

**BLACK IDENTITY RECONSTRUCTION THROUGH RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA  
BASED ON THE SELECTED NOVELS BY J. M. COETZEE**

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## ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to highlight the reconstruction of South Africans identity which was formulated through resistance from the perspective of J.M. Coetzee, a novelist. This study addressed the research questions that examined the impact of colonialism on the black South Africans identity based on the selected novels by J.M. Coetzee and how he portrayed the idea of resistance and identity reconstruction through his fictional characters. The data was collected from a critical analysis of five selected novels employing the postcolonial concepts, identity, and resistance. The Post-Colonial Theory was employed to critically analyse the characters which reflect the concept of identity and resistance. The analysis was conducted on the characters' acts, actions, and the setting, in particular in South Africa during the apartheid (1948-1991). The findings showed that South Africans identity was affected by apartheid and colonialism. According to the first objective, all the characters in the novels, in particular the main characters had experienced a significant impact of colonialism and racial discrimination. Therefore, the South Africans tried to reconstruct their original identity and cultural heritage. Referring to the second objective, the analysis of all the selected novels revealed that most characters went through a number of stages in reconstructing their identities. As for the final research objective, it was discovered that the characters had shown different ways of resistance towards the principle of colonialism and Apartheid. From the findings, it can be concluded that South Africans resisted the hegemony of colonialism and apartheid. This has resulted in their thoughts of reconstructing their identity, thus, informed others the understanding of how important an identity is in South Africa, which was marginalized because of colonialism. The implication of this study indicates Coetzee's capabilities at achieving the true sense of identity through his novels to show the resistance representing a new experienced voice in reconstructing South Africans' identity.





## **PEMBINAAN SEMULA IDENTITI DI KALANGAN ORANG KULIT HITAM MELALUI PENENTANGAN DI AFRIKA SELATAN BERDASARKAN NOVEL TERPILIH OLEH J.M. COETZEE**

### **ABSTRAK**

Kajian ini dijalankan untuk menunjukkan pembinaan semula identiti di kalangan rakyat Afrika Selatan yang telah direalisasikan melalui penentangan daripada perspektif J.M Coetzee, seorang novelis. Kajian ini menangani persoalan kajian yang meneliti impak penjajahan ke atas identiti rakyat Afrika Selatan berdasarkan novel J.M Coetzee yang terpilih dan bagaimana beliau menggambarkan idea penentangan dan pembinaan semula identiti melalui watak-watak yang terdapat di dalam karya fiksiennya. Data dikumpul melalui analisis kritikal lima novel pilihan yang menggunakan konsep pasca penjajahan, identiti dan penentangan. Teori Pasca Penjajahan digunakan untuk menganalisa secara kritikal watak-watak yang menggambarkan konsep identiti dan penentangan. Analisis ini dilakukan terhadap tindakan dan kelakuan watak-watak, dan juga tempat, terutama di Afrika Selatan semasa zaman apartheid (1948-1991). Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa identiti rakyat Afrika Selatan telah dipengaruhi oleh apartheid dan penjajahan. Merujuk kepada objektif kajian yang pertama, semua watak di dalam novel-novel ini, terutamanya watak-watak utama, telah mengalami impak penjajahan yang sangat ketara dan juga diskriminasi bangsa. Oleh yang demikian rakyat Afrika Selatan cuba untuk membina semula identiti asal dan juga warisan budaya mereka. Merujuk kepada objektif kajian yang kedua, analisa kesemua novel pilihan ini mendapati kebanyakan watak-watak telah melalui beberapa peringkat di dalam proses pembinaan semula identiti mereka. Merujuk kepada objektif kajian yang terakhir, didapati bahawa watak-watak ini menunjukkan cara-cara penentangan yang berbeza terhadap prinsip penjajahan dan apartheid. Daripada dapatan kajian ini, boleh dirumuskan bahawa rakyat Afrika Selatan menolak hegemoni penjajahan dan apartheid. Ini telah mencetuskan pemikiran mereka untuk pembinaan semula identiti, sekaligus memaklumkan kepada semua pemahaman tentang betapa pentingnya sesuatu identiti di Afrika Selatan dimana ia telah dipinggirkan kerana penjajahan. Implikasi kajian menunjukkan bahawa Coetzee berkebolehan untuk mencapai erti sebenar sesuatu identiti melalui novel-novel beliau untuk menunjukkan penentangan yang mewakili suara baharu dalam pembinaan semula identiti di kalangan rakyat Afrika Selatan.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

The current chapter aims to present the main idea of the study, which focuses on identity reconstruction through resistance as presented in the selected books by J. M. Coetzee.



