rather than European culture, to be given pride of place on African educational syllabuses, and, most controversially, for African writers to write in their native languages alongside European ones, but also, and more importantly, so that contemporary cultural production can be more obviously relevant to the mass of the people to whom the writers belong.” (61)

When Childs and Williams speak of culture, they indirectly refer to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s essays about how English was perceived in Africa. The need for an own voice is important, for within it lies the discourse important to the individual’s life, be it an oral story or written autobiography. It is the same case in Adichie’s lecture, a woman took ownership of one of Adichie’s novel. The woman did not fit the description of the illiterate Nigerian, she went as far as to demand Adichie to write a sequel according to her instructions. It is important for the colonized to be able to voice their own story so that they are not controlled by the invisible chains that language can hold over a person. It is when a person gains a voice and speaks up they perform resistance and practices their newfound cultural freedom.

Thiong’o writes in his essay collection *Decolonising the Mind – The Language of African Literature* says “Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation” (1130). Thiong’o’s

education was heavily influenced by English, he was punished if he spoke his mother tongue at school (1131). However, Thiong'o also states that English became the portal to social mobility "Any achievements in spoken or written English was highly rewarded; prizes, prestige, applause; the ticket to higher realms (social status). English became the measure of intelligence and ability in the arts, the sciences, and all the other branches of learning. English became *the* main determinant of a child's progress up the ladder of formal education...English was the official vehicle of the magic formula to colonial elitedom" (1132). What becomes very clear is that language was Eurocentric, for the colonized were judged for how well they could master English while other subjects were neglected. Thiong'o used his book as a farewell to English in 1986, for he felt like it was no longer able to convey the true African experience in his writings anymore. He began to write in his native Gikuyu and Swahili and has continued to do so ever since (it should be stated that he has translated some of his works into English himself, ironically enough).

Chinua Achebe confronts the problem in a more practical manner, while he too sees the need for a strong connection to his mother tongue, he also understands how practical it is to use English after being colonized for a century or more. Achebe also sees the dangers of being subjugated to the more acknowledged British-English. Achebe then proposes: "I feel that the English language will be able to carry the weight of my African experience. But it will have to be a new English, still in full communion with its ancestral home but altered to suit new African surroundings" (In Rivkin and Ryan, 1129). Achebe's vision is then an English that includes African values that is able to tell their story, without being alienated by the pre-existing ideals and values present in the colonial English.

Mark Mathabane writes with an English infused with possibly Shangaan or Venda (as those are his parents heritage). He does not explicitly state what language he uses when he uses specific terms such as: "it was five o'clock by the *kikilihoo* (cock's crow)", "he wrapped

the *scufftin* (food for work) and the family's *waslap* (facecloth)" (Mathabane, 6). We are presented with Mathabane's experience and reality of his upbringing, for it is his own English he uses. The use of specific terms also invites the reader into Mathabane's narrative, it is almost as if the reader is being told a story while sitting at a campfire, at once the storyteller comes across a foreign word he stops to explain it. The English Mathabane uses draws upon the traditional oral history many African tribes have. This thesis has earlier stated that Mathabane's autobiography is by itself a product of his resistance, and that is precisely the reason to why Mathabane decided to write in his own English. Mathabane could reach a wider audience in the West, in addition to informing them of the gruesomeness taking place in apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, Mathabane also shows a feat of strength by claiming his oppressor's language as his own, showing that he can re-write the current antagonizing discourse to a more truthful one.

## 2.5 The autobiographical truth

The truth is an important concept to understand when looking at autobiographical literature, especially in the case of *Kaffir Boy*. The book states that it is: *True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*. *Kaffir Boy*'s intent is to provide a truthful narrative of Mark's harsh upbringing. It is stated on the cover on the book that it will depict how it was to grow up under apartheid as a black boy. The bold strategy and selling point of a "true story" is met with humbleness on the following page in the preface: "In *Kaffir Boy* I have re-created, as best as I can remember, all these experiences. I have sought to paint a portrait of my childhood and youth in Alexandra, a black ghetto of Johannesburg, where I was born and lived for eighteen years, with the hope that the rest of the world will finally understand why apartheid cannot be reformed: it has to be abolished" (Mathabane xi). Mathabane might seem a bit contradictory by promising the true story for only to break that promise on the next page. Smith and Watson argue the objective truth does not matter, for it is impossible to come by.

They refer to Du Bois' notion of the intersubjective truth which is "partly dream, partly promissory belief – that invites our confirmation of its interpretation. The authority of the autobiographical, then, neither confirms nor invalidates notions of objective truth; rather, it tracks the previously uncharted truths of particular lives" (qtd. in Smith and Watson 16). The significance of Mathabane's promise to tell the story to the best of his ability means that it will remain true to the essence of his and millions of other black's suffering underneath the heavy shackles of apartheid. Smith and Watson continue by stating that no matter what the author writes, it is indirectly a truth about themselves – for even if they tell a lie, it remains a truth because of the words chosen to convey the lie. The intersubjective truth is not only decided by a conscious choice of not telling the truth, memories can be distorted, especially in traumatic cases such as Mark's childhood. In the analysis chapter I will return to Mark's intention to tell the truth and the significance of it in terms of the book's readership, in addition to his own and his family's safety from the apartheid regime.

### 3. Analyzing *Kaffir Boy*

This chapter will apply the post-colonial theory from the previous chapter and analyze *Kaffir Boy*. The analysis will focus on the several resistances performed against the apartheid regime in Mathabane's autobiography. Furthermore, the analysis will inspect how apartheid is internalized within the Mathabane family structure to look at how resistance can take shape. The family plays an ambivalent role in its interaction with apartheid, on one hand it serves as the spatial area where the family members support each other in their struggle against apartheid, while on the other hand the home can be infested with apartheid's venomous policies and turn into a destructive environment. The home is at the center of the Mathabane's life, all moments, positive and negative, are brought into the Mathabane's home by its members. One example is Papa's inability to provide for his family because apartheid deprives him of means to put food on the table. Another example is Mark's education which

is met with ambivalence in the Mathabane family, Mama advocates for its advantages while Papa is the main opponent against schooling Mark. Both examples influence the family dynamic and are main sources of conflict that arises in the Mathabane family.

The inhumane living conditions the Mathabanes and the rest of the Bantu faction are exposed to ultimately lead to the downfall of the apartheid regime. The Bantu faction responds to the oppressive policy with resisting it simply because they do not recognize its legitimacy. The result is resistance against the apartheid regime and its policies in several forms. The resistance took place in several arenas, some physical, while others were cultural. The ANC (African National Congress) organized armed resistance and were labeled terrorists at first, today they are seen as freedom fighters. Mark's resistance is more of a cultural one throughout the autobiography; however, he does state that he got deeply involved with the Soweto riots in 1976. To avoid persecution he changed his name from Johannes to Mark out of fear of retaliation from the apartheid government. Mark's action and resistance during the Soweto riot in *Kaffir Boy* is his attempt to protect the books from burning at the library. Mark's priority during the riot is not free food, but rather the safety of Western classics located at the library. He values the wisdom they provide over the immediate need for food. I will return to Mark's resolution and resistance during the Soweto riot later in this chapter.

### 3.1 Apartheid internalized within the family institution

Before understanding how apartheid is internalized in the Mathabane family it is important to have some structural knowledge of how the Mathabane family works. The Mathabane family institution consists of two parents and seven children. The family is not static but rather often changing, for the youngest children are given birth to throughout the story. Papa is also periodically absent from the family, and the implications of his absence is seen in the following quote: "My father came back... But my instincts told me that that normalcy could be shattered at any moment – by another arrest. At this point in my life I realized that, willy-

nilly, black people had to map out their lives, their future, with the terror of the police in mind” (Mathabane 100). The continuous arrest is a constant reminder that the apartheid regime is influencing the family institution. Mark vision for the future is bleak for he realizes that he too will be subjugated to strict pass laws that his father is being jailed for. Mama is the heroine in the story, she remains a stable force and keeps the family alive through all the hardships they face. Mark is able to seek refuge at Granny (Mama’s mother) when Papa and he does not get along. Granny’s household consist of Uncle Piet and Aunt Bushy which are Mark’s seniors by a couple of years. Together the families create a symbiosis to help each other out in dire times. Their strength lies in their numbers, together they form a security net and are able to cooperate to achieve better living conditions. Their plan is essentially to secure a proper education for Mark so he can provide for them in the future. Aunt Bushy and Uncle Piet are forced to drop out of their education and start working so that they can afford Mark’s tuition fee, primers, clothes and food. Unfortunately due to Venda tribal traditions Papa refuses to acknowledge Granny’s help because he paid lobola (a bride price) for his wife and children. Papa sees the rest of his family as his property, and it is his task to take care of them. If his family should require extra money it would put Papa in a bad light for not being a successful provider. As a result of Papa’s household rule, the symbiosis is more of an ad-hoc organization whose agenda is to support Mark through his academic career. While Papa does not necessarily prevent Mama and Granny working in a symbiosis, he does not acknowledge it either. Papa makes a claim on the praise Mark receives in academia, so there is a double-sidedness to Papa’s situation – he is unable to endorse the symbiosis for it hurts his reputation as provider for the family, while on the other hand he seizes Mark’s academic praise from his peers.

### 3.1.1 Apartheid Pass laws

In the paragraph above there are many apartheid laws that influence how the family dynamic is shaped. The pass law is the most serious one, as it prevents Bantus to move freely without having their passbooks in order. While having papers in orders are mandatory for all functioning societies it was the tedious process of getting them in order that proved impossible for a major amount of the Bantu faction living in Alexandra. The governmental facilities set to deal with registration were understaffed and often very unwilling to help the native African population update their passbooks. Often times the officials looked for mistakes in the paperwork so they could charge bribes from the unlucky black South African. The pass laws were meant to control the Bantu population movements in urban areas, and if violated the perpetrator would face deportation to their assigned Bantustan. Mama and Papa are of different tribal heritage, Mama is Shangaan while Papa is Venda. They met in the Alexandra ghetto. If any of them are caught with their passbooks out of order, they might risk deportation which would destroy their family. In the next paragraph it will become evident how apartheid internalized in the Mathabane family.

Mark's first memory places him at home before the first Peri-Urban police raid, he wakes as Papa goes about his morning rituals "He drank what was left of the water in the mug. Minutes later he was out through the door, but not before I had said to him: "Don't forget our fish and chips, Papa." "Fish and chips is tomorrow, son. Today is Thursday. Payday is tomorrow." (Mathabane 6). We are introduced to their daily rituals, and at first glance we see a functional family supporting each other. The calm and serene nature of the first scene quickly shifts as Mama's morning rituals are interrupted by the Peri-Urban police raid as seen in the following quote:

*"It was my mother. In the dim candlelight, her body, crouched like that of an animal cowering in fear..." [Mark] what's the matter, Mama?" "Peri-Urban is here." "Peri-Urban!" I gasped and stiffened at the name of the dreaded Alexandra Police Squad...I knew she had to leave, she had to flee from the police and leave*

*us children alone as she had done so many times before. By now my mother had reached the table, and her big brown eyes darted about its top, searching for something. "Where's my passbook?" she asked in a frantic voice...She grabbed me by the shoulder and shook me, yelling frantically, "where is it! Where is it! Oh, God. Where is it, child? Where is the book? Hurry, or they'll find me!" (9).*

The Peri-Urban police are the embodiment of apartheid laws, for they are the physical manifestation of the law's authority to Mark. The child is only able to understand the seriousness of the situation by hearing Mama fanatically yelling after her passbook. Mama is required to present her passbook if she is confronted by the Peri-Urban police. Mama's passbook is outdated, for it requires information on work place, racial heritage, civilian status and identification traits. Mama has not updated her tribal affiliation to Venda after her marriage to Papa, she is therefore labeled as an illegal citizen within the Alexandra ghetto. Had Mama been caught by the Peri-Urban police with an outdated passbook she would have been forced to pay a bribe she could not afford. Had Mama been caught without a passbook it would be worse, she might have faced deportation back to her assigned Bantustan. Mama is forced to abandon her family temporarily because she is recognized as a criminal according to the Group Areas act and Pass laws. The intrusion into the family's private sphere serves as a powerful image to represent the violating nature apartheid imposes on its victims. The violating nature is both political and cultural in its sense that they are both related. Apartheid uses political acts to further their own materialistic means, and they enforce their rule through a cultural arena such as the family, education and language. The Mathabane family is further terrorized when forced out of their home by the group act enforcing the destruction of the Alexandra ghetto.

