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The Concept of 'Passing' as a Critical Entryway and Threshold Concept into Decolonising the South African FET English Literature Curriculum

By

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September 2022

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A thesis submitted to the School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand in fulfilment of the degree of Master in Education.

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There are decades when nothing happens.

There are weeks where decades happen.

When I started this thesis, I could hardly have imagined that Vladimir Lenin's words describing the Bolshevik Revolution (which lasted a good twenty years) could be applied to my own masters dissertation; but here we are. Regardless of the figurative decades, I remain grateful for every literal minute.

To Dr Grant Andrews: the greatest teacher I have ever known. You gave me the courage to write about things that matter, and the ability to enjoy every part of that process. Working with you these past few years has been a privilege, and I am so grateful for this journey. You are *always* available, *endlessly* patient, optimistic and kind. Thank you for being my supervisor and becoming my *friend*.

To Steve: Your support these last couple of months (years) has saved me. I am forever grateful. Please consider doing your second PhD in English Literature Education.

To Mom and Dad: Thank you. My love for stories and books was something you cultivated in me from an early age, and I am grateful. To you, J.K Rowling, J.R.R, Tolkien, Terry Brooks and Sarah J Maas.

I will finish with this quote, because even after all these years there has always been something about Bilbo Baggins that has resonated with me, *and,* because I believe that all great stories should begin with the following ten words:

In a hole in the ground

there lived a Hobbit.

- J.R.R Tolkien

Abstract

This thesis proposes using the concept of passing as a critical intervention into the FET English literature curriculum in South African schools. It argues that passing is an ideal threshold concept for learners because of its relevancy to the South African context and how it illustrates the mutability of human identity. This work adopts a broader definition of passing to also include forms of identity dissociation; in particular, it argues that the concept of passing can illuminate the fluidity of identity, where identities that were once seen as fixed (for example, racial, gender or religious identities) are now able to be consciously altered by individuals. The concept of passing, here, is a powerful tool that allows learners to critically reflect on their own identities, and could offer them entryways into texts that might have seemed unrelatable to their lives or contexts.

In this study, a critical literacy approach to teaching literature in South African English classrooms will be explored through the use of critical literacy theory, culturally relevant pedagogy, a pedagogy of discomfort and decolonial theory. These four theories will be used to analyse F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Zoë Wicomb's *Playing in the Light* to build a more socially conscious framework for teaching literature in FET classrooms. The proposed framework can be used to develop learners' critical engagement with texts and can culturally interpellate black, working-class South African learners who feel that they cannot relate to English set-works.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Over 98 per cent of South African children have access to at least primary education, and despite our *almost* universal access to education, and the amount of money the South African government has spent on trying to provide quality education, the quality remains poor and the pass rate is still worrying. Despite the budgetary commitments by government, there still seems to be a shortage of resources and South African education is in a state of crisis (Modisaotsile, 2012).

In 2019, 790 405 South African matriculants sat down to write their final year examinations, and of these matriculants, only 81.3% passed. While this is a figure that has increased over the last 10 years, the quality of South African education is of a low standard. The World Economic Forum in 2017 placed South African education in 114th place out of 137 countries (Bloomberg, 2020).

There has been a long-established debate in South African education about the lack of adequate resources and an appropriate educational approach needed to improve our educational system. However, despite the government's efforts to eradicate these issues with the relevant funding, our education system has demonstrated time and time again an inability to "translate resources into results" (Jansen and Spaull, 2019, p. 358).

According to Jansen and Spaull (2019):

> South Africa has made significant shifts in education spending as evident in global indicators percentage of GDP (about 7%) and proportion of national expenditure (around 20%) or in direct, correct funding measures such as the equity Share Formula (the education component) and the School Fee Exemption policy […] And yet, as one study after another has demonstrated, there is a persistent incapacity of the system to translate resources into results. (p. 358)

Part of the problem in the South African education system is that teaching approaches and curriculum content might not be relevant or tailored to the majority of learners in the South African setting, and scholars like Aslam Fataar have argued that in order to enact "pedagogical justice" in South Africa, educators need to be cognisant of "cultural resistance displayed by disadvantaged students towards their

schooling which they view as being against their class-cultural interests" (Fataar 2012, p. 52). While there are a number of factors that contribute to South Africa's less than satisfactory pass rate, such as poverty, a lack of resources, poor management and inadequate teacher training, this thesis will focus primarily on English literature classrooms and how the content of literature classrooms, if made relevant to the vast majority of learners through critical literacy practices, could contribute to greater student investment in their learning through culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017), and enact a form of "pedagogic justice" (Fataar, 2012, p. 52) in English literature education. This involves including more relevant texts and teaching these texts in ways that are conscious of the "class-cultural interests" of learners. While this might not address all of the issues in South African education, this thesis argues that it can begin to make learning more relevant to learners' lived experiences and address some of the ways that mainstream public school English literature education has excluded and alienated South African learners (Romylos, 2018; Robinson, 2015).

Based on this background, this thesis proposes employing the concept of passing as a critical intervention into FET English literature education in South African schools. According to Ginsberg (1996), 'passing' or 'racial passing' happens when an individual who classifies as being a part of a particular racial group is accepted or 'passes' as a member of another more 'desirable' hegemonic racial group. This term has been used predominantly in America to describe mixed-race people who have lighter skin and accents that 'sound white' and could be said to 'pass for white'. This act of 'passing for white' gives people access to more power and privileges in that they are now able to escape some of the legal and social restrictions imposed on their original identities as either mixed-race or black.

While racial passing also took place in South Africa under apartheid, this thesis adopts a broader definition of passing to also include forms of identity dissociation and how people adopt identities that they see as more beneficial to them. Passing has, for example, also been applied to the LGBTQ+ community who can "pass as straight", "pass as cisgender" or other forms of passing that allow people to avoid potential discrimination or harm (Rocco & Gallagher, 2006). In some of the novels discussed in this thesis, there are also examples of religious "passing", where characters associate with hegemonic values or religious identities – at times in ways

that are hypocritical – in order to gain power in certain social settings. This thesis will argue that the concept of passing can illuminate the fluidity of identity, where identities that were once reified (for example, racial identities, gender identities or religious identities), are now able to be transformed and even slipped in and out of. The concept could be a powerful tool to allow learners in schools to critically reflect on their own identities and could offer them critical entryways into texts that might have seemed unrelatable to their lives. Through critical discourse analysis of four novels, this thesis will show how teaching the concept of passing can not only open new avenues into discussing these texts in schools, but also be a method of working towards decolonising South African English education.

1.2 Research questions

The main research questions for this study are:

1. How can the concept of passing act as a threshold concept into more critical engagement with identities represented in literature in South African classrooms?
2. How do we teach literary texts, whether they are Western or African in a way that is culturally sustaining, while being cognisant of the colonial heritage of English in South Africa?
3. How can we transform classroom strategies through culturally relevant pedagogy to promote critical literacy and social awareness in learners?
4. Can the intertextuality between Western and African literature be used in ways that promote critical engagement with social issues, particularly those prevalent in a post-colonial society?

1.3 Motivation for the study

In South Africa, there has been much debate about the decolonisation of our curriculum. While this thesis intends to support this decolonial research thrust, it recognises the place of Western literature in a South African curriculum, and intends to introduce interventions into teaching Western literature in ways that can challenge

Western hegemony and that are culturally sustaining in South African classrooms. Two texts, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953) will be analysed in relation to the concept of passing, as these texts are currently taught in many South African schools at the FET phase. However, transformation of the curriculum will also need to take place. For this reason, this thesis will use the lens of passing to explore an African novel, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, as well as proposing how a South African text that directly deals with passing, *Playing in the Light* by Zoë Wicomb (2006), could be introduced to the South African curriculum with a teaching approach focused on the strategies of passing in the novel. The thesis will also look at approaches and classroom strategies to ensure that Western and African literature are taught in ways that develop critical literacy, and where social awareness is enhanced and content is culturally sustaining. A particular focus in this thesis will be placed on issues of race and social class, as two issues that are particularly important in the racially unequal South African society where race and class are still strongly correlated, with a wealthier white minority and a black majority where many are still economically disadvantaged in the country.

The language classroom is particularly important in reproducing or challenging social discourses that might link to systems of power in society. According to Zaidi et al (2016):

> Language, which is an integral part of hegemony, exercises power. Researchers use the word "discourse" to describe ways in which culturally embedded use of language is a social practice, determined by and determining other social practices and how genres and topics of language in public use, exercise power. (p. 2)

According to Crippen (2012), literature used in any educational system should work to promote an appreciation of the cultural heritage in that setting, as well as those of other settings. While many works of literature depict African culture and are sensitive and responsive to the diversity of the South African society, these works, however, are not often or primarily used in government schools. Most of the literature used in government schools is taught in limiting ways and teachers are not equipped to teach it in culturally responsive or sustaining ways (see Berkman, 2019). To mention a few, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* have been prescribed in many South African government schools as English matriculation

set-works. These works of literature need to be taught in ways that address and highlight themes that relate to the South African context, including themes that centre on discrimination, gender-based violence and racism, in order to make the literature culturally relevant and to create awareness in learners of social issues to transform discourses and bring about social change (Janks, 2003).

Racial tensions and racist ideologies are apparent in these novels and might be overlooked in classrooms to focus on a range of other themes. For example, in *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald addresses both eugenics and Nordicism. Nordicism is an ideology that maintains that people of Nordic ancestry (Northwest Europe) are of a superior bloodline and are under heavy threat of extinction (Brown, 2004). In the novel, a very wealthy and aggressive character, Tom Buchanan, openly supports Nordicism and espouses a fictional book called *The Rise of the Coloured Empire* which plays on Lothrop Stoddard's real text *The Rising Tide of Colour: The Threat Against White-World Supremacy* published in 1920. Tom suggests that by not reading this book, the white race may become "utterly submerged" (Fitzgerald, 1925). Although Tom is constructed as an unrelatable character who is 'out of touch', the world is perceived through Nick Carraway's eyes and "even as he admits his disdain for Tom's opinions, however, Nick maintains his silence, never challenging or questioning Tom's dubious convictions" (Brown, 2004. p. 55).

Another example of a text that has been frequently prescribed in South African schools is Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* There are instances in the play where women are marginalised or portrayed through patriarchal stereotypes. Lady Macbeth's character internalises patriarchy and believes the only way for her to persuade her husband to kill the king, is for her to rid herself of all that makes her feminine. Even the act of persuasion on her part is framed as inherently evil and out of character for a woman, as a woman should not be able to wield *so much,* if any, power over her husband. The reproduction of these stereotypes in understandings of the text, and its focus on European history over African history, can be seen as incongruent with the values codified in the South African constitution, which guarantees equality and non-discrimination. Despite this, these texts are still prescribed and viewed as integral to English literature education in South Africa (Berkman, 2019), often without employing decolonial or critical literacy approaches.

Educators often find it easier to teach for plot, rather than for social and cultural relevance (Taylor, 2008). If educators are encouraged to both address and challenge false discourses of class and race found in Western set-work books, the teaching of these texts could be made more culturally sustaining and contextually relevant. For this reason, it would be illogical to suggest that European literature be removed from the South African curriculum; when taught correctly, any literature can be unpacked in such a way that it will be made relevant and educational, no matter the setting. Robinson (2015) notes the problem with centring "canonical" texts in South African settings and teaching these texts from Eurocentric approaches:

> [T]here is a sense that Englishness is one thing, rather than many. There is no acknowledgement of class differences, regional interests, gender issues, religious variances, or other aspects of sub-cultures within a broad understanding of English society. This attitude is not helpful in South Africa, with its differences based on language variation, religion, race, class, and region. (p. 127)

Regrettably, in many GDE schools, circumstances have forced teachers to continue with the same themes that have been used for years when teaching these texts, including the themes of the American Dream or the symbolic meaning behind colours which have been explored *ad nauseam* in *The Great Gatsby* (Haibing, 2015). These themes often fail to address elements of social class, gender, and blatant racism that are present in the texts, to mention a few issues more relevant to the South African context.