The author who came from South Africa, shared common cultural values as well as the tyranny of history and the cruelty of colonial powers with his South African society. The chapter, therefore, provides some perspectives on the problem of white hegemony and its exploration in the novels.

The problem statement, the objectives, and the level of identity reconstruction through resistance in South Africa are presented in this chapter. This is followed by the research questions, significance, scope and limitations of this study. In addition, key terms such as identity, resistance and colonialism are also defined and clarified in this chapter.





Five novels by Coetzee were selected for this study: *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), *Foe* (1986) and *Age of Iron* (1990). The novels are from different times in his literary career ranging from between 1977 to 1990 with a similar thematic concern.

### 1.1.1 Justification of choosing the Author and Novels

The choice of these novels for this study was because they represented a chronology and development in the authors' concern about the society and was presented in the selected texts: reconstruction of identity in post-colonial South African society. They were also equally and interestingly rich with concerns from a postcolonial perspective, which make them more relevant in this study. The selected novels consistently explore this history of the development of identity in South African.

The aforesaid novels are distinguished from Coetzee's other novels because of their similarities among each other. In this study, Coetzee was chosen as one of the famous South African writers because of his unique literary works which discussed South Africans' social and political issues such as identity reconstruction. All the events of the selected novels happened during the apartheid. Additionally, the characters were carefully chosen in the selected novels in order to highlight and reflect the lives of black South Africans.





## 1.2 Background of the Study

English literature in South Africa has been dictated primarily by the standards of literary realism. The English novels in South Africa reflect the growing political crisis of the society. The impact of the drastic change of the political and social systems in the country of South Africa was over identity, particularly black identity, and resistance and how it was reconstructed (Bhabha, 1994). Black South African society, thus, struggled against the daily experiences of racism imposed on it by resisting them to overcome these experiences. Therefore, one form of resistance is to search for its free black identity. These racial experiences were also seen as an integral part of the historical, economic and political circumstances of being black. This is due partly to a public situation of honor, but similarly significant is the wish to reserve in South Africa a 1<sup>st</sup> World identity, “a state which is technocratic, capitalist, oriented towards Western standards, and somehow breaks up the black majority – in short one within which white identity is secure” (Pienaar, 1995, p. 300).

The history of South Africa has come into existence to dismantle the apartheid regime and its effects. Furthermore, politics, history and literature cannot be separated in discussing the dynamics of South Africa as a country. According to Brink (1998), the political situation “produces sense of priority, making it too difficult for authors to write about certain ordinary human situations without being accused of fraud while Rome is burning. There was polarization of “binaries”, he or she was either with or against apartheid” (p.15). Brink (1998) added that minority dominates the majority by saying,





“the hegemony of the few, of the elite, of the powerful, over the many, the ‘nameless’ (p. 143).”

Apartheid in South Africa was boosted by formalizing its official state policy when the African National Authority took power in 1948. Its seeds have been planted over three centuries since European colonialism, during which South Africans, the blacks, were exposed to their property, identity, freedom and civil privileges. The traffic regime, for example, involves restricting the dwelling of Africans through document requests, which was earliest presented by the British colonial power in 1809. For the racist National Party (NP) by 1948, such ways of discrimination, which looked like those existed in many colonies in the period, not sufficient to ensure the bearable white control of the South Africa. The segregation went even more by rooting the racial discrimination. There were great efforts for Afrikaans as a sovereign and distinctively the language of African had an undeniable significance to justify the freedom of the Afrikaners in politics in South Africa:

Afrikaans linguistics emerged within the context of struggle for the recognition of Afrikaans in all domains. The Afrikaner Broederbund and National Party gave this language struggle (taalstryd) a nationalist direction by incorporating it into the larger drive toward political dominance (John & Talbot 1990, p. 132)

South Africans were made to think that everything was worth growing out of Europe. Through Africa, English has become the language of the superior class. As it is





pointed coloured whose conventional dialect was Afrikaans, English has turned out to be progressively powerful since the mid nineteenth century (Mesthrie, 1993).