### 3.1.2 Apartheid and the spatial home

The home is a spatial area where the family is able to reside from the struggle of everyday problems, however in the apartheid regime many black families, the Mathabanes included, are forced to rent illegal shacks to survive. The reasoning is the Group act that "forces physical



separation between the races by creating different residential areas for different races. [This] led to forced removals of people living in “wrong” areas, for example Coloureds living in District Six in Cape Town.” (Boddy E., Alistair). The Group Act serves to control where the black population lives. The Alexandra ghetto lies close to Johannesburg, which were a white residential area. The apartheid regime’s interest were to have black laborers live in Alexandra, not their entire families. The following quote shows how black families were moved out of their home without having a say in it:

“The authorities announced that Alexandra was soon to be demolished, for it had long been declared a “black spot.”...It meant that all family units were to be dismantled to make way for barracks housing only single men and women working in the white world...Our family had no such permit. Where would we go? We had no home back in the tribal reserves. To compound our problem, my parents came from different tribal reserves, and in the event of the family breaking up, I did not know whether my mother would be allowed into my father’s tribal reserve...But there was no hope of us ever getting such a permit; our papers were not in order. Where would we go? What could we do? The family was plunged into utter despair. We had little sleep each night, not knowing when the bulldozers would come to raze our home.” (Mathabane 91-92)

The Mathabanes felt a powerlessness when faced with potential deportation they had no control over. The family is at a loss for they know no matter what they do, the threat of apartheid destroying their family and lives is present. They are mere numbers in papers and are easily transportable for the apartheid government. Mark reveals later that his family magically found a shack at Thirteenth Avenue while the destruction of Alexandra took place. Eventually they government stops their project and leave parts of Alexandra untouched. However much of the damage is done, and while the Mathabanes were lucky enough to not get deported, other families who could not hide were deported. The steady stream of black families kept arriving in Alexandra “Waves of men, because of rampant poverty in tribal reserves, continued coming illegally to the ghetto. Some brought their families with them, and hid them in the shacks in illegal yards; others made their homes in abandoned cars and buildings” (100). The barren Bantu homelands were fruitless, and surviving there was near impossible. The situation was so extreme that even though the government worked to remove

the black spot there just arrived more families. The threat of prosecution and deportation was met with resistance and adaptability. Families found simple shelter and kept living to the best of their ability. The home is not necessarily the four walls that encloses the family, but rather just an area which it lives. The important home is the area the family inhabits and share with each other, and the family is supposed to feel safe and protected within that area. However, the terror of not having proper papers and therefore no home and facing deportation leads to a stressful life.

### 3.1.3 Papa's changing social role

The men's inability to adapt to living between the tribal and apartheid lifestyles causes them to find their social status no longer fixed. Papa's role is a very peculiar one, for his role as the patriarchal head of the family is undergoing a paradigm shift. Catherine Campbell argues that it is the African male masculinity which is in crisis for: "apartheid and capitalism have limited the power of working-class men in the wider community. For men who were oppressed both in race and class terms, their socially sanctioned power over women and young men in the family was often the only arena in which they were able to exercise any dominance...Fathers who are unable to support their families adequately are apparently looked down on" (618-9). Papa is unable to fulfill the social expectations set by the community. He is simultaneously expected to provide for his family in addition to be able to prove his manhood by showing resistance towards the Peri-Urban police, which is the embodiment of the apartheid laws in Alexandra.

Papa refuses to run away during the police raids because he want to prove his manliness, as a result he is arrested and forced to pay a hefty bribe or fine to the Peri-Urban police, if he is unable to conjure up the money, he is jailed. In the following quote we are able to see the proud and stubborn attitude the father figures have: "he and other men would frown, and, with affectations of bravery, continue with business as usual. For a long time I did not

understand why my father and other men acted this way, until one day I heard talk among the womenfolk that the real reason why their husbands refused to run away was that they considered it cowardly and unmanly to run away from other men” (Mathabane 29). Papa seems to be caught in a juxtaposition where he is unable live up to the expectations the community and family asks of him. The socially produced male gender role is not able to adapt as well as its female counterpart, which is able to run and hide from the Peri-Urban while, not perfectly, is still able to keep up with her assigned task of taking care of the home and family. The males are met with disappointment after using their paycheck to pay bribes. In a conversation between Mama and Mark, we see his disapproval of Papa’s inability to provide becomes clear: ““My friends say their fathers buy them food all the time,” I said. “Why won’t Papa do the same? We are his children, aren’t we?” “yes” “As his children he should buy us food all the time.” “He doesn’t make enough money, I told you.”...”But we have to eat, Mama,” I protested... “We are his children, aren’t we?” I repeated, implying that it was a father’s duty to provide for his children no matter what” (66). The conversation takes place because Papa is unemployed after being jailed for not having his passbook updated during a police raid, and no workplace is willing to employ an ex-convict. Mark stresses the question “We are his children, aren’t we?” twice to underline his dissatisfaction with Papa’s ability to provide for the family, implying that Papa’s ownership of him is only legitimate if Papa can bring food to the table. Papa’s position as head of the family is being challenged by Mark because Papa does not supply the family with food. Papa is unable to bring food to the table simply because apartheid robs him of the means to do so. The situation is what Campbell explained, male masculinity was in a contradictory flux in apartheid. Papa finds himself alienated within his own family because the old family traditions of lobola no longer is sufficient to take care of the family. The family structure of the Mathabanes might remind some of a contract between an employer and employee, as long as each can help each other

the contract is valid, but once one of the parts is unable to fulfill their commitment it is rendered void and useless. The external forces of apartheid successfully alienates Papa, and other males because of conflicting values, and the result is seen in the next paragraph.

As Papa's position as the male figurehead of the family is weakened he lashes out at Mark:

“Are you screaming at me,” my father said, incredulous, “at me, your father. You-you-you my own flesh and blood,” he stammered. “This school business has taught you to be cheeky, I see. Because you're working and making a few pennies, you think you're a man, heh. Well, let me tell you, my boy, let me tell you. I'm still man around here” – he beat his chest – “I call the shots. Either you give me the money or leave my house right at this minute.”

Without a word, I stood up, dressed, gathered my books and left for Granny's place; it was five o'clock in the morning.” (206)

Papa's resistance toward apartheid has so far been inefficient, so he starts lashing out against Mark's new promising future. Papa brings his conflict with apartheid into his family, he is unable to cope with his declining social position and uses the power he has left to throw Mark temporarily out. Mark is able to seek refuge at Granny's home and he is continuously able to do so throughout the autobiography, for it is his sanctuary. Granny is able to provide shelter and education for Mark, but she does it at a high price; Uncle Piet and Aunt Bushy are forced to quit their education so that Mark can finish his, the cost of black education was simply too high. The altruistic policy the symbiosis abides by does seem cold and inhumane at first, for it denies Aunt Bushy and Uncle Piet the possibility of realizing their dreams. However even though great sacrifice is needed, it is one of the few ways the Mathabane and Granny households are able to climb out of poverty from.

It becomes evident that Papa is a victim of the rigid apartheid laws, for he is unable to cope with his new role as seen in the following quote: “It soon became evident that the reason my father lived for the moment was because he was terrified of the future – terrified of facing the reality that I was on the way to becoming a somebody in the world that regarded him as a nobody, a world that had stripped him of his manhood, of his power to provide. Years of

watching him suffer under the double yoke of apartheid and tribalism convinced me that his was a hopeless case, so long as he persisted in clinging to tribal beliefs and letting the white man define his manhood” (207). Papa is crushed underneath the heavy social forces undermining his authority and his role in the family institution. He is restrained and put under the “double yoke” and so the internalized forces of apartheid has caused him to live from a day-to-day basis where he drinks and gambles. The quote above is narrated through “I”, Mark the child, but underneath the layers lies the intended author. The purpose of having the intended author appear is to justify his own distancing from his tribal heritage that would most likely jeopardize his own future. Mark embraces the culture of his oppressors because he sees the need for change, there is no beating apartheid in a power contest – the apartheid regime is simply too powerful. Mark understands that to abolish apartheid he needed to learn the way his oppressors think and act, so that he can beat them by with their own weapons, namely education and language. The quote is commentary given in past tense, and it is also a political voice criticizing the apartheid system. The writing is infused with a political message voicing the concern of apartheid’s victims. Papa is a victim because he desperately held onto tribal values and refuses to hybridize. Furthermore, the quote also critically looks at the double-ness of apartheid and tribal customs which directly contradict each other. Papa is an avid follower of his tribal heritage, and refuses to change even though apartheid oppresses him. Papa becomes a victim of apartheid, and subsequently, he becomes a tool in its regime to create more victims, which is seen in his short-sighted resistance against the apartheid regime.

While Mark does not resolve to violence as an adult in the autobiography, he does so when he is a child, for it is socially internalized into the family by apartheid, just like Papa’s violence. During the first Peri-Urban police raid Mark is left to watch over his younger siblings, he panics when he is unable to stop George and Florah’s crying: “In desperation I wrenched his ears, pinched him black and blue, but still he continued hollering” (12) and

“Enraged, I slapped her hard across the mouth” (13). Catherine Campbell argues that “The family can be regarded as the cradle of violence because experiences of violence in childhood and family life are invariably socialized into a cycle of violence” (625) she continues elaborating on the issue of older brothers means of governing siblings: “The violence of older brothers against their sisters in their socially approved role of policing or ‘guarding’ them (626). Due to apartheid laws Mark is put in a situation he as a child of five is not apt to deal with so he resorts to violence thinking it is the correct tool to ‘guard’ his siblings from the horrifying Peri-Urban police. This relates to Mark’s choice of abandoning some of his tribalism, he sees the violence as a weakness that apartheid is able to abuse. Mathabane writes in his preface: “I saw at a young age that apartheid was using tribalism to deny me equal rights, to separate me from my black brothers and sisters, to justify segregation and perpetuate white power and privilege, to render me subservient, docile and, therefore, exploitable. I instinctively understood that in order to forge my own identity...I had to reject this brand of tribalism, and that in the rejection I ran the risk of losing my heritage. I took the plunge” (Mathabane XI). Unlike his father, Mark chooses his own path and creates his own African story in America. Mathabane did reclaim some of his tribal heritage after having taken the plunge, the evidence is his autobiography *Kaffir Boy* where he uses a new English supplied with his mother tongue, as seen in this example: “Yes, mei makulu baas [my big lord], he’s makulu [very] wild” (115).