What is fundamentally lacking in this instance is a more reflective approach to South African post-apartheid English literature education. A critical reflective approach allows us to identify and closely examine our practices in an effort to improve them (Ossa Parra et al., 2014). Critical literacy education, according to Janks (2014), centres on the role that language plays as a "social practice" and "examines the role played by text and discourse in maintaining or transforming these [social] orders" (p. 349). Knowing that these practices can be improved, and questioning ideas that are often taken for granted, opens up possibilities for social action (Janks, 2014).

Hilary Janks is a vocal advocate of critical literacy in South African schools and was instrumental in including critical literacy in the post-apartheid curriculum; moreover,

she has written at length about how important it is to foster critical thinking and anti-racist thinking in South Africa.

According to Janks (2003):

> Part of the work of critical literacy is to make these workings of power visible, to denaturalise 'common sense' assumptions and to reveal them as constructed representations of the social order, serving the interests of some at the expense of others. Critical literacy within this discourse is seen as an emancipatory project in which subordinated groups are rescued from false consciousness. (p. 1)

A false consciousness, according to Neville et al (2005), "reflects an internalized, culturally sanctioned belief that encourages individuals in a stratified society to adopt the viewpoint of those in power. Acceptance of the dominant viewpoint, in turn, serves to keep minorities in a subjugated position by justifying their oppression and thus encouraging inertia" (p. 31). This is why Janks (2003) argues that what needs to be developed in all spheres of education is a critical consciousness in learners.

According to Zaidi et al (2016), having a critical consciousness indicates some level of awareness of social inequalities and how they are created. Zaidi et al (2016) build on Paulo Freire's explanation in which he describes having a critical consciousness as having an "in-depth and reflective understanding of the world, which takes account of social relationships and power dynamics" (p. 1). Developing this consciousness at the school level requires instructional design and intentionally reflective and critical teaching practices. Based on this framework, a strong foundation for critical social engagement can be developed in the English literature classroom through critical literacy.

If teachers are to adopt such an approach, they need to have a strong understanding of current social issues and the working of discourses within texts that might reproduce power hierarchies, and how to connect these ideas with their learners' experiences of the world. Janks (2014) recommends that teachers explore the "problematic" in texts, and consider how the problematic is constructed by careful analysis of design choices and people's behaviour, and use this as the basis for teaching critically. The problematic might include reified concepts of race, class and gender identities that reproduce oppressive ideologies. For this reason, critical tools, like the concept of passing proposed in this thesis, can allow for learners to gain a

greater understanding of how identities are socially constructed, and thus our ideas of hegemonic identities can be transformed both in classrooms and in societies at large.

Teaching critical literacy allows for more than just teaching for plot or irrelevant themes; instead, it makes room for a transformative process to unfold, whereby learners are taught to view the world with a more critical lens, refuting false notions of class and race and striving to bring to the fore the underlying mechanisms which work to protect and reproduce false consciousness (Ferreira, 2019).

This thesis will explore Western and African texts that are currently taught in South African schools and consider pedagogical approaches to teaching these texts from a critical literacy perspective in a way that is culturally relevant and culturally sustaining. Paris and Alim (2017) describe culturally sustaining pedagogy as "seek[ing] to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literature, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation" (p. 1). Thus, hegemonic or dominant cultures are not the sole focus of curricula, but diverse voices and perspectives are respected and represented in school settings and through teaching approaches.

Culturally sustaining pedagogy and critical literacy approaches will form the basis of this thesis. The selected texts will be analysed using critical discourse analysis, primarily based on the concept of passing as it is evident in these texts, but also more broadly challenging how identities are represented in the texts. Following this, teaching approaches and relevant classroom activities and questions will be discussed in order to offer a framework for teaching English literature in South African classrooms in ways that are culturally relevant, engaging and that promote critical literacy.

1.4 Outline of the study and chapter overview

This thesis argues that schools need to place strong emphasis on promoting critical thinking and critical literacy in English literature classrooms, and that literature should be taught in a way that is culturally sustaining and relevant to South African learners and their contexts. The aim of this study is to discuss methods of teaching that promote critical literacy in learners and awareness around social issues and to

develop a critical consciousness when dealing with prescribed literature, especially literature that might reinforce oppressive ideologies around race and class. The concept of passing is used throughout to demonstrate how it can function as a threshold concept for learners in being more critical of identities and of challenging the oppressive ideologies they encounter in texts and societies broadly.

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter has focused on the need for critical literacy in South African literature classrooms in order for learners to develop a critical consciousness and awareness of social issues that are relevant to their lives. The chapter introduced the study, the background and motivation, and described the research questions and focus of the thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, an extensive review of literature is presented to illustrate how important it is for learners and educators alike to develop critical literacy strategies that work to challenge dominant ideologies found in English literature. Recent approaches to teaching critical literacy are discussed, and relevant factors in the South African educational setting are outlined. The literature review also considers the place of English literature in South Africa, and the imperative to Africanise and decolonise education.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This chapter covers the methodology used in the study and expounds on the theories of culturally relevant pedagogies and critical literacy in more detail. The chapter begins with the theoretical framework which outlines the theories that will be used to analyse the literature and to provide suggestions for how it can be taught through a critical lens. These theories are decolonial theory, a pedagogy of discomfort, culturally relevant pedagogy and critical literacy theory.

Chapter 4: Western Literature in South African English Classrooms: A Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Literacy Approach

This chapter illustrates how Western literature, namely F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, can be enhanced through a focus on multiple forms of passing. Once this has been explored, Chapter 6 will discuss strategies for teaching the texts in ways that culturally interpellates learners and how, by using the above theories, educators can encourage learners to think more critically about the way ideas or characters have been represented and what it may mean for learners.

Chapter 5: African Literature in South African English Classrooms: A Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Literacy Approach

This chapter demonstrates how African literature, namely Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Zoë Wicomb's *Playing in The Light*, can be used as a literary bridge to make subsequent Western texts culturally relevant by exposing similar themes. The portrayal of various identities is the main area of study here, including questions of class and race. Additionally, critical literacy will be important in working to challenge and disentangle false notions of class and race found in these setworks.

Chapter 6: A Culturally Sustaining Critical Literacy Framework for English Literature

Once the ideological underpinnings and social practices have been explored in the above-mentioned texts, this chapter will develop a critical framework, using culturally relevant pedagogy, critical literacy theory, a pedagogy of discomfort and decolonial theory. These theories will be used to demonstrate how a more critical and socially sensitive approach can be applied to teaching the four texts in the South African FET school context. The findings from the previous chapters will be consolidated in the framework outlined in this chapter. The framework will consist of lesson plans which demonstrate how *Purple Hibiscus* and *Playing in The Light* can serve as introductory texts to teach *The Crucible* and *The Great Gatsby* respectively. This will allow for intertextuality to be explored between seemingly disparate texts, promoting a deeper and more critical understanding.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The concluding chapter will explore the limitations of this study and deliver recommendations for future research in this area.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Bantu education and Marxist theory

Theorists like Fanon have pointed out the absurdity of the South African racist systems, the legacy of which still lingers today. Fanon explains in a powerful quote: "What is South Africa? A boiler into which thirteen million blacks are clubbed and penned in by two and a half million whites" (Fanon, 1986, p. 87). In terms of the South African context, it is particularly unusual that the marginalised students across the country are in fact the majority. This is why students' determination in tertiary institutions to have the curriculum decolonised is a bold expression of their resistance to Westernised traditions of knowledge "that are predicated on the embodied culture of whiteness" (Janks & Spaull, 2019, p. 232).

As this study has a major focus on social class and its intersections with race in South Africa, it is important to recognise the roots of critical pedagogy in Marxist theory and to outline relevant concepts which influenced education theorists like Freire and Janks. While this study acknowledges the important contribution of a broad range of Marxist thought in the foundations of radical pedagogical approaches, only elements of Marxist theory that are relevant to this study will be explained in detail, and a close and detailed explanation of Marxist theory goes beyond the scope of this study. Thus, ideas of hegemony and class consciousness will be the two central concepts outlined, especially the way that these ideas have been adopted in educational theories like critical pedagogy and critical literacy.

According to neo-Marxist theories on class and social hierarchies, the nature of a capitalist society allows wealthy owners of the means of production to exploit the much larger working class, as production functions through hierarchical divisions of labour. Essentially, the working class (proletariat) own nothing but their own "labour power", and this labour is what is used to provide for the labourers' physical needs (Marx, 1983). The South African society, through the lens of Marxist theory, could be seen as exploiting the labour of the working class, for the benefit of the political and economic elite. In contemporary South Africa, similar patterns of exploitation are becoming evident, especially in the case of the economic elite being predominantly white and depending heavily on cheap black labour to maintain their privileged status (Southall, 2006).

Over time, the working class begin to develop a sort of “dependency” on these production owners (or the Bourgeoisie, in Marx’s terms), and it is this very dependency that allows production owners to establish cultural values, norms and ideologies that the labourer is forced to accept (Marx, 1983).

Without a critical consciousness, the labourer, as the exploited party, internalises these belief systems and enacts them, not recognising that he or she is producing and reproducing a dependency that reinforces their exploitation and oppression. Essentially, these bourgeoisie values are “ideologies which create a false consciousness, dominate society and become the foundation for social order” (Barteck & Mulin, 1995). According to Bowles and Gintis (1976), the normalisation of the bourgeoisie’s values allows for class discrimination and class domination. Such belief systems permeate societies and appear in all spheres of life including education. The only way to challenge this, Marx contends, is to become conscious of dominant ideologies and the effects they have on social relations. This is critical consciousness that allows for social change (Marx, 1983).

According to Zaidi et al (2016):

> Acquiring such a critical consciousness and reflective ability is not easy, because not every member of society has equal access to money, status, knowledge, information or even public discourse and communication. Those with the best access, may be so influential that they strongly inform what less privileged people perceive as reality; they enshrine what Gramsci described as “the only sensible worldview” into laws, rules, norms and habits. This results in hegemony, whereby the most powerful members of society determine what is ‘real’ within a culture. (p. 2).

In the case of the South African context, the apartheid system bears a striking resemblance to the relationship Karl Marx describes between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Christie and Collins (1982) maintain that, although there were many policies employed by whites to separate themselves from black people in South Africa, this was not wholly due to race; white people wanted “cheap black labour,” and this exploitative drive ultimately informed education policy under apartheid in ways that purposely distanced black learners from critical consciousness and many forms of knowledge, including the disparaging of indigenous languages and knowledge systems in the education system.

A quote from apartheid architect Hendrik Verwoerd (1954) demonstrates this underlying drive informing apartheid:

> My department's policy is that education should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society… the Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open. For that reason, it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he is not allowed to graze. (Verwoerd, 1954, n.p)

Bantu Education had been designed to produce and reproduce labourers that could provide white people with cheap black labour, much like the relationship Marx described between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Educational structures during apartheid perpetuated false notions of race, which society, in turn, internalised and adopted. These ideologies reified the concept of “race” and predetermined the so-called “rightful work” of black workers, and the apartheid government worked relentlessly to make sure the education system served these purposes and perpetuated racist ideologies. The schooling system, in this case, is viewed as a “reproductive mechanism” which the bourgeoisie employs to both maintain and perpetuate false notions about race, knowledge and black identities (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Arguably, the way certain forms of literature are taught in the post-apartheid setting could perpetuate these ideas if a critical literacy approach is not adopted. While critical literacy was adopted in early educational policy, it has since been side-lined in the South African education system (Ferreira, 2019). Even with the inclusion of more African and South African literature, these texts might not be approached in a way that can speak to the current South African context, or in ways that can untangle oppressive discourses of race, class and gender (Ferreira, 2019). Additionally, Western texts are still given dominance in the South African educational setting (Robinson, 2015), which could legitimise these texts as more valuable forms of knowledge and thus reproduce harmful ideologies. It thus becomes necessary to

consider how these texts can be taught differently to encourage critical literacy and critical consciousness in South African learners.

2.2 Education and the working-class struggle for empowerment

According to Bernstein (1971), the class system on its own cannot be held liable for the underachievement of working-class learners, but rather, the nature of schooling should be interrogated in unequal societies. While Bernstein's theories are in some ways dated, these theories can be seen as precursors to critical literacy theories, and provide a useful foundation for exploring issues of social class and language in education, central foci of this thesis. Thus, Bernstein's theories will be explored in the following section as they have informed many contemporary theorists.