Blacks South African were subjected to the tragic suffering which had led them to lose their identity and their language marginalised. Therefore, they had started thinking about resistance that would enable them to reconstruct their identity which had been lost as a result of colonialism and its effect. The reconstruction of identity was an act of consciousness raised by the colonized blacks in South Africa to resist the colonizers for reconstructing their identity and dignity for them, which is the focus of this study to investigate the postcolonial identity reconstruction of blacks in South Africa.



each other since one accompanies ideology that deems itself superior to the other. South Africa's history has always remained a mystery. It has undergone many transformations in the past four hundred years or so. As a matter of fact, the postcolonial concept manages the impacts of colonialism upon societies and social orders. The term was initially utilized by history specialists after the Second World War; it was named as, 'post-colonial state', where 'postcolonial' has an obviously sequential meaning, which defined the period of post-independence. In this context, Bressler (1999) defined the term 'post-colonialism' as "an approach to literary analysis that concerns itself, particularly with literature written in English in formerly colonized countries" (p. 265). Therefore, the post-colonial period signifies the end of colonization by giving the native





people the essential right, political and cultural freedom to substitute them and gain independence by overwhelming political and cultural domination.

Furthermore, postcolonial theory is based on the concepts of resistance, subversion, opposition and difference. Thus, blacks South African carried with them ideas about human freedom and identity as well as the facts of slavery, immigration and political independence. Post-colonialism focuses “on an exploration of the ways in which the dominated or colonized culture can use the tools of the dominant discourse to resist it’s political or cultural control” (Ashcroft, 1995, p. 5). Post-colonialism is further defined as “a counter-discourse of the formerly colonized others against the cultural hegemony of the modern West with all its imperial structures of feeling and knowledge” (Hsieh, 1997, p. 7). Moreover, post-colonialism has been rooted in colonial power, hegemonization, exploitation and prejudice. It has been developed from the history of strained cultural relations between colonies in Africa.

The postcolonial theory seems to have emerged from the South African colonized blacks' frustration, cultural clashes, and trepidations, hopes and dreams about their own future and identity. Though the European colonizers claimed that they came to Africa to illuminate the ignorant heathens that lived in cultural darkness and to decolonize the South African minds from superstition, simultaneously, the blacks South African rejected that by resisting them to regain the real identity which was marginalized (Sethi, 2011) .







The main theory of post-colonialism refers to the incapability of the first world theory which is to study postcolonial writings that express their specific native vision of cultural traditions. It is no longer possible to discuss South African postcolonial literature without shedding some light on colonialism in Africa. Europe emerged as the world's largest colonizer and imperial power. Europeans believe they were born to rule the world. The assumption that Europeans were biologically superior to any other race remained. Goldberg & Solomos (2001) asserted that the inquiry of identity has “taken on so many different connotations that sometimes it is obvious that people are not talking about the same phenomena” (p.5).

As a matter of fact, the white Africans in South Africa were the descendants of former European settlers. They felt inferior towards Africans’ culture, religion and race so far, despite the post-colonialism and postcolonial theories. In other words, European cultural, political and philosophical traditions have dominated South Africa. In spite of the fact that there is little accord with respect to the substance and extent of postcolonial was examined as a basic belief system, they were deduced from different interpretations. Africa itself was under the control of African nationalism, which was a key factor in subjugating and suppressing the people of South Africa through racial rule. Therefore, the indigenous resettlement law created geographic boundaries that isolated ethnic gatherings and as of now, strengthened the sentiments of tenacity and ethnic character (Mattes, 2004).