### 3.2 Mama and adapting

Mama finds herself unable to fully perform her role as protector of the family and the children due to the pass laws. However, it should be stated that Mama is an adapting character. She faces both possible wrath of Papa’s tribal rules in addition to the strict apartheid laws and still manage to secure a future for her children. Mama is needed to maneuver through strict rules from both factions, her political prowess is seen in her fine diplomacy when Papa makes

enquiries about school fees: “I told you woman, not to take him to the damn school. Now where do you think he will get money to buy slates and pay school fees? Not from me.” Humbly, my mother said, “Well, I bought him that one slate. He broke it and kept using the pieces for a year. And I’ve already paid his school fees for this year.” “Where did you get the money?” asked my father suspiciously. “I didn’t use your money, if that’s what you’re thinking,” my mother said. “Granny gave me from the little she had.” (144). Eventually Mama manages to convince Papa that an education will serve the children right, and while Papa agrees to help slightly funding it, it is only to “When you’ve learned how to read and write letters, I want you to stop going. That’s all the education you will need to get by in this world.” (145). Mama is smart enough to not head-on fight an authority that is stronger than her. She would rather adapt to the current apartheid regime to survive. Mama is the main proponent for the children’s schooling because she sees the need for them to adapt. Her resistance towards apartheid lies in supporting her children so they can have the future and possibilities she never had by providing an education to them. Mama works hard so her children does not need to suffer her fate, she married Papa at the age of fifteen and never received an education. Mama’s single story can be summarized to: wife and mother to Papa’s children. The single story does not convey her will-power and determination to have her children succeed through an education. Papa is entirely different in his opinions, he sees education as a way to oppress the black people.

Mark’s birth certificate was mentioned earlier, and it is of the utmost importance for Mark’s future. His entire academic future hinges on the piece of paper stating that he is born in Alexandra, for without it he is unable to enlist in tribal school. Mama is constantly misguided through the bureaucracy offices in her endless effort in securing Mark’s papers. Mama is referred between the superintendent’s office, Alexandra Health Center and University Clinic. Neither of the offices are able to provide a birth certificate without having

papers from the other. Mark is no more than a discrepancy in the Afrikaans superintendent's influx control papers: "After you had coughed him out you should have gone to the clinic and had him registered. Those papers are important, you know? – more important than him" (116). The systematic oppression of blacks causes the agents of apartheid to become inhumane in their treatment of other fellow humans, they are mere numbers and names on papers, not actual living humans. The institutionalized treatment favors rules and regulations over human problems, and it is only Mama's persistency that allows her to successfully acquire Mark's birth certificate. Mama returns to the University Clinic and is yet again told to return with the proper papers from the superintendent's office, however this time she is lucky to encounter a compassionate woman: "When my mother ended her story, the white woman, almost in tears, stormed into the office, fuming... In a matter of minutes, my mother was called to the window, where an irate young black man, who earlier had ordered that my mother be towed away, shoved a piece of paper in her face" (118). It is very interesting to note that Mama's story is what actually ends up getting Mark his birth certificate. The woman is hybridized when subjected to Mama's story, the woman is able to communicate through oral and textual discourse. Mama had continuously struggled because she is only able to communicate orally, not textually, however, with assistance from the white woman, Mama finally succeeds in her quest of acquiring Mark's birth certificate. The woman served as a translator and mediator for Mama and is proof of colonization being able to produce humane subjects that are able to cooperate and thrive together. As previously mentioned, Mark is able to return to the superintendent's office after receiving years of schooling and help his friend's family stay in Alexandra by duping the superintended with his fluent Afrikaans. The incident is proof that Mama's unwillingness to give up and keep resisting the apartheid rule paid dividends. The help Mama received from the white woman also serves as a turning point in Mark life where he learns that: "[Mama] You see, child, not all white people are bad;



remember that.” (119). The single story had made Mark unable to see white people as ethically good up until then, it is humanized white people that allows him to escape apartheid in the end. Papa however, is unable to see the white man as anything but bad which will be seen in the next paragraph.

### 3.3 Papa and his resistance towards apartheid

Mark’s father Jackson Mathabane resistance may come across as the simplest form of resistance at first, however, upon a closer inspection it becomes clear that his resistance is very much complex. Papa despises the apartheid regime because he is of the opinion that it favors the white man and abuses the black. His opinions and resistance resembles Edward Said’s notion of the “*us* and *them*” dichotomy. Papa harbors no warm feelings toward the apartheid regime, and even less so for his white employers. He despises the government and its regulations and contemplates defying it by joining a stockvel, which is an invitation only party where alcohol and food is served at a fête-like party. The profit accumulated in a stockvel went straight to the owners, thus avoiding taxes, unlike the formal beerhalls which were subjugated to paying high taxes to the apartheid government. Papa is filled with rage, his distaste for injustice and his need to re-establish himself to his former social position is seen in his argument with Mama:

“Where do you think we’ll get the kind of money needed to join a stockvel?” my mother asked.  
“By combining our incomes,” my father said. He asked for a second helping of porridge and giblets.  
“My hard-earned money will be used for nothing but the children’s schooling,” my mother said.  
“Don’t give me that rubbish, woman,” my father said hotly. He always raved when he could not get his way immediately. “You know I can’t do it alone. Those damn bloody white bastards aren’t paying me enough even to afford a pair of used underwear. I intend to quit the bloody fucking job as soon as the beer business is successful. I’m bloody tired of being told, ‘*Kom jong, kom jong; ons moet werk, ons moet werk; tyd is geld, tyd is geld!* [Come, boy, come, boy; we must work, we must work; time is money, time is money!]’ by white boys the age of Johannes [Mark] here, while they lounge about in easy chairs sipping whisky and brandy bought with money filched from my paycheck. It’s high time I stopped being a slave and became my own boss.” (Mathabane, 175).

Papa is tired of being abused by the apartheid regime, it is humiliating and he hates that the whites are able to reap the rewards of his hard work. The word “slave” and “boss” implies that there is a colonial relationship between Papa and his employer. Papa is so blinded by his hatred for white people for he can only see them as oppressors. Papa is also a victim of the single story, for he writes off his own failures as a result of the systematic oppression of apartheid. Papa’s resistance has until now been futile, his head-strong attitude has been crushed against the massive social pressure the apartheid laws have put onto him. His inability to provide due to apartheid oppression lead to gambling and drinking, which only decreased his ability to provide. The crushing forces trap Papa in a vicious cycle which works to break his will. Once broken, Papa is used as a tool to enforce the apartheid regime’s policy. His blind hatred for the white man indirectly enforces the segregation the apartheid system stands for.

### 3.3.1 Papa’s endorsement of apartheid through education and language

There is irony in Papa hating the white man while simultaneously enforcing their ideology. Papa’s acts of defiance paradoxically legitimize the apartheid ideology. Papa is originally against Mark’s education, and would rather have him raised in Venda manner. Mark rejects his Venda heritage and “began speaking Zulu, Sotho and Shangaan, the languages of my friends. It worked...until my father got wind of it.” “Whose son are you?” “Yours” “...which language do I speak?” “Venda” “which does your mama speak?” “Venda” “which should you speak?” “Venda.” (Mathabane, 34). Papa partakes in the racial ideology of segregating the various cultures for he remains true to his Venda ideals, while living in Alexandra, a township made to house every Bantu tribe that works in Johannesburg. Papa incorporates double morals, he hates the legal apartheid system as it violate the Bantu’s human rights by segregating the different races, while at the same time reinforcing the same ideology by differentiating the various sub-Bantu races by their language. Papa is also attempting to

remove Mark's multi-cultural identity by forcing him to speak Venda. Papa views Mark as his possession due to his paid Loboda, and therefore he should be speaking Venda. If Mark spoke other languages it would undermine his authority and the legitimacy of the Venda language. Language is a very important cultural arena and Papa's defiance against apartheid relies strongly on his own ethnicity. Had Papa allowed apartheid to categorized Venda as inferior it would undermine the legitimacy of his Venda heritage and it would be seen as a crushing defeat for Papa.

Papa continues his segregation by secretly trying to admit Mark to Venda mountain school: "These men have come to take him to circumcision school," my father declared, a smile of deep satisfaction playing on his lips. Under Venda tribal law, every boy, before being admitted into malehood, had to attend a "mountain school," usually situated in wooded, mountainous areas remote from the villages. During attendance at the school, the proselytes are put through various rituals by a group of circumcised men, including the main ceremony where the boys' penises are cut by razors without anesthesia" (222). Papa wants Mark to sacrifice his white endorsed Bantu education, and attend three months of mountain school, however doing so would jeopardize Mark's exams and his hopes to continue educating himself. Papa's attempt at Venda-lizing Mark is meant to segregate him from his education and his socializing with whites as seen in the following quote "not only are you trying to become a woman by crying and not bearing pain like a man, but I see you're also trying to become an imitation white man by playing this silly thing called tennis" (216). Papa's stereotyping towards white people is equally racist as the apartheid laws, we can therefore safely assume that Papa is ambiguous in his attitude toward apartheid. Papa's ambiguousness is better explained in the next paragraph.

Papa is known to steal credit for Mark's academic achievements, while he believe that an "education was a tool through which white people were going to take things away from

him...And that a white man's education was worthless insofar as black people were concerned because it prepared them for jobs they can't have" (133). So Papa is aware of the prestige of excelling in the academic field, but at the same he expresses his distaste for it because he thinks the Bantu educational act is used to prevent blacks from rising in ranks rather than helping them climb the social ladder of mobility by scoring respected and well paid jobs. Papa's initial argument may have been the case in earlier forms of colonizing, Rivkin and Ryan write in their essay *Introduction: English Without Shadows: Literature on a World scale*: "It [English] was indeed used to help create a more "literate" and, one might argue, docile class of colonized subjects capable of co-administering empire (1071). The colonizers would learn the bare necessities to the colonial subjects, just as the Bantu's as denied the education needed to be successful in the apartheid regime. They learn about their tribal history and are taught simple English sufficient to lessen the burden on the Afrikaans and English population in simple positions such as mail men. So when Papa endorses some of Mark's schooling by "reaching deep into his pockets" and giving him some money to finance his education, it is only until "you've learned how to read and write letters (Mathabane, 145). Instead of allowing Mark a proper education where he is able to fully develop his academic skills, Papa wants to limit Marks education. There is a clear parallelism between Papa's argument and the purpose of the Bantu educational act: both serve to deny Mark the possibility of properly educating himself. It is worth noting that Mark's main source of resistance to apartheid lies exactly in education.

### 3.4 Mark's resistance towards apartheid

Mark's resistance to the apartheid regime springs into existence by his questioning nature. His resistance is minor and harmless against the apartheid regime at first, but as Mark develops as a character, so does his resistance towards apartheid. In the following excerpt we see Mark's

questioning nature in his conversation with Mama about his ambition to build a big beautiful house:

“Even if you had all the money in the world, my child,” she said, you wouldn’t build that house.”

“Why not? Money can buy everything, can’t it?”

“Because it’s against the law for black people to own houses,” my mother said matter-of-factly... “It’s a law for black people only,” my mother said, and added that such a law had long stripped black people of the right to buy land or own homes.