According to Bernstein, the nature of knowledge employed in schools produces variances in achievement between the working-class child and middle-class child. When the working-class learner enters the schooling system they do so at a complete disadvantage; they enter the system with a "restricted language code" (Bernstein, 1971). This language code is highly limited in the sense that it is largely colloquial and vernacular, and the learner is not inculcated in the academic discourses to which middle-class learners have had much greater access. The middle-class child, however, enters the schooling system with a far more elaborate code; it is elaborate in the sense that it allows for a more developed and creative sense of expression, with a range of linguistic alternatives.

Not only are middle-class learners able to use different types of language, but the dominant language is usually one that culturally interpellates them. They are the ones who are given agency and are given full humanity through the codes that are used, whereas those from working-class backgrounds are often placed in positions of disempowerment even through the language and texts that they are affronted by in the school system (Leonardo, 2004). Bernstein (1971) claims that upon his analyses of knowledge used in schools, it became clear that the majority of knowledge catered solely for the middle-class child. Ultimately, the education system uses and promotes the elaborated code which puts middle-class children at an advantage over their working-class classmates. This is an inequality that the school cannot overcome by acting in isolation; it is a societal issue. The nature of

knowledge and schooling itself needs to change if it is to accommodate the working-class child as well. In the South African setting, where race and linguistic diversity intersect strongly with class, these issues are compounded, and the many indigenous languages are marginalised in schooling systems. The dominance of English in schooling thus requires teachers to be conscious of the ways that learners are excluded by the dominant discourses and texts that they encounter.

In a 2007 study on identity and community funds of knowledge undertaken by Ferreira and Janks, art students were instructed to engage with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process, in order to judge its effects for themselves. The purpose of this study was to place black students at the centre of the curriculum, understanding that they would have access to "privileged knowledge" as they would have greater access to victims of apartheid's exploitative systems and violence in their communities, and be able to express this knowledge through their stories. This study gave students who are normally disempowered in the school curriculum with its elaborated code, access to a code that students of the hegemonic group would be unfamiliar with, and black students, knowing more about the TRC and its effects, were now able to write themselves into the curriculum.

According to Ferreira and Janks (2007) this study "challenged the hegemony of traditional curriculum content and disrupted power and knowledge relations. [The] approach works with diversity as a productive resource for transforming the power or knowledge configuration of the curriculum" (p. 81). This approach runs counter to dominant educational approaches in South Africa where Western knowledge forms are more valued (Heleta, 2016). This pedagogical strategy has also informed the current study which has a focus on passing, a concept which the hegemonic group might not be as familiar with in South African schools, and thus this concept can allow for knowledge from diverse groups to be centred and productively employed in the classroom.

The nature of knowledge needs to shift to accommodate both the working- and middle-class learner, and the nature of school needs to work with a code that allows for all students to thrive academically, in this instance referring to the texts selected and the ways these texts are taught. In Ferreira and Janks's (2007) study, they demonstrated a strategy to include "marginalised community funds of knowledge […]

in the shared classroom space." (p. 81). By taking advantage of learners' community funds of knowledge and moving away from 'textbook' versions of history and traditional conceptions of 'valid knowledge' to *real life* engagement with multiple narratives, marginalised students were able to write themselves in the curriculum. These strategies of culturally sustaining pedagogy could be powerful in the literature classroom as well, and the critical literacy work of Ferreira and Janks will be used in formulating approaches to understanding and teaching the selected texts, both in the critical discourse analysis that this study undertakes as well as in developing the pedagogical intervention based on the concept of passing.

2.3 Underachievement in public schools

While it has been noted that the public-school pass rate in South Africa was 81.3%, for the 12 595-private school matriculants who wrote exams set by the Independent Examinations Board (IEB[1]), the pass rate was an exceedingly high 98.8% (Naidoo, 2020).

It is clear that private school learners, those of wealth and means, can navigate the syllabus and the schooling system with more agency, as their access to the 'elaborated code' allows them to achieve better outcomes, as has been described by Bernstein (1971).

In the case of the South African context, the education system works in collaboration with structural and social privileges that wealthy learners have. The IEB curriculum works independently from that of the Department of Basic Education (DoBE) curriculum and works to provide education that can be seen as more relevant to learners within the private school context. IEB schools have the resources and structures to educate along the guidelines of an IEB curriculum; in these schools, students have access to the wealth of information necessary for various education-based tasks (Jansen & Spaull, 2019).

In the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) public-school curriculum, however, the learning outcomes are somewhat similar to that of an IEB curriculum in that

[1] The IEB is an independent assessment body that sets its own curricula and testing system. It has a higher matriculation pass rate, because it is often used in private schools that are well-resourced.

learners are expected to have had the same access to information as any IEB learner would. However, most GDE schools battle financially, are poorly resourced and are unable to employ highly skilled educators (Jansen & Spaull, 2019).

Ultimately, the educational system at present does not cater for these relatively under-resourced schools – disadvantaged learners are expected to pass matric examinations and are held to the same entrance requirements for post-school studies, despite the lack of resources that they face. The curriculum needs to be made relevant in the sense that it needs to cater for the majority of our population, most of whom are unable to access the reservoirs of cultural or social knowledge that would be advantageous in the Eurocentric schooling system that is catering to a middle-class demographic. One of the strategies proposed to address social and cultural inequalities in postcolonial societies is decolonising education.

2.4 Africa at the centre, Europe at the periphery

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is a Kenyan writer and decolonial theorist, who has argued for the need for decolonisation in African countries. What is fundamental to his theory, and resonates strongly with Marxist theory, is the idea that education is the key to material and mental emancipation, and the only way to overcome the false consciousness we bear that privileges Western ways of being. Ngũgĩ explains:

> The biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against that collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. […] It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other people's languages rather than their own. (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986, p. 3).

Since colonial times, African people have been marginalised, exploited for cheap labour and in many countries, used as slaves. The norms, ideologies and even laws that once permitted these mistreatments and gross violations of human rights, have become firmly embedded in the roots of our consciousness, to the point where many have normalised them, even today. Cultural theorist Frantz Fanon conceives of this as colonialism of the mind:

> Whiteness, Fanon asserts, has become a symbol of purity, of Justice, Truth, Virginity. It defines what it means to be civilized, modern and human. That is why the Negro knows nothing of the cost of freedom; when he has fought for Liberty and Justice ... these were always white liberty and white justice; that is, values secreted by his masters. Blackness represents the diametrical opposite: in the collective unconsciousness, it stands for ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality. (Bhaba and Sarder, 2008. p. 13)

This false and deliberately racist consciousness can be recognised as unequivocally discriminatory and resisted through education that emphasises critical literacy. Once a learner's consciousness is aware of the workings of power in shaping their thinking and recognises how their perspectives have been shaped by dominant ideologies, rooted in a racist and exploitative history, only then can education become an emancipatory tool. Education is an important component of challenging oppressive systems through fostering critical literacy.

Ngũgĩ (1986) writes from the African point of view and maintains that our Eurocentric thinking patterns, beliefs and perceptions must be resisted if we are to move forward. Our relationship with the West remains conflicted, as African knowledges are still disparaged and measured by Western standards. Knowledge systems, including in academia and education broadly, are patently Eurocentric, such as the belief that when knowledge is produced in Africa, it can only become truly impactful or legitimate knowledge when it is validated in the West (including academics facing pressure to publish in Western journals according to neo-colonial journal ranking systems).

Countless African academics have left Africa for the West in an effort to produce 'creditable knowledge' (Ngũgĩ, 1986). This may suggest that, despite our efforts to change our thinking patterns, we as Africans do not wholly feel that knowledge production in Africa is as authentic as Western knowledge, and this seems to be reflected in our text choices and ways of teaching in schools. Ultimately, the false consciousness which has allowed us to believe for so many years that rightful work for Africans is exploited cheap labour and not knowledge production, is still very much prevalent, and needs to be challenged.

Ngũgĩ (1986) calls for all Africans to challenge the "centre periphery" relationship they have with the West and demands that Africans destabilise and challenge the old

hierarchies of the centre (the West in this case). There should not be a need to validate our knowledge from Africa through the external Western framework. African literature needs to be resituated and moved to the centre, especially African literature that destabilises the Eurocentric notions of African bodies and psyches as intrinsically linked to cheap labour. This method of needing our knowledge validated by the West threatens our status as African academics, scholars and learners. Additionally, this might be seen to create pedagogies that are not culturally relevant or sustaining, as learners need to unlearn their codes in order to participate in "valid" knowledge production or engage with texts that are seen as valuable (Bernstein, 1971).

2.5 English literature in South African schools

Paulo Freire, a major advocate for critical literacy in schools and educational settings beyond school, explains the importance of critical literacy in a powerful quote:

> [T]eaching cannot be a process of transference of knowledge from the one teaching to the learner. This is the mechanical transference from which results machinelike memorization, which I have already criticized. Critical study correlates with teaching that is equally critical, which necessarily demands a critical way of comprehending and of realizing the reading of the word and that of the world, the reading of text and of context. (Freire, 1997)

Freire identified the role language could play as an emancipatory tool in his literacy programme, which taught adults how to read and write. Through language, he found, one was able to negotiate and make meaning of reality. Essentially, the ultimate liberatory tool for him was being able to go one step further by reading and then writing. Doing so, he claimed, no longer confines us to the limitations of our current concrete reality – reading allows one to experience the world vicariously, and to move out of one's physical reality and into another, making it easier to understand other world views and multiple forms of injustices (Freire, 1996).

According to Gabrielsen et al. (2019), recent national literary policies promote comprehension over creativity. Therefore, there is an increasing need to investigate how literature is taught in the classroom, and what teachers need in order to change the current ways of teaching that stifle critical thinking. As Rosenblatt (2005)

explains, literature in education can extend beyond the teaching of skills, comprehension and content, and instead work towards social change.

Literature can be a powerful site for expanding learners' worldviews and increasing their consciousness of the experiences of others. As Gabrielsen et al. (2019) explain: "Across the world, educational systems invest heavily in the expectation that literary reading in the classroom may teach learners a number of social, human, and cultural values. Active engagement in literary reading has long been considered a form of vicarious experience." Thus, this study will explore how teaching literature through a critical literacy approach can make learners conscious of social issues in the country and inspire them to become active in the transformation of the word and the world, particularly the need for decolonising knowledge and the problematic false consciousness that links blackness to labour and divorces it from valid systems of knowledge. In South African DoBE schools currently, there is a need for critical pedagogies to break down Eurocentric notions that work to devalue African knowledge and to critically engage with African subjects found in English literature (Ferreira, 2019).

For many years, the DoBE has opted for texts written by European and United States authors such as Shakespeare and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Furthermore, the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for FET First Additional Language learners states that novels and short stories are to be used to engage *creatively* with the important cultural and aesthetic elements of prescribed texts. Despite this, CAPS do not seem clearly focused on grappling with current social issues and culturally relevant ways of teaching literature.

According to CAPS (2011) "[s]et work study will introduce learners to the meta-language or technical terms used in literary criticism, e.g., 'plot' and 'character' for novels" (p. 14), a framework which is notably lacking a focus on critical literacy. Ferreira (2019) notes that critical literacy has been de-emphasised in the South African curriculum, despite its strong presence in the early post-apartheid curriculum. The English FAL curriculum shows a lack of critical engagement within the English literature classroom, especially in terms of how the prescribed texts can be used to critically interrogate notions of race, class and gender.

Despite the inclusion of more African and South African literature in the syllabus, the texts may not be taught in ways that challenge dominant ideologies, specifically those that devalue African knowledges and perpetuate ideas of the superiority of whiteness (Ferreira, 2019). Thus, it is vital to consider curriculum changes in English literature within the framework of critical literacy and decolonial thought, and to explore ways of teaching and interpreting these texts that can meet the needs of the South African context (Heleta, 2016). New critical interventions, like the strategy employed in this thesis of using the concept of "passing" to analyse African and Western texts differently, are proposed as ways to develop critical literacy in relation to a broad range of texts, and to make these texts more relevant to South African learners.