Throughout the history of Africa and South Africa, South Africans have struggled to reject hegemonic powers. From the time of the slave trade by the Europeans, throughout the colonial period, to the era of neo-colonialism after independence, Africans devoted their lives in resisting the colonial powers and imposing the culture of strangers, imperialism and neo-colonialism. The theme of Africans' resistance, the rule of others and their struggle against various forms of hegemony, injustice emerged as a central theme of modern African studies in the early 1960s. The attention to this central theme is the culmination of the struggle against colonialism that has been reflected on the modern national discourse. There were continuous waves of liberation after World War II. As a result, many literary works have been produced to refer to the exploitative nature of the colonial powers and to any form of power as a whole enslaving a man or a nation. This is definitely not another wonder since "for all hegemonies, the claim to purity has served as part of a claim to power ... Status requires boundaries and with boundaries come boundary police" (Pieterse, 2001, p. 228).

Resistance in the background of the present research is not a very narrow word that can be limited to a specific period; instead, it should be placed in a broader perspective and greater implications because the strategy of colonialism and subjugation was not one-dimensional. It is a complex issue that deals at the same time with the different dimensions of human existence. Resistance is "an act of complex acts designed to rid a person of its oppressors, be they slave masters or multi-national co-operations" (Ashcroft, 2001, p. 28).





During the colonial history of South Africa, the racial factor was one of the most successful actions used by whites to control blacks. This was because the blacks' new kinds of work were accepted as cultural traditions of whites. These cultural traditions changed the human perspectives towards blacks. Thus, the blacks in the South Africa became more familiar with the traditional customs and traditions of whites. They began to develop an intimate relationship with the whites. In this sense, both blacks and whites benefited from each other. The blacks benefit from this relationship because it developed their identity (Heywood, 2004). Such an identity is not independent, since the British power was comprehensive and suppressed. It was developed out of the whites' power. This relationship has been studied in the light of self-other relationship in the bulk of postcolonial critiques which was written on the imperial encounter between the South African and the British oppressive enterprises (Heywood, 2004).



The European colonization in Africa and particularly in South Africa began during the nineteenth century. The colonized people suffered years of untold hardship, torture, deprivation and oppression, which left an indelible mark on them with the ripple effects lasting up to the present. These are captured in the analysis of J. M. Coetzee's selected novels. Hence, there is a need to explore identity and resistance, and their attendant effects on the oppressed and colonized people of South Africa.

In the African context, cultural resistance has taken responsibility for rebuilding the ancient cultural heritage and its values. Africans have realized that liberalization depends on the Africanization of national culture. There was a growing awareness





among African intellectuals to revive their culture to play a central role in national liberation. To achieve this, African cultural nationalism has taken different ways of resistance such as the West African backwardness movement. This movement is an anti-colonial response to colonial rhetoric that distorts African national consciousness, identity and independence. This movement is central to any discussion of resistance against colonialism. In the African context, the defamation of the others was the main cause beyond African's resistance and the European stereotype of Africa demonstrates the African allegation of resistance. Appia (2001) shared this confidence in the non-balanced nature of personality development which he contradicted to the procedure of rationalization that was engraved in the investigation of characters.



The attention is at the thought of the effects of extreme change for the political and social framework in South Africa which was on black identity. The expected idea of a novel should be a presentation of the author's or writer's vision of life as he or she faced through the writings and works. Perhaps the writer seeks to present the truth of life as he sees and forces it to give a vivid account or first-hand experience to readers. Coetzee is widely viewed as a postcolonial writer, and perhaps freedom is embedded in his works with huge colonial influence on the account of events in his works. Therefore, Africans found solidarity in a common black identity that has rejected colonial racism. They believed that the common black heritage of African individuals in the continent and the Diaspora is the effective way to resist colonial domination. However, colonial oppression is closely linked to physical resistance. In this regard, Fanon (1968) declares that when the African knows, "he is not an animal", at that moment, resistance is born.