“Who makes such unfair laws? I asked. The fact that white people made all the laws, ran the country alone, had not yet entered my mind. My encounters with whites in the movies had revealed none of the politics of the country. “white people,” my mother said. “why?” “that’s a stupid question to ask,” my mother said. “white people make laws because they’ve been making all the laws since they took over our country.”

“Can’t we black people make our own laws? Alexandra is our world, isn’t it? And white people have their own world.” My conception of the world, of life, was wholly in racial terms” (Mathabane 93).

While there is little resistance a six year old boy can perform against the apartheid regime, his ambitions and curiosity are the seeds of a greater resistance yet to come. Mark’s world-view is simplified as the homodiegetic narrator and author (the grown Mark Mathabane) explains that they saw the unfair world in racial terms. Mark’s way of understanding the world and his positioning is closely related to Said’s notion of the colonizer abusing the colonized. Mark and Mama are in a victimized position, for the colonized is unable to offer resistance because they have become an indoctrinated docile people to the ruthless apartheid regime. Mark finds himself in that vulnerable position in the early points of his life; however, as he grows older and receives an education he is able to surpass the perceived notion of him only being a victim.

### 3.4.1 Education and resistance

Education is what allows Mark to succeed financially and culturally. After procuring his birth certificate he is admitted into tribal school in Alexandra. The internal strife within the Mathabane family is about their disagreement about the Bantu Educational Act. The act aims to provide an education tailored to the recipient, meaning it would educate Mark within his

specific heritage. The particular issue with this act is that it is conjured by the European Faction that wants to keep their current power position. The children would be taught tribal culture in addition to simple English, enough to receive simple jobs.

There is a tension in the Mathabane family about whether the education actually will help Mark, however, Mama makes a compelling case arguing why she and Papa and did not receive educations, Papa was led to believe he would be controlled by a white education and Mama was denied one. Upon hearing his mother's speech Mark's resolve to attend school is strengthened:

“If you can read or write you'll be better off than those of us who can't. Take my situation: I can't find a job because I don't have papers, and I can't get papers because white people mainly want to register people who can read and write... I want you to go to school, because I believe that an education is the key you need to open up a new world and a new life for yourself, a world a life different from that of either your father's or mine. It is the only key that can do that, and only those who seek it earnestly and perseveringly will get anywhere in the white man's world. Education will open doors where none seem to exist. It'll make people talk to you, listen to you and help you; people who otherwise wouldn't bother. It will make you soar, like a bird lifting up into the endless blue sky, and leave poverty, hunger and suffering behind. It'll teach you to embrace what's good and shun what's bad and evil. Above all, it'll make you a somebody in this world. It'll make you grow up to be a good and proud person. That's why I want you to go to school, child, so that education can do all that, and more, for you.” (Mathabane 133-34)

The excerpt is a very motivational speech, and it does make the reader question whether Mama actually gave such a motivating speech. I am of the opinion that it is Mama's will and feelings that are incorporated into a political speech which the intended author is attempting to make; the excerpt clearly shows how much value is placed in receiving an education. The author uses “education is the key” as a metaphor several times throughout the text: “I saw command of the English language as the crucial key with which to unlock doors leading into that wonderful world of books” (193). The metaphor of being able to unlocking the hitherto locked possibilities with the educational key speaks volume for the oppressed African people. Education will allow the people to “soar” into the “blue sky” while being free as a “bird”. Mathabane's metaphor is also an allusion to the metaphor “the sky is the limit”, thus he hints

at the endless possibilities education provides, Mathabane's political message indirectly states that apartheid is not absolute and education is the path to abolish it. Any doubt Mark has about school quickly disappears after hearing Mama's speech. The importance of reading and writing is also emphasized, the oral tradition is no longer able to bear the weight of the African experience alone.

Mark's problem with attending tribal school is his tribal affiliation. There are no Venda tribal schools in Alexandra. Due to Bantu tribes mainly having patriarchies, Mark is labeled a Venda, even though he also has a Shangaan affiliation. Mama makes an attempt at admitting him into a Shangaan school and succeeds after having a conversation with the principal: "You see, Mrs. Mathabane, technically, the fact that your child's father is a Venda makes him ineligible to attend this tribal school because it is only for children whose parents are of the Shangaan tribe. May I ask what language the children speak at home?"

"Both languages," my mother said worriedly... The principal coughed, clearing his throat, then said, "I mean which language do they speak more?"... "When their father is around, he wants them to speak only Venda. And when he's not, they speak Shangaan. And when they are out at play, they speak Zulu and Sisotho."

"Well," the principal said, heaving a sigh of relief. "In that case, I think an exception can be made." (Mathabane 129).

It becomes evident that the colonial subjects in this example are only docile to the bare minimum requirements asked of them. The principal does a literal reading of the law and makes sure the requirements are fulfilled; however, he does not necessarily remain true to the essence of the Bantu Educational law. They temper with Mark's identity and heritage, but not enough to evoke any suspicion. The mockery of Bhabha's notion of mimicry is present, as the principal respects only the legal part of the laws because of apartheid's authority.

Simultaneously he seeks to undermine the law's authority where possible. The community

provides resistance against the regime by helping Mark to the best of their ability. Even though they have clear guidelines in how to educate the Bantu children, the principal attempts to blur the apartheid rules to the best of his abilities.

Once in school, it becomes clear that Mark is an academic prodigy, he excels at his studies and is therefore able to overcome the teaching curriculum designed to prevent social mobility for Bantu children. Mark is lucky enough to receive gifts from Mrs. Smith (Granny's white employer) and often those gifts would be in form of English comics, "easy" English books such as *Treasure Island*, *The Three Musketeers*, *David Copperfield*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Tom Sawyer* and the Sherlock Holmes series. These canonical texts allows mark steadily develop his reading abilities independently of the Bantu education, Mrs. Smith gives him the opportunity to develop himself further than what the tribal school would be able to provide.

The more advanced works gives Mark a broader education; however, not necessarily a better one. Some students would be better off learning about their local surroundings, but it is a wholly other matter in denying the Bantu children the possibility to learn about European society, and its culture and values through textual means. The obvious downside with having Mark educated are the sacrifices Uncle Piet and Aunt Bushy needs to endure. They sacrifice their schooling to take a chance that Mark will be able to provide for their families in the future. Mark eventually acquires the tools needed to resist the apartheid regime through his education, and it is mainly seen through language and culture.

### 3.4.2 Language and resistance

Language is an arena where resistance is performed in *Kaffir Boy*. Mark speaks a plethora of languages and legitimizes the languages by his use of them. However, it should be stated that English is held in high regards by most factions, and as Ngũgĩ Thiong'o stated it was seen as the portal to higher social realms. Mark makes it his goal in life to master English after his



encounter with Clyde (Mrs. Smith's son). The Eurocentric focus on English is seen in the following scene where Mark is being shown Clyde's library: "I handed the book back, "I can't read this type of English."

"Then you must be retarded," Clyde laughed. Though he might have meant it in jest, my pride was deeply wounded. "This book is by William Shakespeare," he went on, waving it in my face, "the greatest English writer that ever lived. I could read it from cover to cover when I was half your age" (Mathabane, 192). Mark is offended because he is being ridiculed for not being able to understand the advanced Shakespearean language. Furthermore, Clyde has taken upon himself to call Shakespeare the greatest English writer of all times, which implies that English literature is of the highest status one can achieve. However, Rivkin and Ryan note that scholars from the late nineteenth century started educating themselves differently:

"Instead of Homer, Aeschylus, Pindar, Seneca, and Cicero, men in training now read Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Wordsworth, and Eliot" (1071). The interesting thing to note from the quote is that a paradigm shift has taken place, English has become the 21<sup>st</sup> century lingua franca that study and learn from often in higher education institutions. The language shift shows the influence politics, war and colonialization has had on language and people. Mark finds himself in the same process, his ancient heritage with folklore and oral stories are replaced with English classics such as Shakespeare. For Clyde it is only natural that he should claim superiority for he has mastered the more advanced English; however, he does not take into consideration that he is unable to understand the African oral languages such as Tsonga or Zulu. An example of the powerlessness white children would face upon being met with Tsonga is Mark's verbal fight with an Afrikaans schoolboy: "Kaffir is your mother," I said in Tsonga. My friends heard me and roared with laughter. The white boys didn't know what to do. They couldn't understand a single word of Tsonga, it seemed; yet we understood everything they were saying in Afrikaans" (204). Mark has gained power through being able

to speak Afrikaans and Tsonga, he is able to control the conversation by deciding which information he wants to withhold and which to share. The white school boys are masters of Western language, they are well versed in communicating in languages that are Eurocentric such as English and Afrikaans, however, when faced with Tsonga they are powerless.

Clyde is rather bold in voicing his disliking for Mark and his Bantu heritage and Mrs. Smith is quick to discard Clyde's rude remarks. However, Mrs. Smith is also condescending towards Mark, no matter how genuine her intentions are. Upon meeting with the Smiths Mark introduces himself: "Using pidgin English, I proceeded not only to give my name and surname, but also my grade in school, home address, tribal affiliation, name of school, principal and teacher – all in a feverish attempt to justify Granny's label of me as a "smart one. Mrs. Smith was astounded. "What a clever, clever pickaninny!"...Bantu [black] children are smart. Soon they'll be running the country." (Mathabane 188-89). Mark caters to Mrs. Smith with his poor English and she is impressed because she does not expect a poor Bantu child such as Mark to have mastered English. However it should be noted that mimicry is never far from mockery, and Mrs. Smith's praising of his abilities are predicated on that Mark's English is still very poor, and therefore he poses no threats to her. It should be mentioned that there is perhaps a half-truth to Mrs. Smith's utterance. She is possibly sub-consciously aware that Mark possibly will be running the country. Her statement is ambivalent in that Mark simultaneously amuses and might inflict fear into Mrs. Smith. After his condescending, yet perhaps well intended encounter with the Smiths, Mark's resolve to master English in strengthened: "To learn to express my thoughts and feelings effectively in English became my main goal in life. I saw command of the English language as the crucial key with which to unlock doors leading into that wonderful world of books revealed to me...my heart ached to explore more such worlds, to live them in the imagination in much the same way as I lived in folktales of my mother and grandmother." (Mathabane 193). Just like

the African woman taking ownership of Adichie's novel – Mark too makes it his ambition to claim ownership of the European stories written in books. The path Mark is set on allows him to explore the stories in a hybrid manner, for he is able to live through folktales and books.

Mark makes great efforts to learn English, he borrows his neighbor's dictionary to learn two new English words a day, he would write them down in his notebook to memorize them. As Mark empowers himself with English learning English he overcomes the bleak English vocabulary he is given through the Bantu Education act. In the following quote we read Mark's thoughts about the oppressive nature of the education he is given "How I cursed Dr. Verwoerd (Prime minister) and his law for prescribing how I should feel and think" (Mathabane 193). All the examples above (Clyde, Mrs. Smith and Dr. Verwoerd) are condescending towards Mark and his capabilities of learning English. As Mark keeps practicing his English he "...Began imitating how white people talked, in hope of learning proper pronunciation. My efforts were often hilarious, but my determination increased with failure." (194). Mark continues to strengthen his English and we see his transcendence into a hybrid person whom is able to use English as well as his oppressors. In a conversation with the principal Mark talks about his reasoning: "As for the books I see you reading," he said, "they are not what I would expect a black child to want to read. Why do you read them?" The principal was right; my taste for books had been greatly influenced by the kinds of literature I had seen in the homes of white people. I was under the impression that in the kinds of books they read – poetry, philosophy, classics and so on – there must lie the secret of their power over black people" (Mathabane 253-54). Mark understands that for him to claim his freedom he needs to challenge the white man, and in the process of challenging the white man he needs to understand how the white man thinks. After hearing Mark's strong resolve to gain his freedom the principal responds with "I've always had a feeling this would happen to you. It always happens to students as sensitive as you are. Your kind cannot pretend. Maybe it's

about time we black people stopped pretending and fooling ourselves that the white man will someday have a change of heart and accept us as equals, and end apartheid” (254). He urges Mark to keep practicing, but to be careful of being branded a traitor, for many blacks saw his love for books, tennis and classical music as an attempt of becoming white, rather than creating a hybrid culture.