Even if a more critical curriculum were to be introduced, research has shown that when complex curricula are introduced into schools, wealthy schools with available teacher capacity and resources are capable of interpreting different concepts in ways that advantage their learners, while the under-resourced schools fall further behind because of incapacity to work with new programmes to the benefit of their learners (Jansen & Spaull, 2019). Thus, critical literacy approaches need to be responsive to the broad South African educational context, which is largely under-resourced and lacking in skills to adapt to curriculum changes.

Many of these fictional works used in schools were produced over one hundred years ago and have generated significant commentary on their plot and moral themes. Teachers are more likely to use these historical resources, rather than pursue the onerous task of linking European values with the South African struggle. However, educators that opt for a more critical approach to literacy allow learners to critically interrogate the literature in terms of its colonial fiction, and bring to the fore black misrepresentation in an effort to address dominant and stifling ideologies about class and race often found in literature (Ferreira, 2019).

The convention of teaching for plot and not for social relevance often follows learners into tertiary institutions. Many students experience the university as an alienating space, with new discourses and customs, and the texts students are expected to engage with are written in complex academic English and originate mainly from the "political North" (Janks, 2019). I argue that English classrooms cultivate similar

experiences for the black pupil as they would for the black university student through both texts that are divorced from the learners' contexts and through teaching approaches that are not culturally relevant and do not value the knowledge that learners can bring to the classroom.

Luke (2018) explains:

> Curriculum hides its class, patriarchal and cultural bases by representing its selections and claims as natural, truthful and scientific as quite simply, the way things are and should be. In this way, that which is inaccessible to marginalised students – for example, the selective tradition of texts, practices and procedures and bodily dispositions is lent authority to "Culture" and "Knowledge" and thereby, is placed beyond criticism and dispute. (p. 151)

It can become exceedingly difficult for learners to take on numerous "foreign experiences" without ever having understood their own "heritage-based experiences" (Janks, 2019). While GDE schools prescribe Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or *Othello*, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, IEB schools have opted for a less Western and a more African approach when it comes to literature. Shakespeare's *Othello* has been replaced with Nigerian Novelist Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, and her 2013 *Americanah* have become popular as well. This change in prescribed texts demonstrates an awareness of the importance of valuing African knowledges, but it is still important to consider *how* these texts are taught and whether teaching methods can lead to greater awareness of social issues.

According to Ferreira and Mendelowitz (2009):

> It has become necessary, especially as English specialists, to confront the challenge of providing equitable epistemological access at entry-level to a body of students whose diverse identities and languages have been, to a considerable degree, constructed by decades of racially segregated and oppressive educational, economic and social policies. (p. 78)

Ferreira and Mendelowitz (2009) have suggested a more sensitive English curriculum that caters for a diverse student body, whereby learners of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds are placed at the centre and see themselves as collaborators in knowledge production. Within the English curriculum, spaces need to

be made for learners of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to express and value their identities. This can be accomplished in part through culturally responsive activities and question design. On the other hand, learners with English as a home language who would normally maintain linguistic dominance in such spaces should be encouraged to consider their own identity as English speakers in a more critical way, carefully considering what their years of linguistic dominance means to learners with a different linguistic identity, even if it evokes discomforting emotions, as is discussed in a pedagogy of discomfort (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012).

2.6 A solution: Culturally relevant pedagogy

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is a philosophical-pedagogical approach devised by Dr Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006). This educational framework values the cultural identity of learners and recognises the strength and achievements inherent to them. In this framework, teachers encourage learners to debate and critically interrogate their social contexts, histories and cultures with others, all the while strengthening and cultivating their ethnicities and roots. Ladson-Billings (1994) explains the theory:

> Teachers may need to explicitly model and scaffold their instruction, to clarify the challenging curriculum for students of different cultures. Using students' strengths and "in-depth knowledge", as instructional starting points and tapping into ethnic learning styles are two ways to positively enhance student learning. (p. 123)

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) rests firmly on three elementary pillars, namely, academic achievement, cultural competence and socio-political consciousness. To practice CRP, these three pillars need to work mutually with one another; a teacher cannot concentrate efforts on just one pillar without paying attention to the other two (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The first pillar, namely 'Academic Achievement', maintains that teachers have a responsibility to nurture and help develop the minds and conscious awareness of their learners. Essentially, a CRP teacher would attach great importance to, and actively works towards academic achievement. The teacher also tries to avoid pedagogical approaches that see the teachers being at a 'higher level' or learners being at a 'lower level'. They are highly knowledgeable about the content they teach and know how to teach it to learners, based on their social contexts, but learners can

also be valuable knowledge creators in the learning environment and bring multiple forms of knowledge to use and share in classrooms.

The second pillar, ‘Cultural Competence’ necessitates that teachers interrogate their own reality and identity, and work towards challenging biases in themselves and learners in an effort to understand learners’ cultures, as well as how these cultures play a role in education and how they learn. When this is done properly, learners are taught to value not only their own culture, but the cultures of others, all while learning about the world.

The third pillar, ‘Socio-political Consciousness’ maintains that teachers edify themselves on the socio-political issues that influence learners and integrate this into their teaching practice. Ultimately, this encourages teachers to inspire their learners to critically interrogate their own reality, question the system in which they find themselves and envision themselves as agents of social transformation and change.

According to Ladson-Billings (2006), culturally relevant pedagogy is more a way of being and thinking than a teaching strategy. CRP is a way of thinking about learners that needs to be transformed into teaching practice. This way of thinking and teaching allows for the emergence of critical consciousness, social transformation and change.

In the case of the South African English literature classroom, teachers need to consider how literature can be used as a vehicle to help better understand social issues and current circumstances and promote the disentangling of ideologies that serve to oppress people, as well as taking social action to undo oppressive systems. Stories allow learners to experience vicariously, and to critically interrogate and compare the realities depicted in narratives with their own lives (Cunningham, 2010). This function of narrative can allow for greater cultural awareness and understanding in learners.

Unfortunately, due to a lack of resources and teacher capacity in many South African schools, teachers are not able to delve fully into potentially transformative elements in set-work literature (Jansen & Spaull, 2019). This should ideally involve comparing realities, questioning social structures (especially those put in place to maintain oppressive ideologies) and inspiring learners in such a way, that they see themselves as agents of change and social transformation.

2.7 Teaching for social transformation and emancipation

Freire (1996) explains how teaching can be used to either indoctrinate or emancipate. In his sociological explanation he talks about two different kinds of teaching methods; the first, which educators should avoid at all costs, is “banking education” and the latter, which schools should endorse, is “dialogical education”.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Freire’s (1996) “dialogical education” are inextricably linked. Dialogical education, much like CRP, presents an evolving and negotiated curriculum which allows for liberating problem-posing dialogue. In this sense, both pupil and educator are jointly responsible for a process in which they can each develop as critical thinkers and agents of social transformation. “Banking education”, on the other hand, views educators as “all-knowing” authoritative individuals, responsible for “depositing” knowledge into empty vessels, hence the metaphor of “banking education”. This method of teaching requires less critical engagement and can be seen as provoking less discomfort for learners compared to dialogical education.

Provoking a sense of discomfort in learners is arguably a way for social injustices to become more meaningful, which is why critical literacy teachers often engage learners emotionally in pedagogical activities. Zembylas and McGlynn (2012) explain: “it has been argued that a pedagogy of discomfort can be intentionally adopted to enhance the learning experience of students who struggle to understand social injustices” (p. 41). Building on ideas due to Ahmed (2004), Zembylas and McGlynn (2012) further explain that:

> Though the presence or absence of emotions does not guarantee justice or injustice, emotion is still a significant component in the production or prevention of greater justice. Deeply entrenched social norms create and sustain the structures that privilege or oppress—norms which are attended by significant emotional response. Challenging those social norms means changing our emotional relation to them; that is, seeing the consequences of these norms as either gain or loss. (p. 43)

Another example of banking education in the South African context is Bantu Education. This form of education did not allow learners to develop as critically conscious human beings that question the social structures and norms put in place

specifically to ensure that they believed African people's rightful work was to be exploited labour. If classrooms had allowed for CRP, dialogical education or a pedagogy of discomfort, all of which are usually explored in institutions that provide quality critical literacy education, it might allow learners to overcome their false consciousness and achieve a fuller emancipation.

It has been nearly thirty years since the formation of our democratic government in 1994. Poverty and inequality pervade the South African education system; teachers are poorly trained (Jansen & Spaull, 2019), and our matric pass rate is below average. This context desperately calls for reform in many levels of education, and the way we teach literature is an important part of addressing some of these social realities, particularly in terms of dominant ideologies that plague working class, black learners. Using Ladson-Billings's CRP (2006) and Freire's (1996) ideas of dialogical education as a foundation could offer ways of teaching English literature through answering calls for academic decolonisation, conscientisation and social transformation.

2.8 Passing as a threshold concept

Passing is a relevant concept here, as the primary focus of this thesis centres on issues pertaining to race and social class. In particular, *racial passing* as a threshold concept will be easier for South African learners to relate to, as they may have known first-hand of relatives or friends who once had to 'pass' for mixed race, Indian or white, in an attempt to avoid harsh racial discrimination and segregation during the apartheid era. Dawkins (2012) explains:

> Passing, usually understood as an abbreviation for "racial passing," describes the "fact of being accepted, or representing oneself successfully as, a member of a different" group. Generally speaking, passing refers to the means by which non-white people represent themselves as white. (p. 1)

Unterhalter (1975) explains that racial passing in South Africa may have begun as early as 1652, when Jan van Riebeck arrived with his three ships on Cape shores:

> Racial passing of Coloureds into the dominant White group in South Africa is a well-known phenomenon, documented by historians, psychologists and sociologists. It has also been a recurring theme in novels and plays because of the tragic overtones

> in the lives of those who play White. Because of the secrecy which must accompany passing, the number of those able to pass into the White group can never be accurately known but passing must have been common in the early history of White settlement at the Cape. (p. 53)

When the National Party in apartheid South Africa took office in 1948, one of the first acts they carried out was The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act in July of 1949. The act of miscegenation between two races was seen as abhorrent and the prospect of passing for white was not considered in this construction of race as defined through rigid boundaries. Unterhalter (1975) explains further:

> One of the first acts of the National Party on taking office in 1948, was to try to prevent miscegenation and passing for White. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act made marriage between White and Non-White a crime and the Immorality Amendment Act of 1950 prohibited sexual intercourse between Whites and Coloureds. The Population Registration Act of 1950 was designed to prevent passing, by the issue to all South Africans of identity cards based on a national population register which classified citizens according to race. Amendments to this act made passing increasingly difficult, as in terms of the 1968 amendment the proof of Whiteness depends not on appearance alone but on descent and general acceptance as a White. (p. 53)

In July 1972 the Black Consciousness Movement had taken root in South Africa, and sought to reframe blackness in the country: “The term ‘Black' [was to] be taken to embrace all those groups judged to be suffering repression and exploitation - Africans, Coloureds and Asiatics.” (Walshe, 1973. p. 39). Unterhalter (1975) elaborates further on what this meant for South Africa going forward: “The Black Consciousness philosophy is applicable to all who are not White. [Even] Coloured students at the University of the Western Cape have recently said they prefer the term Black to any other collective term; and for the Coloured intelligentsia there should be great appeal in a doctrine dedicated to the liberation of the black man from his hatred of himself and his values” (p. 54).

This meant that while instances of racial passing were becoming fewer, in part due to The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and then the 1968 amendment to that act, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) made passing for white seem like an act of cowardice. To the BCM, passing for white “represents a denial of racial pride, a

willingness to accept the identity of the master race and is the antithesis of the cry that 'Black is beautiful'" (Unterhalter, 1975, p.53).

Passing for white requires severing all ties with family members, changing one's name and surname, and taking on a new identity. Adrian Piper (1992) the American artist and Kantian philosopher, writes about her experience with family members who chose to pass for white, knowing full well the extreme weight of that sacrifice and what it would mean to leave everything behind.