The native begins to “realize his humanity (and) begins to sharpen the weapons with which he will secure its victory” (Fanon, 1968, p. 43).

Fanon (1986) studied the participation of indigenous intellectuals in social and cultural resistance in three stages. In the first stage, indigenous intellectuals absorb the culture of the occupying power and disperse its traditional society. The writings of the original intellectuals of this period were similar to those of the colonizer. This stage did not last long and the indigenous people began to feel that alien culture had separated them from their land in South Africa. There is a level of the resistance such as ‘Postcolonial literature’ which is normally characterized as a study of the colonial relationship in a critical or revolutionary way. The composition that is determined somehow opposes colonial views. Additionally, the power adjustment in the process of decolonization still requires a representative amendment that has called for the reconfiguration of dominant meanings. Africans expressed the hope that decolonization would lead to a radical transformation of their society. But it didn’t happen to them, “for the majority of the African population conditions did not improve after independence, but deteriorated” (Wright, 1997, p. 16).

In South African novels, identity has been transformed into each part of the nation's social, culture, politics and economics. South Africa is a nation that is constantly imagining itself and re-manufacturing itself. This ongoing scrutiny of what the future of South Africa will be, with what may be moral qualities and ethics, to diagram conceivable manners by which three hundred and fifty years of competition can be





restored. Some portion of this reshaping includes the general population themselves, because it is vital for them to understand the ways in which contemporary South Africa, and thus themselves, has emerged. The existence of a political system and the state, to which one has a place, in current history, is the ability to attest parts of identity (social) that goes past the links about race (Diler & Emir, 2015).

Identity is a unique element associated with Coetzee's works. Most of his characters are on the margins of society and in other words, are fighting for continued existence and survival. Therefore, the component and integral part of the race for existence and survival is tied to escaping the forceful impositions of their surroundings. Thus, the approach of identity analysis takes a look at how people, including writers, tell stories about themselves. The life experiences of Coetzee provide us with a superior comprehension of how these essayists thought about themselves in the past, the kind of identities that appeared when they wrote about their future. As mentioned by Michaels (1992), “virtually all the events and actions that we study did not happen to us and were not done by us ... When, however, we claim it as ours, we commit ourselves to the ontology of “the Negro”, to the identity of “we” and “they...” (p. 59).

South Africa's consists of race, history and power which have been constantly characterized as the impediments of the responses of literature. The fictional authors recorded the troubled history of South Africa in their articles which appeared relatively as never ending. A standout amongst the most frequently and again returned to topics in South African writing is deception, whose roots lie accurately in the interaction between





former colonizers and neighbourhood individuals who have found them in South Africa. The relationship between occupation, meaning, choice and control and the reconstruction of disrupted identity is explored. Some writers believe that Christianity helps in reconstructing identity that has been lost in Africa. Some writers such as Butterfield (1974) observed that, Christian principle carries lucidness into the life of the previous slave, with the goal that he may locate another character which he can take pride in.

The identity searching is a very distinct topic in postcolonial studies and writing. The investigation of such postcolonial scholars, as Coetzee, regarding their social characters and their kin uncovers the mixed culture of postcolonial communities and authors. The current study dealt with the identity reconstruction through resistance after colonialism. It mainly discusses Coetzee's work with his personal perspectives on the identity as a postcolonial writer through his five selected novels.

*In The Heart of the Country* (1977) [henceforth THC] reflects a later stage in the historical backdrop of South Africa in its description of the crazy woman, Magda, who lived on an isolated sheep farm in the Cape Desert at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It delves in a complex connection shaped between the settler and the occupied. The setting of the novel occurs in an arid farm in South Africa and is narrated from the perspective of a white woman. She collided with her father when he took an African mistress who caused a split between the couple and led to revenge and violence, robbing her own relationship with Africans. The protagonist of the novel, Magda, “fight[s] against becoming one of the forgotten ones of history” (THC, 1977, p. 3). Magda, bears the





name of the great heroic spouse of Trek leader Piet Retief, she is one of the ‘mothers’ of South Africa. Just as the Africans have struggled to create a national consciousness at the turn of the century, Magda searched to reconstruct her identity.

*Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) [henceforth WB] depicts the dynamics of contemporary South African life. Apart from continuing to echo certain elements of Afrikaner discourse, Coetzee has more interest in as a specific issue looming over South African politics. Coetzee believes that the nature of oppression has marginalized the assemblies who are regularly regarded as, ‘others’. “Othering is a way of defining and securing one’s own positive identity through the stigmatization of another” (Clearwater, 2010, p. 1).



*Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) [henceforth LTMK] reflects and shares national unease concern the upcoming direction of South Africa. It symbolizes the coming of civilization and its effects which offer hope, yet pain and oppression follows thereafter. The articulation suggests that, “[F]unctional inarticulacy, in the South African context, is a ready-made mark of racial identification” (Wright, 1992, p. 442). Michael K is one of the marginal groups in society, through his racial identity, or through his physical deformity. *Life and Times of Michael K* also highlights a realism that has been created through correspondence between the preparation of the novel and the time era and South Africa in the initial 1980s. Michael K accompanies with time indicators, containing traffic rules, jail campsites, gangs assaults and emergencies, altogether indicating that the country has slipped South Africa into a civilian conflict, which several ideas were







forthcoming in the initial 1980s. Coetzee asserts that “[w]e are fighting this war so that minorities will have a say in their destinies” (LTMK, 1983, p.157).

*Foe* (1986) begins with a record of Susan's association with Foe and her battle to keep up a control of her tale. Susan focuses on the fact that Friday is an inferior native who has been denied all avenues of self-expression. Foe's individual identity that possesses unique features is still not recognized and pushed to the margins. Power of silence has been existed in the novel, which represents marginal identity. Susan Barton tells Foe that, “My lungs, my heart, my head were full of black smoke” (Foe, 1986, p. 118).



*Age of Iron* (1990) [henceforth AI] presents a vivid picture of the theme of self-identity and self-exploration that shows the apartheid society in South Africa. It illustrates the social and political disaster unfurling in a nation torn, separated by prejudice and viciousness. The fiction also explores the possibility of promoting and defining South African society. Coetzee's personal and communal worlds interfere in this appalling parable that “recounts in graphic detail both the horrors of living under apartheid and the shame of living with it” (AI, 1990, p. 192).

The power and potential of Coetzee create realities through fiction that draw inspiration of the cruelty and oppression in the society where he lives. As pointed out, the use of force and violence in the novels stem from the relationship imposed on each individual in the novels. Characters in Coetzee's novels resist by reconstructing their





identity. Although there is limited evidence regarding the collective actions of South Africans in resisting their oppressors, it is clearly mentioned in the selected novels, namely the identity and the resistance. However, this study determines the essence of reconstructing identity by using the medium of resistance.

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

This study aimed at exploring the idea of identity reconstruction through resistance in South Africa through the selected novels by Coetzee. They mainly highlighted Coetzee's capabilities of developing and achieving the true sense of identity by using the medium of resistance. The study, therefore, intended to represent a new experienced voice in reconstructing South Africans' identity that has been marginalized. It pinpointed the themes of the novels and particularly events that characters represented to capture the core concept of identity reconstruction through resistance in the selected works of Coetzee. Thus, identity reconstruction facilitates the true process of identity reformation. The basic issue of identity reconstruction is to be widely recognized in that capacity. An absence of gathering acknowledgment may well prompt default in individual confidence and a self-definition. An absence of acknowledgment in this sense can make depression of one's character.

In this regard, Hall (2001) argued that identity "is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person and/or





group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation” (p. 2). Recognition further can be referred to as “an ethical obligation to extend a sort of moral cognizance to persons who share worldviews deeply different from our own” (Appadurai, 2004, p. 62). Thus, the identity evolves through the influence of the societal surroundings of the person. However, the sense of self-identity can be based solely on our social environment in ways of interaction in the context, and being individuals from some social gatherings before we consider ourselves capable of proving the identity (Appadurai, 2004).