As Mark reaches another plateau in his studies he and his class stumbles upon Shakespeare yet again. The previous time Mark encountered Shakespeare he was deeply hurt for having profanities thrown in his face, and even worse, not being able to disprove that Clyde was correct in calling him retarded. Since then Mark has grown very confident in his ability to use English and assumes he is proficient enough in English to read all kinds of English texts, however Shakespeare still proves to be a difficult literary work to read: “But when I encountered Shakespeare one cold and over-cast day, I knew instantly that my confidence had been premature” (255). The class and Mark found Shakespeare was incredibly difficult to grasp, which leads to the class being dissuaded from learning about Shakespeare because of the sheer difficulty of it: “I’m never going to understand this...If the teacher expects us to, he’s mad” (256) students complained. From a pedagogical point of view, the students’ reaction might be the result of the lack of a stepping stone between their previous literature and Shakespeare. To motivate the students the teacher promise double points to the students who continue learning *The Merchant of Venice*. The use of external motivation should be used with care, promising a carrot to learn a play might make the students learn it, but it does not stimulate the students to continue learning Shakespeare for the joy of mastering the difficult language. Mark is lucky enough to have Uncle Piet donate a radio to the Mathabane household, and even more lucky when he stumbles upon a radio channel broadcasting *The Merchant of Venice*: “After listening to the broadcast, I read the play over several times, each time trying to imitate the voices on the radio. I did that for several days,

until I developed an accent. After I gave my presentation, the teacher said, with a smile, “There’s someone who knows how to read Shakespeare!” (256). The manner in which Mark learned Shakespeare is interesting from a didactic point of view, Mark was able to learn Shakespeare through auditory means. The auditory learning method is especially efficient for Mark because of his tradition with oral stories. Had Mark perhaps read and listened in an audiovisual method manner perhaps he would learn even more. The way in which students learn best is something every student should be self-reflective about, and working methods will be discussed in Chapter Four.

Mark’s ability to read Shakespeare has empowered him, the only thing that separates him from Clyde are the visual markings of their skin. Mark is also able to read Shakespeare now. The privilege is no longer only reserved for Clyde and the other Western school children. Mark transcends into a hybrid person by incorporating elements from Western and African cultures and is able to draw power from both cultures. To explain this phenomenon better I return to the theory Bhabha presents. He argues that colonizers attempt to “produce the colonized as a social reality which is at once “other” and yet entirely knowable and visible” (qtd. In McLeod 63). Applied to Mark, he is different than Clyde, because Clyde thinks Mark is “retarded” and not as smart as white people; however, Mark is still being educated as a “white” and as he reaches a higher educational level, Mark too is able to read Shakespeare. Mark is at once both the other and someone familiar, someone strange yet fully knowable. His mimicry and “imitation” allow him to empower himself with Afrikaans and English, while still channeling powers from his ability to speak a plethora of African languages. Bhabha finishes his argument by saying “In trying to do two things at once – constructing the colonized as both similar to and the “other” of the colonizers – it ends up doing neither properly” (65). Clyde and apartheid’s inability to place Mark in a fixed social position shakes the very foundation that their superiority is built upon, for they are no longer

able to impose the single story upon him. Mark's presence threatens to expose the very fragile nature of the Eurocentric superiority the Afrikaans and English language has claimed for itself in the apartheid regime.

To showcase another example of resistance through mimicry I want to return to Mark's encounter with the superintendent. Mark's ambivalence and mimicry allow him to wedge his friend Ndlamini out of an administrative crisis. Ndlamini's family lives illegally in the Alexandra ghetto and while he is being grilled by the superintendent Mark intervenes:

"My Uncle didn't know, sir," I said to the superintendent in impeccable Afrikaans."

"Jy praat Afrikaans? [You speak Afrikaans?]" the superintendent asked me, his face lighting up, The tone of his voice suggested that hitherto he had been bored, but that I had, by my unexpected usurpation of the black interpreter's duties, injected some excitement into the otherwise routine job of interrogating and sentencing a black Influx control offender...

"Do all black students like Afrikaans?" he asked. "It's a beautiful language, you know." The truth was: black students without exception hated the language. But to please him, I said, "dis is 'n mooier taal dan Engels, meneer [We like it better than English, sir]." His face beamed at the words...He chortled. "heh, heh, heh. You're a very smart young chap," he said condescendingly. "You've got potential to become leader of your tribe some day" (Mathabane, 251-2).

Mark hybridity allows him understand the superintendent, and therefore speak the words he wishes to hear. The superintendent seeks legitimacy and approval for the Afrikaans language, and who better to give it to him than their colonial subjects. Mark understands that if he portrays himself as a grateful docile colonial subject the superintendent is more inclined to believe that he is actually doing the black population a favor; his stern rule is in the black's own interest even though they are unable to see it. Just like Mrs. Smith, the superintendent remarks that Mark is a peculiar boy who will someday do very well, and therefore he should become a chieftain. The difference between Mrs. Smith and the Superintendent condescending behavior is that the latter is unable to see Mark as anything other than a member of his tribal community. Mrs. Smith on the other hand is very well aware that Mark might be running the country any day soon, and jokingly suggested so when meeting Mark for the first time. As seen in this example Mark's hybridity and mimicry allow him to challenge

the Bantu Homeland Citizens Act that denies black South Africans to live in ghettos close to white population areas such as Johannesburg. Mark is able to protect Ndlamini and his family from the separation apartheid attempts to enforce because he has learned his oppressors behavior, and therefore he has learned to provide counter-resistance towards the current hegemony.

Mark's hybridity and ambivalence causes him to experience a duality to the race conflict. He is neither fully supportive of the black or white race, for both of the races are unable to see each other's perspectives. During the Soweto riots Mark does not focus on hoarding up on food like his peers. Instead, he focuses on obtaining the English classics from the library that is burning. Angry students put the library on fire to delete all traces of the Bantu Education act, and while Mark protests he realizes that the books has nothing to do with the Bantu Education act: "I could picture [books] going up in flames, copies of Dickens, Stevenson, Zola, Doyle, Shakespeare and many other – donations by white liberals appalled by the state of black education. In my mind's eye I saw reduced to soot all those wonderful books...which had sustained me in a world of degradation...why burn the only things that taught one to believe in the future, to fight for one's right to live in freedom and dignity?" (Mathabane 284-85). Mark is very clear in his distinction of white racists and liberals.

Simultaneously, he is aware of the short-sightedness present in many angry black rioters. His attempt at rescuing any of the classics fails as he is nearly killed by some Afrikaans policemen. Mark's hybridity and ambivalence then leads to a partly alienation of his presence in both communities. To the black he is a turncoat who wants to be an honorary white, whilst the white world discard him as yet another kaffir boy. Mark's appreciation of the English language puts him in a peculiar position. He is able to envision the needed future which becomes apparent when he is confronted by a white liberal: "We blacks haven't the slightest desire to drive you back into the sea," I said, measuring each word carefully. "South Africa is

as much our country as it is yours. We can and must learn to live together. We need each other, not as master and servant, but as equals” (276). While in hindsight the socio-economic problems South Africa faces today shows that the process is still ongoing today, however, Mark’s ideals were needed to rebuild South Africa. It should be stated that the foundation for Mark’s conviction and vision of a better future are situated in the English classics he read, as they provided him with the insight of several worlds free of the shackles of apartheid and its slavery.

### 3.4.3 Mark’s ambivalence and hybridity

One would believe that Mark’s academic performances would lead to Mark’s escaping apartheid, however, it is tennis that proves to be Mark’s ticket out of apartheid. After receiving an old tennis racket from Mrs. Smith he starts practicing and gradually becomes better with the help from black, mixed and white tennis players. The tennis leagues in apartheid South Africa were divided by race and black and whites playing together were unheard of. Due to international pressure and sanctions the apartheid regime allowed African American Arthur Robert Ashe to play in the South Africa Open tournament in 1973. Many South African sport teams were boycotted by other international teams as a demonstration against their apartheid regime. Needless to say, the South African Open was a highly political one, inciting an array of various opinions. No matter the results of the event, they would be used to confirm racial bias by either race. There would be two levels layers of competition; the tennis and racial aspect of sport between the races. Ashe met with high-ranking government officials and: “Urged them to abolish apartheid in sports, or else the rest of the world would continue boycotting South African teams” (Mathabane 239). Black protestors were of a different opinions: “Go home, Arthur Ashe, go home,” one of the demonstrators cried. “we love you, brother, but go home. We admire all you’ve done, but go home. We don’t need you here, for your presence legitimizes the system. Go home, brother, and leave us



alone. You're doing more harm than good...tell the same to the brothers and sisters in America" (238-9). Ashe is being treated ambivalently, he is both adored and hated for his presence, simply because he refuses to partake in the boycott against apartheid sports teams.

Mark faces the same challenges as he grows as a tennis player, he is forced to choose between playing in a white tennis tournament or boycotting it alongside with his black brothers. Sports becomes a political arena because it is a cultural phenomenon which can provide hope and inspiration in an otherwise bleak life. As Mark chooses to play in the white tournament he is seen as a turncoat by the black tennis community. Mark is confronted by a Tsotsi gang when walking home from tennis one day: "'Let's teach him a lesson,'" said one of Jarvis' cohorts. "let's make sure he never plays tennis again" (Mathabane 282). Mark is caught up in the race war due to the people in Alexandra being short-sighted. Mark escape from Jarvis and is able to play as the in the tennis tournament. After being beat as the only black in the white tournament white players offers their sympathies: "'that was a good match"...The black people I met laughed at me, as if saying, "Didn't we warn you, fool?" I began to feel guilty. I was convinced that I had played atrociously, that I had been a disgrace to my race" (306). Apartheid's tense racial segregation plays down the importance of playing good tennis, as the meaning of Mark's match interpreted in political terms, rather than his athletic performance.

At this point in the autobiography we can question the author's reason for writing so politically, for Mathabane must have a very vivid memory if he was to remember the exact "go home" speech from the black protester. Mathabane does most likely remain true to the essence of the black protestor, however, I think Mathabane is appealing to his Western audience as he situates himself in the moral dilemma of choosing between his own career and solidarity with the black tennis community. When Mark chooses himself, we are presented the sacrifice needed to create the self-made man Mark Mathabane sets himself up to be in

America. Mathabane caters to his audience by presenting a person which has equal ideals, values and struggles. Mark's ambition bears a resemblance to the American dream and in the following quote we are able to witness his reaction to being told of the freedoms of America:

“Blacks attended the same schools as me...ate meals with them in the same cafeterias...no one was calling me baas or master any longer...what shocked me the most was that black and whites could mix freely at social gatherings and parties...My head [Mark] spun as I listened...My mind was feverishly trying to compare American society, the way Andre depicted it, with that of South Africa. There was no comparison whatsoever. The two societies appeared light years apart. America seemed a society moving rapidly toward a greater accommodation of its diverse population; South Africa on the other hand was moving with equal speed, if not more, toward a total separation of all races. Would I ever see this Promised Land?” (Mathabane 291-92).