> Trying to forgive and understand those of my relatives who have chosen to pass for white has been one of the most ethical challenges of my life, and I don't consider myself to have made very much progress. At the most superficial level this decision can be understood in terms of a cost-benefit analysis; obviously they believe they will be happier in the white community than in the black one, all things considered. For me to make sense of this requires that I understand – or at least accept – their conception of happiness as involving a higher social status, entrenchment within the white community and corresponding isolation from the black one, and greater access to rights, liberties and privileges the white community takes for granted. What is harder for me to accept is how they could want these things enough to sacrifice the history, wisdom, connectedness and moral solidarity with their family and community to get them. (pp. 85 – 86)

The ethical, social, historical and political complexities of passing offer a powerful tool for learners in South African schools to reflect on their own identities and on how identities are shaped in social contexts. The process of passing demonstrates that categories like race are social constructs that can be reshaped, and also highlights the potential fluidity of identity categories that dominant ideologies have constructed as rigid and unchanging. Passing, as I will demonstrate in my analyses of the four texts and in the pedagogical framework I propose for working with passing in South African literature classrooms, can act as a threshold concept into thinking critically about identities represented in the novels. Meyer and Land (2003) describe a threshold concept as:

> [...] akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view

> of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. This transformation may be sudden, or it may be protracted over a considerable period of time, with the transition to understanding proving troublesome. Such a transformed view or landscape may represent how people 'think' in a particular discipline, or how they perceive, apprehend, or experience particular phenomena within that discipline (or more generally). (p. 1)

Thus, passing could be an entryway into understanding ideologies of racism, classism and other exclusionary perspectives and how these operate in South Africa. Learners might find the process of working with this new concept "troublesome" (Meyer & Land, 2003, p.1), which is akin to a pedagogy of discomfort, but the approach could ultimately offer learners greater access into texts that might have seemed unrelatable to them and their lives.

In the following chapter, I outline this study's methodology and the theoretical framework that is used to approach the texts. This includes a detailed discussion of how this study will use critical literacy theory, a pedagogy of discomfort, culturally relevant pedagogy and decolonial theory, and how the methodology of critical discourse analysis will be applied to the four texts.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Theoretical Framework

In this study, a critical literacy approach to teaching literature in South African English classrooms will be explored through the use of critical literacy theory, culturally relevant pedagogy, a pedagogy of discomfort and decolonial theory. These four theories will be used to inform a more socially conscious framework for teaching literature in FET classrooms. The proposed framework can be used to develop learners' critical engagement with texts and can culturally interpellate black, working-class South African learners who feel that they cannot relate to English set-works (Romylos, 2018; Robinson, 2015).

Additionally, elements of the abovementioned theories will be used to analyse the texts in this thesis and will demonstrate how a critical literacy approach enables teachers and learners to expand on one-dimensional readings of the texts. The analysis chapters will demonstrate that critical literacy can lead to readings that interrogate the constructions of identities in the texts in ways that engage learners in reflection of their own identities and of South African social issues. In each of the analysis chapters, the concept of passing will be used as a central lens. Passing is a threshold concept that can provide a greater depth of understanding of how identities are socially constructed and interact with systems of power. A detailed discussion of how these theories will be used is presented below, and thereafter the method of critical discourse analysis is explained in relation to the current study.

It is important to note that this is a conceptual study that does not yet apply the framework in the real-world classroom setting. However, this data can be used to formulate a working hypothesis, which can be used in empirical research. There is, however, another view, which states that conceptual and empirical research "share a common goal" in that they both work to create new knowledge by "building on carefully selected sources of information combined, according to a set of norms." In the case of this thesis, however, although information is not "derived from data in the traditional sense [it] involve[s] the assimilation and combination of evidence in the form of previously developed concepts and theories. In this sense, conceptual papers are not without empirical insights but rather build on theories and concepts that are developed and tested through empirical research." (Jaakkola, 2020, p. 19)

3.1 Critical literacy theory

A critical literacy framework will be used in this study to analyse four texts, three of which are prescribed in South African schools, and the latter which is proposed as a good text for teaching the concept of "passing" at the FET phase, namely, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Zoë Wicomb's *Playing in The Light*. The aim here is to challenge the traditional ways of teaching school texts and work to transform these teaching strategies in such a way that they encourage learners to think critically about the world and the taken-for-granted ideologies that they might be subjected to both in the texts and in their everyday environments.

Critical literacy education, according to Janks (2014), centres on the role that language plays as a "social practice" and "examines the role played by text and discourse in maintaining or transforming these orders." (p. 349). Knowing that these practices can be altered for the better, opens up possibilities for social action (Janks, 2014).

Janks (2014) recommends that teachers explore the 'problematic' in texts, and consider how the problematic is constructed, by careful analysis of design choices. Teaching critical literacy allows for a transformative process to unfold, whereby learners are taught to view the word (texts) and the world (contexts or social settings) with a more critical lens, challenging oppressive notions of class, race and gender and striving to bring to the fore the underlying mechanisms which work to protect and reproduce a false consciousness. This false consciousness is conceived in this study as constituted by dominant ideologies of Eurocentrism, classism and racism.

Teachers who advocate for a more critical approach to teaching literature allow learners to read beyond the limitations of the word, and allow them to better understand the underlying devices put in place to maintain an idea or ideology through representation or misrepresentation of identities through characters in these texts (Ferreira, 2019).

Critical literacy theory in this study will be used in several different forms. However, the first and most important here would be to challenge the traditional ways of reading and teaching each of the four texts in classrooms. The critical literacy approach

will inform the way that texts are analysed in Chapters 4 and 5, to show how identities can be read as fluid and socially constructed, through the lens of passing. The approach is also used to cultivate learners' ability to think and read the texts critically in order for them to challenge dominant ideologies independently. This can be done by encouraging learners to answer questions that are not traditionally used in the school setting.

An example of a few questions teachers could pose in this framework might be: "Why do you think the character is framed in this way, and what does it suggest about our society, or the society in which the story is set?", "What does this kind of framing suggest about the context of the text's production?", "Whose voice do we hear most in the story, and whose voice do we rarely/ never hear?" and, "Why do you think black characters are marginalised in this text, and what might this suggest about who is in power?". Learners could also be required to perform redesigns of these texts, with activities that invite them to, for example, rewrite a scene from *The Great Gatsby* from the perspective of the staff working for Gatsby. These questions and activities will be developed in close consultation with the critical literacy frameworks developed by Janks and Ferreira and will be presented in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

3.2 Culturally relevant pedagogy

This educational framework values the cultural identity of learners and recognises the strength and achievements inherent to them. In this framework, teachers encourage learners to debate and critically interrogate their social contexts, histories and cultures with others, all the while strengthening and cultivating their ethnicities and roots (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

This framework places learners and their social contexts at the centre of the curriculum, and values their cultural identity, all the while encouraging them to debate and interrogate their contexts and histories with others. This kind of thinking and way of teaching in South African schools will work to stimulate and cultivate a critical consciousness in learners, particularly when engaging with Eurocentric ideas frequently found in Western literature written decades ago, that hold subtle and overt racist positions, which are not always obvious to those who are not trained in critical

literacy reading practices. Culturally relevant pedagogy will be used in this thesis to design questions and create activities within the framework for teaching English literature based on the four selected texts. The different ways to teach Western and African literature will be discussed by ensuring that approaches and activities make the texts relevant to learners' contexts, environments, and the knowledges they bring with them to the classroom.

Culturally relevant pedagogy is an approach that encourages learners to debate and critically interrogate their own social contexts, histories and cultures with others, all the while valuing and meaningfully engaging with their ethnicities and roots (Ladson-Billings, 2006). This framework will be used to help inform the types of disruptive and critical questions and discussion topics that could allow learners to reflect on their own experiences, questions that are relevant to their cultural backgrounds rather than being abstracted from their lives, and questions that are culturally sustaining (giving value to a range of cultures) while expanding the knowledge and literacies of learners.

3.3 A pedagogy of discomfort

A pedagogy of discomfort is a framework that places great emphasis on our emotions in critical learning environments. This framework asserts that emotions are an important factor and perform an important role in teaching concepts that work to challenge dominant ideologies or ideas that question structures of power in society (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012). It is through and by "challenging dominant and oppressive systems, [that] strong emotions often arise that must be recognised in the practice of critical pedagogy" (Andrews, 2020, p. 9).

Boler and Zembylas (2003) assert that "A pedagogy of discomfort recognizes and problematizes the deeply embedded emotional dimensions that frame and shape daily habits, routines and unconscious complicity with hegemony" (p.108). In this framework "educators and students ... engage in critical inquiry regarding values and cherished beliefs, and ... examine constructed self-images in relation to how one has learned to perceive others" (Boler, 1999, p.176).

An overview of how this framework is applied in educational spaces has been illustrated by Andrews (2020):

> The educator disrupts dominant ideologies that stifle critical thinking concerning oppression and marginalisation. Disruption, thus, is a part of the process of critical pedagogy and a pedagogy of discomfort, specifically on the part of the educator, and the strength of emotional reactions also entails that students or learners might be likely to "disrupt" or resist ideas within teaching environments. (p. 10)

In terms of this thesis, emotions that cause discomfort may arise in critical literacy education around English literature, especially in cases when teachers ask learners to rethink questions about their set-work and its narrative, questions that may be considered unconventional or make some learners uncomfortable, or questions that directly relate to the identities, privileges or unexamined biases of learners. Learners might then be asked to recognise how their discomfort might reflect their privilege being challenged (Andrews, 2020). Another way discomforting emotion may arise is when the content of a critical curriculum evokes feelings of guilt and discomfort, especially as learners are now forced to question their own beliefs and assumptions and how they may need to start challenging themselves and others in order for necessary transformation to unfold (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012). This pedagogical approach will be used in this thesis by purposefully asking questions that challenge learners to examine their subject positions and how they might be complicit or enmeshed in systems of power. The themes of race and class will be particularly important.

A pedagogy of discomfort is a framework that places great emphasises on our emotions in learning environments. This framework asserts that emotions are an important factor and perform an important role when it comes to teaching about concepts that work to challenge dominant ideologies or ideas that question structures of power in society (Zembylas & McGlynn, 2012).

Essentially, discomforting emotions play an integral part in working to challenge dominant beliefs and practices which sustain social inequalities. This is why becoming conscious of our entanglement in coloniality can bring about feelings of discomfort and uneasiness, and it is our emotions in this instance that play an important role in bringing about transformation and change as they allow educator and student to interrogate how ingrained ideologies might be to their identities. A pedagogy of discomfort will be used in this study to challenge dominant ideas found within the texts, which may evoke feelings of discomfort in learners that can be used

productively to spark debate or change attitudes. Learners are asked to recognise how their discomfort might reflect their privilege being challenged (Andrews, 2020).

A few examples of a teacher-guided exercise in a pedagogy of discomfort could involve a classroom discussion that challenges dominant ideologies and make the privilege of some learners visible in ways that might make them uncomfortable, or an exercise that works to challenge either patriarchy, issues of race, or issues of class found in texts. Questions could include: “What if Gatsby were black? How would the story change? Write some dialogue that demonstrates these changes”. Additionally, teachers could ask learners from diverse economic situations to consider the privilege that the wealthy characters have in the texts, how this might intersect with race, and how they are able to move in certain spaces or face no real consequences for destructive actions due to this privilege, as is the case for the character Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*. These concerns in the text could then be brought to the contexts of the learners themselves, such as ideas of privilege and hierarchies of power in South Africa.

3.4 Decolonial theory

Decolonial theory is a school of thought that focuses on disentangling knowledge production from a predominantly European or Western episteme. A decolonial framework strives to bring to the fore the ways in which one’s consciousness has been shaped to serve colonial systems and thought, and how overcoming the false consciousness which led to inferiority complexes, as is seen in Biko (2004), leads to a greater and fuller liberation.

In terms of how this largely European episteme affected South Africans and our South African context, Seroto (2018) explains:

> The history of South Africa excluded indigenous people, attributed achievements during this period to Europeans and presented them at the centre of history. The glorification of the European history alienated indigenous people and made them feel irrational and primitive. (p. 11)

Seroto (2018) uses the term “coloniality” to describe how colonisers undermined and dehumanised the identities and knowledges of the indigenous populace. While the concept of coloniality had been introduced decades ago by Quijano and Mignolo

(2000), the concept has been reworked from different angles to explore its influences, modalities and consequences throughout history. Mignolo (2005) portrays coloniality as an embedded logic, which works to enforce exploitation and control in such a way that it appears to be good for humanity, a perspective that is particularly useful in this thesis due to the focus on race and class in the process of passing.