People have suffered their identity loss in South Africa under the spotlight of the political arena imposed on them by the colonizers. So, the analysis of Coetzee’s selected novels investigates and examines the experience of social, cultural, political and personal life to reconstruct and reform the identity through resistance in South Africa.

Postcolonial literature recreates the identity that has been marginalized and lost. It shows the sufferings and pains of the colonized and colonizers through changeable relations such as, “the changed and the changer, the One and the Other, with these roles being continuously traded between the two sides” (Kambyzellis, 1997, p. 1). Understanding the emerging conditions in South Africa, it focuses on the postcolonial literature which is utilized to help contentions for reconstructing South Africans’ identity.

For this concern, the research study has a fundamental aim-ahead to figure out the awareness movement in the postcolonial fictions in a term of identity assertion and the



quest for the decolonized conception of the racial segregations and discriminations in Africa. Thus, this research concentrated primarily on the idea of identity reconstruction through resistance in South Africa. In other words, J. M. Coetzee's selected novels, aforesaid, aimed to achieve the main objectives of the study.

#### **1.4 Research Objectives**

1. To examine the impact of colonialism on the black South Africans identity based on the selected texts by J.M. Coetzee.
2. To analyse how Coetzee portrayed the idea of resistance by black South Africans through his fictional characters in the selected works.
3. To identify the idea of identity reconstruction by black South Africans in Coetzee's selected novels

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

1. What is the impact of colonialism on the black South Africans identity based on the selected texts by J.M. Coetzee?
2. How does Coetzee portray the idea of resistance by black South Africans through his fictional characters in the selected works?



3. How is the idea of identity reconstruction by black South Africans portrayed in Coetzee's selected novels?

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study aimed at exploring the significance of identity reconstruction through resistance. It provides an understanding of identity in South Africa that has been marginalized because of racism, subjugation and oppression. This is done through the depiction of characters' acts and actions as contained in Coetzee's selected novels that reflect the way of the peoples' life in South Africa who have lived under the umbrella of



This study has provided an overview of South Africa by investigating what happened in South Africa during the apartheid time. Some imaginations have shed light on the reality of the South Africa, which has a distinctive cultural heritage and a distinct past. This research illuminates a continuous pursuit of the traditional opposition between these racial categories since the emergence of colonialism wide-reaching. The white mind subjugated abundant different methodologies, including religion and education, to keep Africans away from their rich cultural heritage, to build separation between persons and society and to plan strategies. By that time, literature was written in English that practiced dominance over other literature. In South Africa, in consequence of colonialism, blacks were suppressed and marginalized by whites and became inextricably linked to the





exploitation of people who are black. South Africa was an enjoyment garden for the colonizers and a silent graveyard for the colonized. The true history of South Africa was obliterating by colonialism and in its stead the white rewrote history which was based on their perspectives.

In this study, Coetzee used the novels to put a picture of the situation in South Africa at time of the apartheid and therefore enlighten readers as well as create a sense of awareness for reconstructing identity by rejecting the colonial injustice.

### 1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study



The focus of this study was centrally on the idea of identity reconstruction through resistance in the selected novels of Coetzee. It identified the stated objectives in addressing the research questions that would benefit the society in South Africa. Clearly, the comprehension of identity reconstruction in South Africa can be explained to the extent that resolve the research problem proposed. In this research, Coetzee's selected novels *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), *Foe* (1986) and *Age of Iron* (1990), were chosen to solve the research problems. To enhance the resolution of the research problem, data will be collected from various relevant sources, including journals, books and academic writings.





The scope of this research highlighted the themes of the novels and particularly events that characters represented to capture the core concept of identity reconstruction through resistance in the selected works of Coetzee.

## 1.8 Operational Definitions

### 1.8.1. Identity

Identity is the way in which personality is analysed by investigating the manners in which individuals recount tales about themselves (Smith & Watson, 2010). Barker (2003) pointed out that the importance of identity in the specialty of social scholarships must be viewed in two perspectives; self-identity comprises of the manner in which one considers oneself, while social identity is related to the group that one thinks he or she belongs to. Identity is the social attendance as well as the individual assertion in the social circles and in the universal challenges which impose on the mankind to give up on his/her rights, values, culture, religion, language and any right as a human being. Therefore, South African peoples' identity is inextricably linked to this research which discusses the concept of reconstruction of identity that has been marginalized by colonialism in South Africa.