Mathabane has the advantage of being in America when writing *Kaffir Boy*, therefore he is able to foreshadow his arrival there with a rather dramatic rhetorical question with a biblical reference. The most interesting part about the quote is him creating a binary opposition between America and South Africa, while depicting America as the Promised Land.

Mathabane had been a resident in America for eight year before he wrote his autobiography but he does not depict any of the racial inequality in America, for Mark the protagonist only sees it as paradise. It is hard to differentiate if this is Mathabane making his autobiography more appealing to his Western audience, or Mathabane simply remaining true to the essence of Mark's feelings at the time. The result remains the same; *Kaffir Boy* becomes popular and gains recognition in America, as its popularity grows the book itself becomes a product of Mark's resistance towards apartheid.

#### 3.4.4 *Kaffir Boy*: the product of Mark's resistance

The biggest piece of resistance Mark Mathabane performs is the writing and publishing of *Kaffir Boy – The True Story of a Black Youth's Coming of Age in Apartheid South Africa*.

While many of his peers joined the ANC resistance to take arms against the apartheid regime, Mark chooses a different path: “Before I left, Mr. Ngwenya said, “There's room for people with your brains in the struggle. Your kind fight on a different front. Teachers and doctors and

lawyers are needed to care for the wounded, defend political prisoners and teach the masses about freedom. Writers are also needed to tell the rest of the world what the struggle is all about. So, you see, you don't need only a gun to fight against apartheid. There are many roads that lead to Rome. Think about using your talents in the struggle" (Mathabane 270).

Mathabane is self-consciously setting up his explanation for writing *Kaffir Boy*, his final transcendence within the framework of *Kaffir Boy* is the unification of Mark and Mathabane into the author Mark Mathabane. The significant change that takes place is the transformation of Mark's oral story into a text. Mathabane is reaping the fruits of his labor, after making it his goal to master the English language he is able to publish an autobiography that gained world-wide recognition.

Note Mathabane's allusion to the idiom "All roads lead to Rome", it serves to remind Mark that there are many ways of providing resistance. It also refers to England's history of being colonized by the Roman Empire, which in turn implemented the English language. There is a clear parallel between England and South Africa's history, both parties acquired their oppressors culture and have incorporated it as their own. Englishmen now study Shakespeare instead of Homer, and writers such as Mark Mathabane attempt to write new contemporary classics for South Africa to embrace. Mathabane's work is a hybridization of English, Tsonga and Venda as discussed earlier, and it is his way of writing back to his oppressors. Mathabane said in an interview: "the book "gave me a feeling of being purged...I was finally able to fully accept who I was and where I came from. In short, I wrote to heal myself as well as inform others." (Johnson, Anne Janette). Mathabane writes for two reasons: informing people of the atrocities of apartheid and healing himself in the process. The Truth and Reconciliation committee determined in their process of healing South Africa that there were four types of truths when talking about the apartheid past. These truths translate well into writing as Anthea Jeffery points out that instead of operating with objective and

subjective truth, you operate with a factual or objective truth, social or dialogue truth, narrative truth and healing truth (10-11). The social truth is devised through interaction with actors, the narrative truth is how witnesses or participants perceived apartheid – and therefore *Kaffir Boy* the product is Mark Mathabane’s perception of apartheid. Lastly the healing truth attempts to repair the self through the usage of language and words, reconstituting the self through storytelling. The healing truth might be in conflict with the other truths, for they can actually be in conflict or opposition. While Mathabane wrote his autobiography before these concepts were coined in an apartheid manner, he still sees the need for his own healing. While it is hard for the reader to uncover parts in which the author writes to heal himself, we could in a hypothetical example look at the child prostitution scenes in *Kaffir Boy*: ““Take off your clothes!” Mpandhlani yelled at me. “I don’t want to take a bath,” I said...I continued backing away, with quickening steps, sensing that the man was afraid to follow me because he was naked” (Mathabane 72-3). Mark is able to escape the child prostitution circle in his autobiography, however in our hypothetical example he might not have done so in the factual truth. For all we know, Mark Mathabane might tragically be a rape victim, and he writes *Kaffir Boy* to change the past and heal himself of his burden. The healing powers of writing allow him to cope with the fact that he has been violated and the words helps Mathabane rejuvenate from a stressful past. Keep in mind that this is merely an example to state the usefulness of the healing truth, as I have no factual evidence supporting that Mark Mathabane is lied about his interaction with Mpandhlani.

#### 4. Using *Kaffir Boy* in VG3 Social Studies English

This chapter is going to explore how *Kaffir Boy* can be used in the VG3 Social Studies English program. The subject aims to provide the students with interdisciplinary knowledge rooted in English and social sciences. Social Studies English mainly deals with political, social and economic circumstances in English speaking countries. Another important focus of

the subject is its concern with regional and international conflicts in the English-speaking world. The course also requires the students to learn the relationship between language, culture and society in addition to being able to communicating and discussing these issues. *Kaffir Boy* is able to fulfill many of the requirements set by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (NDET), the book critically looks at the apartheid hierarchy in a socio-economic manner, it also looks at the role of language in a cultural conflict, and lastly it promotes the need for critical thought when it comes to education acts and competence aims. The racial segregation and social injustice the minorities in apartheid are exposed to are mirrored in the same way minorities have been historically treated in Norway and the United States, and will therefore further develop the students' understanding of racial injustice.

#### 4.1 The Knowledge Promotion Reform and the Education Act

The organizing of education is central to *Kaffir Boy*, Mathabane states that the apartheid government attempted to create docile subjects through educating black children barely enough to fill simple positions in society. It seems very fitting to look at how the Knowledge Promotion (KPR) allows and encourages the teacher and students to learn about *Kaffir Boy*, so that we may learn how to achieve social equality by studying a case of social inequality. The KPR consist of several elements: The Core Curriculum, The Quality Framework, Subject Curricula, and lastly individual assessment. Within these guidelines are the essence the NDET wants the Norwegian educational system to incorporate into the education of our youth. The Education Act is an entity by itself and it provides the legal laws asked of the education.

##### 4.1.1 The Core Curriculum

The Core Curriculum for primary, secondary and adult education in Norway was developed in 1993 for R-94 by the Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. The Core Curriculum survived L97, and albeit a bit outdated, is still used in the KPR. Even though its examples are slightly irrelevant and in dire need of an update, however, its essence remains

relevant to this present day. The Core Curriculum wants to create humans who are: spiritual, creative, liberally-educated, social, environmentally aware, hard-working, and lastly integrated human beings. The Core Curriculum uses these headings as examples to explain what kind of human beings the students should aspire to be educated into. The Core Curriculum and *Kaffir Boy* resemble each other in the fact that both see the value in social equality and education:

“Education should be based on the view that all persons are created equal and that human dignity is inviolable. It should confirm the belief that everyone is unique; that each can nourish his own growth and that individual distinctions enrich and enliven our world. Education should foster equality between the sexes and solidarity among groups and across borders” (9-10).

Mathabane makes it clear that the apartheid regime clearly violates human dignity and does not at all foster equality between groups. Mathabane’s example of how not to treat fellow humans, regardless of their belief, ethnicity or culture, is shared with The Core Curriculum.

The Core Curriculum also states:

“Education must convey how living standards have continually been improved by trial and error, groping and gauging in generations of everyday practical endeavors. This also applies to social innovations: constitutional forms of government, collective arrangements such as in the case of unions, or legislation on environmental protection. Knowledge about this part of our cultural heritage and history provides us with both trust in tradition and readiness for change” (14).

The important lesson to learn from this excerpt is that we have to learn from the past, so that the students can create better social arrangements in the future. The students should also learn about the past to avoid making the same atrocious mistakes our forefathers have made.

#### 4.1.2 The Education Act

The Education Act incorporates much of the same ideals and values the Core Curriculum inhabits, its function, however, is to legally state requirements of the pupil, teacher, school and the home. In the general part of the Education Act section 9a-1 the law states: “All pupils attending primary and secondary schools are entitled to a good physical and psychosocial environment conducive to health, well-being and learning.” These requirements are

mandatory and of the utmost importance for students attending school. The student should always feel safe and protected in his learning environment. In *Kaffir Boy* Mark and his classmates do not feel safe after the Soweto Riots, the Bantu Education Act does not protect them from the atrocities performed by the apartheid government. As a result, many of Mark's classmates drop out and join the ANC resistance against the apartheid regime. *Kaffir Boy* is well suited for the Norwegian classroom because it highlights the illegitimate laws in apartheid. The knowledge present in *Kaffir Boy* is transferable to the students' own society. The students are able to learn the necessity of laws, how they can be abused and how they should be critical of laws' intentions. By being well informed students they should be able to make educated decisions whenever they give their support to political arrangements, such as elections for instance. The subject Social Studies English is interdisciplinary in the fact that it focuses heavily on social sciences – and laws are naturally a part of the social sciences. Students, teachers and the home might also become more inspired to learn about their rights and demands when presented with the unjust laws present in apartheid. Having knowledge about the law and KPR will enhance the learning simply because of the increased awareness around legal rights.

#### 4.1.3 Social Studies English Curriculum

The introduction of the KPR gave more freedom to teachers, previously in R94 and L-97 teachers had experienced fixed curriculums that required students to learn through learning goals. In *Veiledning i lokalt arbeid med læreplaner* (guidance in working with local curricula) the NDET states that the shift from L-97 to the KPR in 2006 emphasizes how learning goals and competence aims are exceptionally different from one another; while learning goals (L-97) focuses on the knowledge students can acquire, the competence aims (KPR) looks at how students can put the acquired knowledge to use (5). The focus on a local curriculum allows the teacher and students to work with textbooks and works of their own choosing, leaving the

school to decide which material is best suited to teach its students; as long as it fulfills the requirements of the competence aims. Much like the Bantu Education, the KPR ideology on education and learning revolves around the locally embedded knowledge. By bridge-building the local and known knowledge into a broad and prosperous pool of knowledge will prepare the students to become members of society. Needless to say, the intent of the KPR is not comparable to the Bantu Education – which main objective was to create docile black working class.

The Social Studies English curriculum consist of three parts: Language and language learning, Communication and Culture, society and literature. The competence aims states that the aims should enable the pupils to:

- Use a nuanced, well-developed vocabulary to communicate on social and political issues Summarize, comment on and discuss differing viewpoints on social and political issues.
- Elaborate on and discuss questions related to social and economic conditions in some English-speaking countries.
- Interpret at least one major work of fiction, one film and a selection from other English-language literature from the 1900s up to the present.