Maldonado-Torres (2007) asserts that coloniality

> […] survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and every day. (p. 243)

There is a need to transform the spaces where indigenous people experience colonialism and currently experience coloniality. The sphere of knowledge production and intellectual thought in particular remains colonised. Steve Biko (2004), activist and leader of the Black Consciousness Movement in Southern Africa, claims that colonialism instilled in South African indigenous people an inferiority complex, which crippled them on a psychological level; Fanon (2008) stresses the necessity for indigenous people to overcome the inferiority complexes found in Westernised knowledge systems, and work to negate and overcome them through education.

As this study will be examining the ways in which race and class have been depicted and represented in Western and African literature, using decolonial theory as a framework will work to bring to the fore how race and class may have been constructed in ways that reproduce colonial ideologies in these texts, particularly the unquestioned association of blackness with exploited labour (Heleta, 2016).

This framework will be used throughout the textual analysis to explore how the four texts may reproduce colonial and limiting ideologies, and how these ideologies of race and power may have influenced the way characters were shaped and represented by their authors. The process of passing also powerfully demonstrates the workings of coloniality, as many of the characters who choose to “pass” are influ-

enced by dominant ideologies that marginalise and oppress blackness. Thus, passing also acts as a threshold concept that can enable learners to more clearly understand everyday experiences of coloniality, and the need to decolonise thought.

3.5 Research methodology

The theoretical framework informs the methodology of this study. This study explores how teaching literature through a critical literacy approach can increase learners' awareness of social issues in South Africa, particularly the need for decolonising knowledge and the problematic false consciousness that links blackness to labour and divorces it from valid systems of knowledge. It will do so by analysing the four texts and proposing that a more critical and culturally relevant approach be put in place in how these texts are discussed in classrooms.

This study falls within the category of qualitative research. This method makes use of observation or other qualitative methods to collect unstructured and non-numerical data (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This type of research works to study the meanings, interpretations and perceptions of phenomena to provide an explanation as to how and why certain phenomena may occur, rather than how often they do (Mogashoa, 2014). Qualitative research is a useful method when working with text analysis and in fields where meaning is important, as it allows the researcher to explore how texts can link to ideologies through discourse analysis (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Each of the four texts will be analysed firstly through critical discourse analysis, and the concept of passing will be explored in relation to characters' identities. Once the texts have been analysed, a framework for working with Western and African texts through the lens of passing will be proposed in the final chapter.

3.6 Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

Through CDA, this study will work to explore how certain social issues are represented by exploring dominant ideologies embedded in texts. The analyst, using CDA, explores the relationship between the texts and social practices, and then offers an explanation as to why and how these social practices were produced, and how texts link to power in societies (Janks, 1997).

According to Mullet (2018):

> CDA is a useful approach for educational researchers who [wish to] explore connections between educational practices and social contexts; for example, CDA has been used to examine relationships between teaching, learning, [...] curricula [and] students' identities across time [as well as] cultural representations [found] in textbooks and the influence of teachers' ideological perspectives on their teaching practice. (p. 117)

Although Janks's (1997) framework for critical discourse analysis will be used in this thesis, Mullet (2018) demonstrates a general analytical framework for CDA, which I will use to illustrate the steps followed in CDA. In the table below I demonstrate my abbreviated version of Mullet's (2018) guideline for a general analytical framework (p. 122).

Table 1:

Stage of analysis	Description	Instantiation
Select the discourse	Select a discourse related to injustice or inequality in society.	**Classism and racism** Experiences of fictional characters who live in classist or racist societies: "passing" as a means of escaping discrimination or, for upward social mobility.
Locate and prepare data sources	Select data sources (texts) and prepare the data for analysis	1. ***The Great Gatsby*** by F. Scott Fitzgerald 2. ***The Crucible*** by Arthur Miller 3. ***Purple Hibiscus*** by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie 4. ***Playing in the* Light** by Zoë Wicomb
Explore the background of each text	Examine the social and historical context and producers of the texts.	1. ***The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald**: 1920s, old money vs. new money, the rise of capitalism. Fitzgerald writes about the inequalities experienced between social classes, through the eyes of Nick Carraway. 2. ***The Crucible* by Arthur Miller**: Miller used *The Crucible* as a metaphor for the political witch-hunt led by Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s. McCarthy attempted to control the spread of Communism in America by placing partisans and sympathisers on a 'blacklist'.

		3. ***Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**: Colonialism in Nigeria: Adichie writes about the Nigerian struggle for freedom from the British colonists a few years after its independence. 4. ***Playing in the Light* by Zoë Wicomb**: Racial passing as a means for upward social mobility and escaping racial discrimination**.** Set in South Africa during apartheid.
Code texts and identify overarching themes	Identify the major themes and subthemes using a choice of qualitative coding methods.	**Axial coding**: **intertextuality** between texts. *The Great Gatsby* and *Playing in the Light* *The Crucible* and *Purple Hibiscus* With particular reference to: **racial**, **cultural** or **religious passing** <u>Overarching themes:</u> • Jay Gatsby: **performs cultural passing** • Reverend Parris: **performs religious passing** • Eugene Achike: **performs cultural passing and religious passing** • Helen and John Campbell: **perform racial and cultural passing**
Analyse the external relations in the texts (interdiscursivity)	Examine social relations that control the production of the text; in addition, examine the reciprocal relations (how the texts affect social practices and structures). How do social practices inform the arguments in the text? How does the text in turn influence social practices?	1. ***The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald**: • Economic caste system • Old money vs new money vs working class 2. ***The Crucible* by Arthur Miller**: • Puritanic town Church represents truth and wisdom • Church defines the social hierarchy 3. ***Purple Hibiscus* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**: • Christian missionaries run the education system • Use it to promulgate European superiority • Leads to hierarchy with colonisers at the top, indigenous groups at the bottom 4. ***Playing in the Light* by Zoë Wicomb**: • Apartheid racial classification system

Janks's (1997) framework for critical discourse analysis will be used to analyse the ideological underpinnings found in *The Crucible*, *The Great Gatsby*, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Playing in The Light*, particularly exploring identities of race and class and how the concept of passing can be a tool to reimagine identities in these texts.

Once these ideological underpinnings and social practices have been explored through CDA, a framework for pedagogical approaches that align with critical literacy will be explored in relation to these texts, using the theories of culturally relevant pedagogy, a pedagogy of discomfort and decolonial theory. These theories will be used to demonstrate how a more critical and socially responsive approach can be applied to teaching the four texts in the South African FET school context where these Western texts are regularly prescribed.

The second-last chapter will design a framework for teaching these texts in a way that is accessible to South African learners. In particular, it will propose pairing an African novel with one of the commonly taught Western set-work books. The framework will describe how initially teaching the concept of passing in the African text creates an avenue for understanding the subsequent Eurocentric text through a lens that is more relatable and empowering. In particular, it will demonstrate how *Purple Hibiscus* and *Playing in The Light* can serve as introductory texts to teach *The Crucible* and *The Great Gatsby* respectively. This will allow for intertextuality to be explored between seemingly disparate texts, promoting a deeper and more critical understanding in the learners.

In the following chapter, an analysis of *The Great Gatsby* and *The Crucible* will be rendered, with particular reference to how characters pass, and how this act is framed by the authors of the text.

Chapter 4: Western Literature in South African English Classrooms: A Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Literacy Approach

4.1 Section 1: *The Great Gatsby*

This chapter will perform a critical discourse analysis on two Western texts, namely F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible.* These two texts are often prescribed in South African schools, although the perspectives of these works are often foreign to our learners' contexts.

This chapter will confront the social and political aspects of these texts to explore how issues of language and power are represented, how ideologies are communicated through these texts and the ways that South African learners might be marginalised or excluded from participating fully in text analysis as they are not the imagined audiences of these texts. The concept of passing will be used to frame the analyses. The analysis will then work to find ways that allow for critical thinking pathways to open up and ways for learners to relate certain aspects of what the characters experience to their lives, thus making the content relatable, empowering and significant for diverse South African contexts.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great* Gatsby (1925) is set in the Jazz Age on Long Island, America. The novel illustrates the narrator's (Nick Carraway) exchanges between the people he meets, the overall freedom the Jazz Age exhibits and his rare friendship with his neighbour Gatsby, a 'new-moneyed' millionaire, who happens to be in love with Nick's married cousin, Daisy. This analysis will explore the social conventions in wealthy circles at the time, wealthy circles that looked down on those who were not born into families with generational wealth, and how in turn this affected characters like Gatsby.

The narrative centres on Gatsby's intense fixation to reunite with his wealthy ('old moneyed') former lover, Daisy, who at the start of the novel, five years since Gatsby had last seen her, married the enormously wealthy polo player, Tom Buchanan. Although Tom Buchanan does love his wife, he has a mistress named Myrtle Wilson, who much like Gatsby, yearns to be a part of the world of the 'old moneyed'

community inhabited by Tom and Daisy. It is only revealed much later in the novel that Jay Gatsby's mysterious background and upbringing were far from that of wealth and means, and after having met Daisy during World War I as a soldier, Gatsby realises that the only way he could be with her, was if he worked his way into the world of the old-moneyed society (Fitzgerald, 1925).

Essentially, Gatsby would have to 'pass' for Daisy's level of privileged, wealthy 'whiteness' in an attempt to be accepted by her and the other wealthy characters in the novel. 'Passing' or 'passing for' behaviour is also demonstrated by Tom Buchanan's mistress Myrtle Wilson, as she attempts to 'pass' as Tom's wife by modifying her behaviour and clothing to match that of Daisy's when she is with him (p. 29). Although there have been numerous papers published on other characters in this novel that display characteristics of passing, this chapter will focus primarily on Gatsby and his intense fixation to be accepted into the wealthy old-moneyed white American community, and the sacrifices he is willing to make to ensure that he is successful.

The cost of passing is demonstrated by Davis (1991): "Those who pass have a severe dilemma before they decide to do so, since a person must give up all family ties and loyalties to [their communities] in order to gain economic and other opportunities" (p. 85). Gatsby seems to, at times, overcompensate for his position as an outsider, throwing extravagant parties in order to impress his guests with his wealth, but even these sacrifices do not fully secure him a place amongst the wealthy white elite.

4.2 Racial passing in *The Great Gatsby*: A critical discourse analysis

Janks's (1997) framework for critical discourse analysis will be used to analyse some of the ideological underpinnings found in *The Great Gatsby* that may have allowed for limiting representations of social categories, especially in the way the novel is often taught in schools. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the relationship between the text and social practices will be considered, along with the way social issues have been represented by the author, specifically, the idea that a form of racial passing could be an element of Gatsby's character.

CDA will be used here to illustrate how Fitzgerald uses Gatsby's character to carry out nuances of racial passing, while allowing for this act to be portrayed as an unattainable and self-defeating dream, and one that will lead to tragedy because no matter how hard Gatsby tries, he will always remain an outsider.

Gatsby displays a number of the traits associated with Adrian Piper's (1992) description of the non-white who chooses to pass. Ultimately, Gatsby's *conception* of happiness is solely built on the belief that being a part of the old money American community and isolating himself from his working-class roots, will fulfil him in some way. In doing so, James Gatz changes his name, severs ties with his family and becomes Jay Gatsby, not quite fully comprehending the sacrifice, the loss of "history, wisdom, connectedness and moral solidarity with [his] family and community." (p. 86) It comes as no surprise then, that after Gatsby's death Nick struggles to get even one person to attend his funeral. As someone *passing* as something, Gatsby had no real friends save for Nick, he cut ties with his working-class family, and Daisy, who was the inspiration behind everything that he worked to achieve, let him take the fall for a crime she committed, and ran away with her husband.