### 1.8.2. Resistance

The Postcolonial resistance idea gives a primary outline of the critical scheme of post-colonialism. Resistance is a frequent exhortation and at least hidden object of much postcolonial criticism and theory, mainly in terms of the study in failing or postponement of freedom in South Africa. The anxiety of resistance purposes as an amorphous concept in postcolonial readings, recognizing a varied range of manners, practices, and involvements of the struggle rebellion of supremacy (Jefferess, 2008).

Resistance is defined as the struggle for liberation which is often understood as liberation from the occupier or as resistance to censorship and oppression (Mzali, 2012).

The term 'Resistance' is used in the study as a tool by which black South Africans resist the colonialism and the ideology of apartheid that deprived them of their real identity. Coetzee highlighted the sufferings and sorrows of black South Africans through his selected novels in this research, rejecting all sorts of oppression and dehumanization they were subjected to under the oppressive regime which had distorted their identity.

Definitely, throughout colonialism and apartheid, the black South Africans led by freedom-leaders resisted the unequal supremacist treatment suffered by the whites. Despite the fact that there was strong, relentless resistance from the awfulness/dread activities did and arrangements forced by whites as consequent reactions, the 1970s was considered as the time of general opposition of politically-sanctioned racial segregation by South Africans. "Most of us have two lives. The life we live and the unlive life



within us. Between the two stands resistance” (Pressfield, 2002, p. x). In this study, resistance was enhanced and supported South African people to reconstruct their marginalized identity.

### 1.8.3. Colonialism

Colonialism is a type of mastery and the control of an individual or group over the region or conduct of different people or gatherings. Therefore, post-colonialism refers to “after colonialism” or “after-independence” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989, p. 12).

Colonialism indicates the general imperialist policy, particularly Western countries from the sixteenth century onwards to reflect a repressive attitude that is still present, albeit in different institutional forms.

Therefore, in South Africa, colonialism is a form of domination in which political, racial, economic and cultural issues are imposed on colonized people through exploitation, degradation and torture. British colonizers exploited their position and imperialist power to destroy the colonized traditions and culture. The term ‘post-colonialism’ has come into existence after colonialism to describe the postcolonial period. Thus, the study focuses on reconstructing identity of South African people through their rejection and resistance to colonialism and apartheid.



### 1.8.4 Apartheid

Apartheid is a system of racial separation, and systematic use of passes to control the movement of black South African during the years of national rule (Alexander & Chan, 2004). Apartheid is an Afrikaans term which means ‘parting or separation’. It is assumed to be the certain racial-social philosophy established in South Africa between 1948 and 1949. It led to the political and economic judgment which separated Black, Coloured (mixed race), Indian, and White South Africans (Hart, 2002).

## 1.9 Summary



The identity reconstruction through resistance in Coetzee’s selected novels stems from a personal account of the events and conditions surrounding it in South Africa during the apartheid era. Through his clear writing in the selected novels, he depicted the suffering and pains of black South Africans who were subjected to oppression under the colonial rule of that time. Coetzee was able to stir up a lot of controversy and ideas as well as drew emotional and political responses from many readers and critics alike. Although there are many characters and symbols, as well as identities of stories in novels, these identities are fairly clear in relation to their actions that contributed to the themes of novels. With regard to the situation in South Africa, it focuses on the racial conflicts and power struggles between the local population and the imperialist colonial masters.





As such, the characters in the selected novels resisted the dominant colonial role that marginalized their identity and thus reflected the lives of the blacks of South Africa, who had been denied their identity. While some characters were able to do so, such as the barbarian girl and Michael K, others struggled in the hope of freedom. Much of Coetzee's literary works revolve around the influence of colonialism, especially in the selected novels, the ability of characters to reconstruct an identity through resistance the colonizers.