The competence aims above are requirements set by the NDET, and they are a few selected ones that is particularly fitting with teaching *Kaffir Boy*. By choosing three competence aims to specifically work with, the teacher is able to narrow down and concentrate the material to provide a learning outcome that is sufficiently acceptable. The competence aims are very wide and abstract by design which opens up for local interpretation of them, although, as a result, it might become difficult to define for the school, teacher and student what the specific goals should be. The specification of the competence aims is a vital process to ensuring that the teacher and pupils are aware of their set goals. Some examples of the specific learning



goals could be: “Imagine that you are an agent for FN working in the human rights department. Write a report on apartheid where you present the social, political and economic conditions in apartheid South Africa. The report is to be presented to the CDESCR (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) and should be short and concise. Maximum two pages”. The report will focus on apartheid at a macro-level perspective which will help the pupils look at how apartheid affects actors from a socioeconomic perspective. The macro perspective will emphasize how the various acts influence the life to apartheid citizens. The final competence aim will move the analysis to a micro-level perspective when the students are interpreting *Kaffir Boy*. The micro-level perspective will emphasize the inhumanity of the whole apartheid ideology, the move from statistics and numbers to real life people is a powerful trope to showcase the atrocities committed by the apartheid regime. The learning goal could be “Much like Mark Mathabane, you too should learn how to express yourself eloquently in English by writing an essay that critically looks at how apartheid affect its citizens. Include both the Bantu and European factions into your analysis. Lastly discuss the importance of being able to state your own opinions”. The learning goal focuses on teaching students to be well informed when forming and expressing ones opinion. The goal also stresses the importance of being able to voice one’s opinion. These goals are recurring themes in *Kaffir Boy*, and hopefully seeing the power that comes with being able to express oneself properly will motivate the students.

#### 4.1.3.1 Basic Skills

The ability to express oneself orally and textually are among two of the five basic skills that are heavily focused in the KPR curricula. The remaining three are reading, proficiency at numeracy and using digital tools in English. The four first are perhaps the most notable in *Kaffir Boy* as there is a lack of digital equipment in Mark’s narrative. While reading is a very important basic skill I have chosen not to emphasize it simply because being able to express

oneself is more indoctrinated in *Kaffir Boy*. Numeracy is also used constantly through the text, Mark's family is poor and every rand they can acquire helps them survive. By converting the rand the Mathabane family survives on to the Norwegian currency NOK, the students are able to relate how little value 10 rand amounts (6.5 NOK and 0.82 USD) to. Returning to the importance of being able to express oneself orally and textually the English curriculum states that the basic skill of:

“Being able to express oneself orally and in writing in English involves the use of language in a nuanced, precise manner with a view to developing one's English language skills. These skills are an important tool in the quest to understand and use English in ever more varied and demanding contexts that span special fields and cultures. It involves broad textual skills, which in turn involves communicating by means of dissimilar written and oral genres and stylistic registers. Oral skills involve the ability to understand spoken texts of varying length and complexity. Furthermore, it involves understanding different varieties of English, and being able to converse in English in language that is appropriate to the situation.”

The English curriculum stresses the need to use different varieties of English, both textual and oral genres. Mathabane's work is simultaneously oral and textual, his work is a hybrid example of the various types of English the pupils can learn. The realization that language and English is not static, but rather, very much alive in its continuous change, may provide a personal relationship between the pupil and her relation to English. The pupil will then become aware that she too can express herself through oral or textual means, and it will be her English mixed with her ideals and values. The freedom experienced by liberating herself from the single story is pivotal in the student's continuous motivation to learn how to better express herself.

#### 4.2 Teaching literature: *Kaffir Boy*

This thesis has so far explained why *Kaffir Boy* is a good choice to teach students about learning how to express themselves. That is not the sole reason to why *Kaffir Boy* is a good text to use in the classroom, the text also mirrors the Other, and by reading about Mark Mathabane's tough upbringing, the students empathic emotions are being stimulated. Elin

Nesje Vestli writes in her article that through literature we are able to see the human beings behind statistics. The knowledge of how other people's cultures and lives allows us to self-reflect upon our way of living (5). She continues her argumentation by stating that the students are given a perspective from within in the literature, we are presented daily lives, traditions, living conditions, geography and multicultural cooperation. In addition to that, the language education does not necessarily have to focus on differences, it can also focus on the familiar, to create relations between literature and students (7). These overarching ideals can be put into practice through literature didactics which can be seen as an invitation to a dialogue between theory and practice, as well as a dialogue between the teacher and the student. Previously the dialogue has been non-existent and the teacher had merely controlled the conversation to the point where the pupils had the "correct" interpretation of the text. Nowadays the dialogue is entirely different, the teacher is no longer meant to be the main authority that has the final say in whether an interpretation is correct or faulty, but rather be a guiding lighthouse that stimulates the conversation to the point where the students feel that they too are in ownership of the text. It is important to note that even though teachers are meant to be neutral in their stimulation of the dialogue, teachers can be too interested in ideas that personally appeal to them and are unable to show an equal amount of interest in other ideas.

The Norwegian tradition with literature in the English fields have been heavily muted in favor of teaching from the textbook with its few literary elements according to Vestli (15). However, the students have access to a massive amount of experience working with literature in their Norwegian classes. The students' competence allow them to move from a passive recipient of Norwegian, to becoming active producers of their own work. Vestli argues that the knowledge is interdisciplinary rooted, and that the English subject can make use of the pre-existing knowledge the students have from the Norwegian field (11). Vestli does not

specify the possible need for modification or complication that using the same knowledge from two fields might lead to. She does, however, state that the students need to have a certain level of competence in English for the transfer to be applicable. An example of a possible clash of knowledge could be the essay-genre itself, the English essay does strike a resemblance to the factual Norwegian Article. The Norwegian essay works the same theme from a certain angle, but it remains factual. There are many examples of pitfalls such as these, therefore it is the teacher's job to inform the students of differences if necessary.

So far in the chapter we have discussed why *Kaffir Boy* is a good choice to teach, for it fulfills the requirements by the KPR. The book is also being self-reflective about its own position in the literary tradition compared to the great canonical works such as Shakespeare. Mark Mathabane is self-conscious about the difference between what he wishes, and what he should learn, which is seen in the scene where his teacher makes them read Shakespeare. While the class is finding Shakespeare much too difficult to grasp, Mark continues to work hard to learn *The Merchant from Venice*. Through hard work and conviction Mark perseveres and is able to claim the freedom that literature provides; Mark is able to experience the wonders of the world through Shakespeare. While Mark's perspective is an inspiring one, the pedagogic and didactic failure from the teacher is important to note, most of the class were unable to understand Shakespeare. The teacher should have picked an easier text that the students could relate to, while allowing Mark to study Shakespeare. Transparency is key when deciding what material one should use, for while Mark can study Shakespeare by himself, it is a solitary process. Vgotsky's sociocultural learning theory proposes that learning happens in a social arena, where the students and teacher build upon each other's knowledge. All intellectual development is situated in social activity in Vgotsky's opinion, the individual and independent thought process is socially constructed, it is a result of the social interaction between the child and other people (Imsen 225). Learning is then situated in the social

interaction in Vygotsky's theory, and to transfer that philosophy into learning methods is possible. Vestli gives several examples of possible ways to learn how to express yourself: Pupils reading to each other in groups, oral re-telling to a fictive person so that the group needs to adapt their register to the fictive person, roleplay of characters, having a conversation about the literature in class or groups to simply share opinions (21-22). The examples above are oral activities the teacher can use to socially construct an effective and safe learning environment. It is important that every student's opinion is heard and not disregarded without critical feedback responding to why perhaps another interpretation might be more correct. There are also writing activities the students can work together with: blogging where other students can comment their opinions (with a moderator), rewrite or write continuation of *Kaffir Boy's* ending, write a manuscript of a normal day at the Mathabane's and film it, have students impersonate a character and write letters to each other, write a literary analysis of *Kaffir Boy* (23). These examples have mostly been textual or oral ways of working with the material, but the ability to express oneself is not only contained within separate fields, the students could also combine the two to make PowerPoint presentations, perform a roleplay on a large scale with the class, create a wall-poster that students have to present, make board games that summarizes the essence of the apartheid struggle. There are many ways of working with the text and teaching students to express themselves.

#### 4.2.1 Apartheid outdated?

Had the teacher in *Kaffir Boy* perhaps chosen a canonical work such as *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe instead of Shakespeare, the students could have related to the social problems, and the book would still provide a sufficient challenge for the pupils in addition to being canonical, yet relatively contemporary. Going by the same philosophy I could have chosen *Things Fall Apart* as it deals with many of the same post-colonial issues in the Igbo society that the native South African population experienced. While apartheid is perhaps still fresh in

the mind of the Norwegian teacher, most students have no personal relationship towards it. The NDET have also published the report “*Etniske og religiøse minoriteter i læremidler*” (Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Teaching Aids), which deals with questions such as anti-Semitism and racism in teaching materials. The NDET state that teaching apartheid to students stresses the notion of biological racism, which does not necessarily look at the need to look at racism by addressing it in a multicultural understanding about minorities, immigrations and social stigma created by ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic factors. Textbooks often relies on WW2 and apartheid as themes, and as a result students have voiced the need to learn about more imminent conflicts that are more modern (Midtbøen, Orupabo and Røthing 39). The report mainly deals with the social studies field within the Norwegian school, but it does remain relevant for the interdisciplinary purposes of the Social Studies English subject. The issues raised are important to put on the agenda, for they are legitimate issues. *Kaffir Boy* is a good text to teach because of its simplicity while simultaneously being able to put social issues on the agenda. The autobiography also has the advantage of writing in a retrospective manner, Mark Mathabane waited eight years to publish his autobiography after arriving in the United States. Literature includes the reader at a micro-level perspective, students are able to learn much more from a product that is polished and which main intention is to convey how apartheid really did affect its citizens. The single story had previously portrayed the black man as the victim of the oppressive apartheid system, but it had not focused on white liberals who opposed the regime. An example is Afrikaner boys being forced into military service, and refusal would result in imprisonment. Furthermore, the remnants of apartheid is still visibly present in South Africa as there have been a rise of xenophobic attacks on foreigners in 2015. Robyn Dixon writes that “it began after the Zulu king, Goodwill Zwelithini, told his followers last month that foreigners in South Africa should pack up and leave... Wednesday as anonymous cellphone text messages warned that

Zulu people were coming to kill immigrants in neighborhoods with large migrant populations.” It is important to note the killings are mainly Nigerians, Ethiopians and Somali immigrants, so the killings are not for racial reasons, but rather ethnic and socioeconomic ones. As previously stated the unemployment rate is at a stunning 24% and has led to desperation and despair among many South Africans. These issues show that apartheid is still very much relevant, and by looking at it through literature the students are presented with the reason to why social inequality present in South Africa.

#### 4.3 Teaching taboo and sensitive topics

*Kaffir Boy* is by no means an autobiography that is subtle about sensitive topics such as rape, suicide, murder, racial and cultural injustice, gender inequality and family violence. The book faces these problems head-on in a pragmatic gripping manner, and for teachers that might lead to some difficulty teaching it, unless he or she is well prepared when teaching *Kaffir Boy*.

While these are examples of sensitive themes, they do not necessarily fill all sensitive topics present in the classroom. Post-colonial theory attempts to voice the concerns of marginalized groups that have been unfairly treated or is still being subjected to social stigma. The teacher should be extra aware of these situations and decide how he or she is going to deal with concerns such as these, should the teacher avoid these issues, or perhaps be very pragmatic and inform students about these issues, or perhaps use the students as a resource to strengthen the learning outcome? There are no correct answers for how to deal with the sensitive themes, however, the teacher can make well informed and educated decisions when teaching the autobiography. The two main topics this thesis is going to discuss are child prostitution and suicide. These topics are directly related to the education act paragraph 9a-1 (good psychosocial environment) which has previously been mentioned, the themes are very sensitive and being confident enough to discuss them openly in the classroom is of the utmost

importance for a teacher. *Kaffir Boy* presents many controversial scenes that might leave an unexpected impression on the students that they might feel the need to talk about.