4.3 Racial passing in *The Great Gatsby*

Discriminated racial groups in Europe have been known to alter their grooming habits, names, accents and discourses in an attempt to appear to be part of the more privileged group (Ginsberg, 1996). Throughout the novel Gatsby attempts to pass for privilege and 'a form of whiteness' that belied his working-class upbringing, and he even goes as far as to tell Nick that he is an "Oxford man" although he only attended the university for five months – a privilege given to certain soldiers after the armistice. According to Slater (1973):

> His true name, Gatz, and the Lutheran faith of his father indicate that [Gatsby] was of German descent, with, very likely, at least one immigrant grandparent which would preclude his being considered of Old American lineage. In a curious way, however, Gatsby possesses no ethnicity of any sort, being a product of his own dreams and conceits. (p. 56)

It is revealed later in the novel that at the age of seventeen Gatsby had changed his name from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby after having met a wealthy mining prospector

named Dan Cody. After working on Dan Cody's yacht for some years, Gatsby started to adopt Cody's mannerisms, grooming habits and phrases such as: "Old Sport" which Gatsby uses repeatedly as a term of endearment for Nick (Fitzgerald, 1925).

> The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God [...] So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end. (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 98)

Essentially, Gatsby refuses to allow himself to believe he hailed from 'inferior' and working-class roots, and simply invented a romanticised version of a past that would be worthy of Daisy, claiming that he is "the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West, all dead now […] and brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all [of his] ancestors [had] been educated there for many years. It was a family tradition" (Fitzgerald, 1925, p. 64). This link to England is important in terms of whiteness, as Gatsby holds the belief that culture, sophistication and class are located in England which gives him an edge in terms of performing whiteness. However, Gatsby's attempts to pass as an old-moneyed Oxford man amalgamated with his mysterious heritage only arouses suspicion in everyone who knows of him, including his closest friend, Nick Carraway. In truth, his wealth had emanated from money laundering and a wide range of drugstores that he owns that sold over-the-counter liquor during the first two years of the prohibition in the United States.

Through his bootlegging and money laundering, Gatsby had accumulated an enormous fortune and bought a mansion directly across from Daisy's. Every so often he would host the grandest of parties at his manor hoping that Daisy would "wander into one of his parties some night […] but she never did." (p. 77). Although Gatsby was tremendously wealthy and able to purchase the house directly across from Daisy's, Fitzgerald asserts that in comparison to Tom and Daisy's wealth, Gatsby would always fall short in that "he [was] 'without a past' […] without an acceptable pedigree, and winning Daisy (in the nativist imaginary) requires that he have one" (Schreier, 2007, p. 156).

4.4 Tom Buchanan: The thorn in Gatsby's side

Fitzgerald's novel, while having strong romantic overtones, is overwhelmingly concerned with ethnicity, identity and, most importantly, *race*. Just pages into the novel, Tom Buchanan introduces the racist discourse:

> "Civilization's going to pieces,'' broke out Tom violently. ''I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read 'The Rise of Coloured Empires' by this man Goddard?'' ''Why, no,'' I answered, rather surprised by his tone. ''Well, it's a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The idea is if we don't look out, the white race will be—will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved [...] This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things [...] This idea is that we're Nordics [...] we've produced all the things that go to make civilization". (p.18)

Tom Buchanan is often described as a character with very few redeeming qualities, he represents some of the foulest aspects of upper-class American society; and his wealth shields them from the limitations and implications of law and morality (Lewis, 2007). These racist pronouncements early in the novel frame Tom as someone who is protective of power and dominance, in this case, the racial dominance of white people, and feels threatened by the possibility of this power being taken away. This might indicate why he displays some antagonism towards Gatsby, as he sees Gatsby as an "outsider" who threatens his power.

This is evident later in the novel, when Daisy accidentally hits and kills Tom's mistress with Gatsby's car while driving home with him from the Plaza Hotel, and has Gatsby take the fall for her crime. After finding out that his mistress had been killed with Gatsby's car, Tom tells Myrtle's husband that it was in fact Gatsby who had killed Myrtle and left the scene. Gatsby is then shot and killed while swimming in his pool by Myrtle Wilson's husband who had been told by Tom that Gatsby had not only killed his wife but had been having an affair with her too. When Nick had confronted Tom, and asked him what he had said to Myrtle's husband that had made him want to kill Gatsby, Tom answered:

> I told him the truth he said. 'He came to the door while we were getting ready to leave, and when I sent down word that we weren't in he tried to force his way upstairs. He was crazy enough to kill me if I didn't tell him who owned the car. His

> hand was on a revolver in his pocket every minute he was in the house' – he broke off defiantly. 'What if I did tell him? That fellow had it coming to him. He threw dust into your eyes just like he did in Daisy's, but he was a tough one. He ran over Myrtle like you'd run over a dog and never even stopped his car.' (p. 169)

Essentially, Gatsby had deceived them by trying to pass as one of them, and his act of deception and his figurative 'dust throwing' is perceived as a terrible crime in Tom's eyes, and one that is worthy of death. Subsequently, Tom takes matters into his own hands and ensures that Gatsby takes the fall for his wife's crime, because in Tom's eyes Gatsby's deception is a far greater injustice to *him* than Daisy killing Myrtle in a hit-and-run.

After Mr Wilson murders Gatsby, he then proceeds to kill himself.

In a famous quote below, Nick illustrates how the chaos preceding and succeeding the deaths of the two 'passers' Gatsby and Myrtle, had been elicited by Tom and Daisy's immense carelessness and inability to take responsibility for the destruction and devastation they inflicted and the lives they cut short. This is undoubtedly a symptom of the form of whiteness they inhabit, relying on privilege and allowing "outsiders" to take the fall for their crimes and corruption. Ultimately what kept Tom and Daisy together was the illusion that they could be above "others" in society, no matter the crime:

> They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retracted back into their money or vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. (Slater, 1973, p. 170)

4.5 Tom and his fight against class mobility

Tom's very existence represents an obstacle to both Gatsby and his dream, right from the start of his dream up until its untimely end. Furthermore, Tom's existence serves as a harsh reminder to Gatsby that he will always be lacking in some way, especially having hailed from socially inferior roots, compared to the likes of Tom and Daisy who know nothing but privilege and affluence. This is something that Gatsby fails to consider while on the rise to upward class mobility (Slater, 1973). Moreover, it could be argued that Gatsby's existence serves to reinforce Tom's

power, and by Gatsby aspiring to be *like* Tom, he is again reiterating the fact that Tom belongs in positions of power due to his heritage.

Tom, on the other hand, feels threatened by the idea of someone from a lower class infringing on his privileged life, and having an affair with his wife. His main objection to Gatsby stems from the notion that Gatsby is a self-made man (who is now having an affair with his wife) and not a man born of privilege, or one of his wealthy polo-player friends - an outsider unworthy of Tom's respect. Tom suggests that he would be willing to accept if Daisy left him for someone belonging to their social class and upbringing, but he is not willing to accept her betrayal with someone of Gatsby's status… "certainly not [with] a common swindler, who'd have to steal the ring he puts on her finger." (p.127). Ultimately, Tom's resentment towards Gatsby is not merely just an attempt to impede on his pursuit of Daisy, but an attempt to fight against class mobility in general. The idea of allowing an outsider to take up a position equivalent to the "insiders" is unthinkable to Tom, and echoes his line from the start of the novel to "watch out or these other races will have control of things" (Fitzgerald, 1925: 18). The discourse Tom engages in creates parallels between the racial "threats" he identifies and the class-based threat that Gatsby posed to him.

According to Lewis (2007):

> Daisy alone unequivocally possesses the necessary credentials of good breeding and racial whiteness, as is apparent in all the proximate figurations of whiteness associated with her—a dress, a roadster, a string of pearls, and a white palace. But Gatsby will not be able to pass as Daisy's shade of pale, and Tom challenges him directly in the next scene. (p. 177)

During Tom's confrontation with Gatsby at the Plaza Hotel, Tom attempts to use Gatsby's race as a tool of degradation and humiliation.

Tom asserts:

> "I suppose the latest thing is to sit back and let Mr Nobody from Nowhere make love to your wife. Well, if that's the idea you can count me out… Nowadays people begin sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white." […] "We're all white here," murmured Jordan. (pp. 123-124)

It is important to mention here how Jordan, a friend of Daisy's and a famous golfer, tries to assert a shared identity, but this act only creates anxiety in the passage. This is a statement of claiming something that, according to rigid identity ideologies, should be obvious. The fact that it is made to be *not* obvious through Jordan's assertion shows this anxiety about insider and outsider status. The idea of racial purity seems to be an anxious pursuit, based on the *danger* of the outsider who might, at any moment, masquerade as an insider.

Slater (1973) explains:

> [Tom] begins the key exchange by attacking Gatsby on the basis of social class (*"Mr. Nobody from Nowhere")*, but it is not sufficient enough to express the depths of his distaste, and so Tom quickly converts his assault into a racial one by associating Gatsby with miscegenation. This attempt to lower Gatsby in Daisy's estimation by playing upon the venerable American fear of miscegenation is so patently misguided and irrelevant, though a good indicator of the panic in Tom's mind, that even the aloof Jordan Baker feels compelled to demur, "We're all white here". (p. 54)

Ultimately, as Fitzgerald has made clear, for Tom, Gatsby is not 'quite white', and whether this is because he is in fact black or attempting to 'pass' for white and its associated privileges, remains uncertain. Nevertheless, as far as Tom is concerned, Gatsby's love for Daisy is to some degree an act comparable to that of miscegenation (Lewis, 2007).

According to Lewis (2007):

> Upon analysing Fitzgerald's figurative and dramatic depiction of black people, and Tom Buchanan's pointed accusations towards Gatsby which blur the distinction between the literal presence of race and the figurative representation of it […] we cannot really know whether Gatsby represents a literal position on a gradated scale of racial Others (i.e., blacks, Jews, Slavs, Italians, and Irish as non-white), [or whether] race is a metaphor for something else (e.g., class or region), or some uncertain combination of both. (p.175)

4.6 Conclusion

This section examined the idea of passing in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. An orthodox reading of the text reveals the story of a working-class man who attempts

to enter the upper echelons of society to be accepted by his long-lost love, who is embedded in the world of the privileged upper class. An alternate reading, however, could offer a far more relevant interpretation to this narrative that is still widely prescribed in South African schools. In particular, viewing Gatsby through the lens of ethnic or racial passing may allow for learners to relate his story to the stories of non-white South Africans during the apartheid regime and to consider contemporary ways that whiteness is still afforded privilege in South Africa. Just as Gatsby abandoned his heritage in an attempt to climb the social ladder, so too did many South Africans in an attempt to be accepted by whites in Apartheid South Africa. Regardless of the social benefits, these acts of passing damaged families, communities and, in some cases, even culture (Piper, 1992). Additionally, the individual passer is forced to abandon his original community, but is also unable to integrate fully into his new social group. This is made obvious at Gatsby's funeral, when Nick is unable to find more than one friend from Gatsby's past or present life to attend.

Gatsby might have been an ethnic outsider as someone of German descent, but an alternative reading aligned with Ladson-Billings's (2006) culturally relevant pedagogy might even see Gatsby as a black or mixed-race person who stoked racial anxieties in the privileged white characters in the text, as demonstrated through racist utterances highlighted above. Gatsby thus attempted to pass in multiple ways, but was ultimately still an outsider to characters like Tom and Daisy. Considering this alternative way of reading the text could allow South African learners to relate the text more closely to how race and class are intertwined, as is often the case in South Africa.

While this section argues for racial and class-based passing as a way to teach this text to learners, the next section of this chapter will extend this idea to also consider religious passing carried out by the characters in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*.

4.7 Section 2: *The Crucible*

Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* was written in 1952, with its first performance in 1953. While based on the Salem Witch-Trials of 1692, the play was written as an allegorical warning for the audience against the dangers of McCarthyism in the 1950s. In the 1950s, Senator Joseph McCarthy attempted to control the spread of Communism in America by placing partisans and sympathisers on a 'blacklist'. This political witch-hunt caused widespread fear and panic of Communist influence, as people tried to escape their own charges by accusing other innocents of Communist allegiance. Miller used *The Crucible* as a metaphor to demonstrate how the community in 1692 Salem, driven by blind faith and private animosity would falsely accuse innocent people of witchcraft; to save themselves, excommunicate others and be regarded as religious and devout Christians.