#### 4.3.1 Teaching taboo and sensitive topics: Child Prostitution and Sexual Abuse

The child prostitution scene is the reason *Kaffir Boy* has been banned from some high schools in the United States, for it is fairly graphical: “They then bent over and touched their toes, their black anuses high up in the air. One of the naked men brought out a large bottle of Vaseline and began smearing, lavishly, the boys’ anuses, and then his long swollen penis” (Mathabane 72). The quote is the most explicitly pornographic in *Kaffir Boy*, and while the narrative does not disclose anything more, for Mark runs away, it is heavily implied that the men have anal intercourse with the children. The first and foremost concern should be whether it is ethical to subject the pupils for this content, for it is illegal to subject minors underneath the age of eighteen to pornographic material. However, since there is no visual depictions or any explicit mention of sexual intercourse it does not classify as pornography. Jane Nolan and Sarah Oerton have empirically researched the use of pornography in the UK classroom at the university, and although not aimed at VGS, the knowledge is transferable: “Using ‘real’ art, erotica and pornography in the classroom is likely to give rise to strong views and emotionally charged reactions, whether these are arousal, stimulation, amusement, discomfort, anger, offence, disgust and/or distress. However, student reactions can often be pivotal in classroom discussions, providing useful opportunities to explore and unravel their emotional responses” (10). The age difference between the two student categories is at least four years (17-21), which is significant difference in terms of a maturity level. However, I am of the opinion that the various emotional responses that Nolan and Oerton’s article cover the wide spectrum of emotions pupils might encounter, for people act and feel differently when met with an uncomfortable topic, regardless of their age. Rather than fearing teaching the subject of child prostitution, teachers should rather use it as a resource as it can be very



informative for students that were emotionally affected by the child prostitution. Secondly, and perhaps most important, is the fact that the pupils might be or have known victims of child abuse, and the exploration of this sensitive theme might trigger an unwanted emotional response. Although these topics are uncomfortable they need to be addressed so that unresolved feelings do not linger in the students. Pedophilia is taboo and is difficult to understand at a young age, especially if adults do not speak about it. Pedophilia is also a difficult topic to discuss for adults, as it is very sensitive for both perpetrators and victims. Therefore it is very important to lay down some ground rules. The teacher should warn the pupils about the possible disturbing scenes in the book before reading it, and possibly allow some students to skip the pages where the scene takes place to avoid an unwanted emotional response in special cases. This does not ensure that the pupils do not have an overwhelming emotional response, the pupils might think they can handle the scenes, and still be negatively affected. Another possible way of dealing with uncomfortable scenes could be assigning reading excerpts of the book, instead of reading all of it. On the downside, it would hurt the legitimacy of *Kaffir Boy*, as one of its main objectives is to give a voice the social injustice that is taking place in apartheid South Africa. It is incredibly important that the classroom is a safe environment where the students and teacher feel safe to discuss the topic and perhaps their personal emotions toward it. Another aspect is that participants, especially Vgs-students, often want to emotionally distance themselves from taboo subject such as child prostitution, and that might led to a very political correct reaction where a student or teacher says officially condemns the action and state that no one should ever want to do such a thing, without disclosing the reason to why child prostitution and pedophilia takes place. It is first when the teacher and the pupils have an open mind toward the topic that they are able to have an academic discussion about why it occurs, and why we all have our personal emotional reaction towards it. There might also arise an occasion where a student confides their own

personal experiences in the teacher that have been unaddressed so far, they might be victims, have relatives that are pedophile or even have own sexual feelings toward children that they do not understand. As teachers we are placed in difficult ethical position where our reaction and handling of the situation is crucial for the continued relation to the student. The main intention should be the student's well-being, whether we choose to inform the institution with authority and expertise within the matter (school nurse, psychologist etc.) or simply talk to the student and refer him/her to sources such as [www.ung.no](http://www.ung.no) knowing that it will resolve the matters depends entirely upon how the student will react. However, if the student clearly is in distress and requires professional help, and still does not want you to contact any institutions, we as teachers are obligated to do so, for the students own well-being. The betrayal the student might feel should be explained as the situation is; the teacher is unable to help, and professional assistance is needed.

Nolan and Oerton continues by stating that: "student reactions can often be masked by humour, and there can be benefits and drawbacks to this. A humorous response can elicit a more relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, enabling students to feel more comfortable – both with the material they are viewing and their confidence and ability to discuss this material openly with those present" (21). Nolan and Oerton are also critical of humor, as it can marginalize the very issues of child prostitution, or sexual abuse and violence. The discussion should rather quickly be brought back into an academic discussion where the issues are very seriously dealt with. If the students are more comfortable speaking about the issue at hand, the classroom discussion moves away from morals that are absolute; that they are correct and wrong. The discussion can then move toward topics and questions which answer questions that the students might have, for example about sexual abuse. This provides the teacher with an excellent opportunity to stress the importance of consent when having sexual intercourse with your partner. By being informative, critical and assuring the teacher is able to create

healthy attitudes toward sexuality. Instead of fearing difficult topics, the teacher should rather use them as resources.

#### 4.3.2 Teaching taboo and sensitive topics: Adolescent Suicide

Mark contemplates suicide at the age of ten after being treated harshly by the world, depression grabs the hold of him and he struggles to find the will to live on in apartheid South Africa: “I felt unloved, unwanted, abandoned and betrayed by a world that seemingly denied me an opportunity to find my niche. A world that seemed to hold out nothing to me but hunger, pain, violence and death... Thus, as I stood dreamily by the stoop, twirling a switchblade knife between my trembling hands, oblivious to the world around me, I thought of killing myself” (Mathabane 167). Suicide is a taboo subject for many, especially adolescent suicide. The phenomenon is very seldom talked about in the Norwegian school, and is often reduced to statistics. In 2013 twenty-five children in the category age 10-19 committed suicide in Norway (Ping Qin 3). While perhaps there is a need for a pragmatic statistical approach to suicide within the field, it does not adequately deal with the difficult topic for pupils. The students need to be informed about suicide, it is important to discuss the depression, loneliness and utter despair many students might feel. The pupils might have friends, relatives or themselves which have thought about suicide, and as a result feel alienated because these emotions are never openly discussed, and tragically, if the occasion arises it is often due to a suicide. *Kaffir Boy* puts the topic on its agenda, and does three things; it explains what would lead a person to consider taking his own life, stresses the need for help through family, community or institutions, and lastly Mark Mathabane gives a voice to the many thousand persons that are contemplating suicide by humanizing the person behind the statistics. I remember from a personal experience when the brother of a classmate committed suicide, as a student my emotions shifted between anger, grief and confusion, I did not know how to deal the situation because it was surrealistic, I could not comprehend that

someone had committed suicide within my assumed perfect circle. The experience taught the teacher and students to value compassion, including our peers into social circles and respecting each other's differences. Tragically it required the loss of a young boy for suicide to be openly discussed in the classroom. Before discussing adolescent suicide, the teacher needs to set clear rules for the discussion as the students' reactions might be very varying. Some students might deal with grief with humor, others will seeking solitude, while some might want to be together. The students need to be aware that their reaction is personal and valid, but so are their peers' reaction as well. Religion and belief could also lead to disagreement, an example could be two students arguing about the spiritual afterlife and the decomposition to earth process the human body goes through. There is need for a clear authority that asks both parties to respect each other's opinions, while simultaneously making sure that the authority is not too influential that students are afraid to participate in the discussion. The topic is very sensitive and the students need to be informed about exactly that. The teacher should attempt to stimulate their empathetic abilities by making the students think what would make a person take his or her own life. The exercise will hopefully instill good morals and behavior into the students, by making them more open for difference amongst their peers.

As a teacher it is important to be resourceful, but it is also equally important of knowing your limits. Resources such as: 116123 (Norwegian suicide prevention number), leve.no, mentalhelse.no, sidetmedord.no are all great resources for people with mental issues to find a forum where they can articulate their problems orally or textually. The teacher should also contact the administration and home if there is any suspicion about depression, the threshold to care for the mental health of the pupils should be moderately low so that severe cases are discovered and helped by professionals.

## 5. Conclusion

This thesis critically looks at how Mark's Mathabane's autobiography *Kaffir Boy* presents his upbringing through apartheid South Africa. Mark is continuously oppressed as a child, and lives in fear of the apartheid government taking away his house, or worse; having the Bantu-police taking away his parents. As a result of his oppressed upbringing, Mark and his brethren develop resistance against the apartheid regime. Through Mathabane's narration the reader is able to witness several layers of resistance conveyed through Papa, Mama, Aunty Bushy, Uncle Piet, Granny and Mark himself. These resistances are small and insignificant individually, however, accumulated they are a force to be reckoned with, which ultimately bring down the apartheid regime. The process of providing resistance is not without pain and suffering for the Mathabane family, as its participants have fundamentally different views on how to live in apartheid.

The thesis has uses post-colonial theory to situate the apartheid conflict into theoretical terms, as the apartheid conflict is very much similar to other colonial discourses. With the help from colonial theorists such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha we have established a theoretical framework that seeks to explain the new social hierarchy present in apartheid South Africa. Terms such as The Single Story, ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity allow us to identify and explain social interaction that hitherto had been unexplainable. The terms ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity all seek to understand and explain the social interaction between two different cultures. The terms also attempt to clarify that the colonial situation is not explainable in binaries, but rather, one needs to take into consideration a wide range of social, economic and cultural factors to fully understand the complex interaction between two cultures.

In the analysis of *Kaffir Boy* we are able to see how the theory works in interaction with the resistance performed by the characters. Mama's ambivalence allows her to see how

the apartheid school system will provide a better future for Mark. Papa on the other hand is an avid protestor against the apartheid regime, unfortunately in his craze, he enforces the apartheid ideology in his attempt to deny Mark a higher education. Papa's operates in binaries, much like Said's notion of the colonized and colonizer, and it makes him unable to cope with his new social position in the Mathabane family. Mark adopts the best of Mama and Papa, he uses the few possibilities apartheid offers him while simultaneously remaining critical to the rules that are meant to prevent him from rising in social rank. Mark empowers himself by acquiring a voice through language and education. Mark's transcendence into a hybrid person allow him to challenge the apartheid system and secure his future in America. Mark's final resistance against apartheid, is the publication of *Kaffir Boy* itself. The autobiography serves the purpose of rising awareness around the oppressive apartheid system and ideology.

Much of apartheid's oppressive nature lies in the Bantu Education act. The act aimed at limiting the potential of the school children, rather than providing a healthy physical and psychosocial learning environment to properly groom the children's talents. *Kaffir Boy* also presents the teacher and students with an excellent opportunity for students to learn how to express themselves effectively, in both oral and written English. The autobiography also touches upon very sensitive topics that can be challenging to teach, but at the same time; it can be valuable if done skillfully. Topics such as suicide and child prostitution requires mental fortitude, and must be cautiously dealt with in the classroom. Post-colonial theory stresses the importance of difference among culture and people, and it is exactly that which the pupils need to learn solidarity about. The taboo topics are not necessarily limited to suicide and child prostitution, but a range of other issues pupils might need to address either directly in their own experience, or indirectly in the classroom.

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