Essentially, Miller used *The Crucible* to demonstrate the non-fiction parallels that occurred in his McCarthyistic reality. Blakesley (1992) explains further:

> Since 1938 an organization… [led by the House Committee on Un-American Activities] had been in existence in America. They had the power to investigate any movement or person who apparently threatened the safety of the state. Under the chairmanship of Senator Joseph McCarthy, this committee became almost paranoid in its searching of communist sympathisers. […] In 1956, when the power of the committee was waning, Miller was summoned. A pile of petitions with his name and signature was produced and he was asked to confess to signing his name. 'In truth, I had supported these various causes to express my fear of a looming victory of fascism and my alienation from the waste of potential in America while knowing nothing about life under any socialist regime.' [Upon being summoned] … he was placed in [the same position] as John Proctor in *The Crucible*: he was asked to give names of people he had seen at a meeting of communist writers ten years before [and] … just as Proctor had done, he refused to answer the question [and incriminate any of his peers]. (pp. 8-12)

In the previous chapter on Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby,* Gatsby's acts of passing were brought to light, and while Gatsby's passing for privilege helped him climb the social ladder, it only got him so far. Gatsby was never able to fully integrate into his new social setting and even died trying. *The Crucible,* however, introduces John Proctor and in strong contrast to Gatsby, Proctor sees beneath the façade of his puritan town and distances himself from it. Where Proctor is comfortable in standing out

from the crowd, Gatsby makes it his life's goal to enter the upper echelons of society in order to be accepted by Daisy.

The Crucible is a play commonly prescribed in South African schools, and while an orthodox reading of the text explores the consequences of mass hysteria and revenge, a contemporary reading and teaching of the play could work to, for example, highlight the parallels between Salem's mass hysteria and the spreading of "fake news" on social media or aspects of "cancel culture". While this contemporary reading of the play is relevant to most educational settings, in our post-Apartheid South African setting, the character of John Proctor can be used to demonstrate and help learners better understand exactly what was at stake for the many South African non-Whites during Apartheid who could pass for white but chose not to, and what was at stake for the many who did.

In Miller's framing of passing, it becomes clear that the act itself is not viewed as a strategic way of manipulating a dominant ideology, but rather an act of dishonesty and deceit, and this is illustrated in his framing of the characters who pass and in the characters who choose not to and are represented as 'noble' and 'brave' in the text.

4.8 *The Crucible*: A summary

In the Puritan New England town of Salem, Abigail Williams and a group of her friends go dancing naked in a forest with the local minister's daughter Betty, and his black slave, Tituba. The play begins after the girls are discovered by the minister himself, Reverend Parris. Chaos begins to unfold as the Reverend's daughter, Betty Parris, lies in bed, unable to wake after taking fright from being discovered in the forest by her father.

Tituba had been forcefully taken from her homeland in Barbados, where spells and *voodoo* magic amongst locals were common and not considered an abomination. This, combined with the fact that she was black, constructed her as an outsider in the community, and made it all the more plausible for her to become the scapegoat (Çakirtas, 2013). As rumours of witchcraft spread, Parris calls for witch-hunter expert Reverend Hale to try and rouse his daughter. John Proctor, a farmer who is a sceptic

of Parris and his intentions with the church, learns of the story and demands answers from Abigail; unbeknown to the village, Abigail and Proctor had an affair, which was discovered by John's wife, Elizabeth.

Hale begins to interrogate the girls. Accused of conversing with the devil and fearful for her life, Tituba confesses to witchcraft, shortly followed by Abigail and the rest of the girls, who also begin to make false accusations. Sometime later, Abigail uses her power to falsely accuse Elizabeth Proctor of witchcraft. Knowing that this is all a sham, and the girls are frauds, John is advised by his wife to inform the court of Abigail's lies and deceit.

Elizabeth is ultimately arrested, forcing John to confess his affair with Abigail, explaining that she accused his wife of witchcraft in the hope that Elizabeth will refuse to falsely confess and hang. The judge, Danforth, then summons Elizabeth and asks her whether the affair took place. Despite her natural honesty, she lies to the court to protect her husband's name and honour (Schissel, 1994). Danforth then accuses Proctor of being a liar. Proctor's servant, Mary, who is Abigail's friend, opportunistically accuses John of witchcraft, leading to his arrest.

After the witch trials have caused many innocents to hang, growing unrest causes Reverend Parris to become nervous. Parris suggests to Danforth that he postpone Proctor's death, as he and the other two women who are to hang with him are respected in the town, and their hanging would likely cause a riot. Reverend Hale, who has lost much faith in the court, begs accused witches to confess falsely to save their lives, but they refuse, believing that "God damns all liars."

Danforth requests that Elizabeth speak to her husband and convince him not to hang. After their discussion, John falsely confesses, but refuses to implicate anyone else or sign his name to the confession. He then decides that for his honour, and as penance for his sin with Abigail, he deserves to die, and joins the other two women on the gibbet.

4.9 Religious 'passing' in *The Crucible*: A critical discourse analysis

Janks's (1997) framework for critical discourse analysis will be used to analyse some of the ideological underpinnings found in *The Crucible*. Through CDA, the relationship between the text and social practices will be explored, along with the way certain social issues have been represented by the author, which will be done by exploring some of the dominant ideologies embedded in the text and bringing them to light. CDA will be used more explicitly here to reveal the play's stance on passing, which has been represented in the play in the form of "religious passing," and carried out more overtly by Reverend Parris and various townspeople in Salem.

According to Munaro (2018): "Passing often derives from a simple wish for something more, for a more peaceful and equal environment. The huge inferiority and inequality of the minor races, in fact, is paralleled by the equality and fairness experienced by the mainstream" (pp. 1-2). This section will demonstrate how the racial passing that occurred during the apartheid years in South Africa and the *religious* passing, as demonstrated by the characters in *The Crucible*, requires a major shift in the performance of identity in an effort to pass for the more desirable race, gender, religious group, or political party (Munaro, 2018).

In the case of *The Crucible,* Miller specifically endeavours to illustrate how passing for a level of piousness and devoutness is used strategically by characters to gain power over others, and as justification for violence and othering as displayed by Abigail Williams and her uncle Reverend Parris. The play represents these acts as highly dishonourable, and this is evident in Miller's framing of the antagonist Reverend Parris, who hides behind the façade of piousness and Christian devoutness with the intention of obtaining respect, money and power from the people of Salem. It is also evident in his framing of John Proctor, who is regarded as having the ability to see behind the façade of Reverend Parris, the witch-trials and the paranoia, and for these reasons, Proctor refuses to be a part of it. For this, John Proctor is framed as a relatable and morally principled character who, in refusing to engage in deceit and false confessions, is regarded as: "the most forthright voice against the madness around him" (Miller, 1996).

Miller (1996) explains further on the character of John Proctor:

> My own marriage of twelve years was teetering, and I knew more than I wished to know about where the blame lay. That John Proctor the sinner might overturn his paralyzing personal guilt and become the most forthright voice against the madness around him was a reassurance to me, and, I suppose, an inspiration: it demonstrated that a clear moral outcry could still spring even from an ambiguously unblemished soul. Moving crabwise across the profusion of evidence, I sensed that I had at last found something of myself in it, and a play began to accumulate around this man.

Essentially, Miller used the character of John Proctor to write a narrative about his personal life and the guilt he endured for his affair with Marilyn Monroe which led to the end of his twelve-year marriage. He then used the Salem Witch-Trials as an allegory for his experience with the House Committee on Un-American Activities, where he refused to provide names of potential Communist sympathisers, just as John Proctor would in the Salem Witch-Trials of *The Crucible* (Blakesley, 1992). As John Proctor represents Miller, John is framed as the voice of reason throughout this narrative, and this framing of, and obvious siding with John Proctor's character sets the tone of the play, and the audience is compelled to support him on his quest for justice, atonement and truth.

Thus, this play is not sympathetic with the characters who engage in "passing" and presents a more overtly negative view of the process of identity fluidity, even if this means avoiding death or persecution by the person who "passes". Passing seems to also be linked to a form of dishonesty in the play, something which runs counter to not only the Puritanical values represented, but also to the play's central theme that dishonesty and suspicion can corrupt a community.

Witchcraft is represented as an allegory for Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist rhetoric, and there is an obvious link between what might happen if a person had been accused of either practice. In Salem, once accused, the charged had no option but to lie, and falsely confess to witchcraft if they had any desire to live, thereby living the rest of their life (and forced to *pass*) as a previous devil sympathiser turned devout Christian. If the accused were "noble" enough to deny the claim, however, they would have to be willing to die for it. Understandably, not many were. This meant that many of the accused were forced to confess to witchcraft, and then name others they had seen communing with the devil.

In the Spring of 1692, Salem Massachusetts had been regarded by the European world as a cruel frontier established by a sect of fanatics. The province had no novelists, and there was no real account of what their lives were like, and their creed prohibited anything resembling entertainment or pleasure. Christmas was not celebrated, and a religious holiday from work necessitated that they focus more intently upon prayer. Ultimately, the witch-hunt according to Blakesley (1992) "was a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom. When one [would attempt to rise] above the villainy displayed." (p. 5)

The church and 'religious leaders' (represented in the play by Reverend Parris and Reverend Hale of Beverly), were regarded as the intellects in that specific context, and were given authority in decision-making. They were the holders of *religious power* and control, akin to the political power of Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s. According to Ayman (2017), the village of Salem had been divided not by economic status, but rather by religious status and Christian devoutness. This contrasts with Gatsby, where wealth and being born privileged had been the markers of inclusion.

The witch-hunt, ultimately, had become an opportunity for community members to "express publicly their guilt and sins under the cover of accusations against the victims" (Blakesley,1992, p.5). Hatred towards neighbours and other community members could now be publicly and openly voiced and old scores settled. Land-lust and years of constant quarrelling over boundaries "could now be elevated in the arena of morality. One could cry witch against one's neighbour and feel perfectly justified in the bargain." (Blakesley,1992, p.5).

4.10 Reverend Parris and the congregation

Miller frames Parris in a negative light in the play – he was the Reverend of the town, a title which held a lot of power in Salem, and was the uncle and primary carer of Abigail Williams. It is ironic, perhaps, that the niece of a Reverend, and one under his care, was responsible for the witch-hunt and for the deaths of the many innocent people who refused to lie and pass as devil sympathisers or witches.

The Reverend uses his position in the Church and his reputation as a devout and pious Christian to gain respect and wealth from the people of Salem. Although the concept of passing is more commonly used with race and marginalised groups escaping discrimination from racial laws, Parris demonstrates a different type of passing: a 'religious passing', whereby he invents a religious façade, and passes for a pious Christian Reverend, when in reality, Miller portrays Parris as narcissistic and power-hungry (Blakesley, 1992).

Ironically, Parris is one of the characters who initiated the chaos and panic that would soon unfold in Salem. He led the witch-hunt out of fear for his good name and reputation, as it was his own daughter, Betty, who had been unable to wake after having been discovered in the forest, his slave Tituba who had been singing and chanting, and his niece Abigail who had been dancing. Thus, Parris is only too happy to lead a witch-hunt that will hopefully shift the fingers being pointed in his direction elsewhere (Çakirtas, 2013).

The play begins with a frantic and dishevelled Parris interrogating his niece about the events that occurred the night before in the forest. We are initially led to believe that the Reverend asks for the sake of his unwell daughter, who is now lying in the bed before them, unable to wake. However, the reader learns that Betty is not the reason for his hysteria, but rather his fear for his reputation at what the rest of Salem might think of a Reverend's daughter being unable to wake, after being discovered with girls who were dancing in the forest, as such things were prohibited in Salem.

In Act One, Miller illustrates the instability of Parris's position in the Church, and how hard he has had to work to maintain his public persona to have the congregation bend to his will. Any shortcoming from his side could drive the congregation against him rather than towards him, and all that Parris cares for is his reputation and "bending these stiff-necked people [to him]" (p. 9). Ultimately, because the Reverend tries to pass for moral and spiritual traits which are demonstrated to be incongruent with his character, Miller portrays him in a negative light. The extended passage below demonstrates Parris's deceptiveness and self-serving façade of piousness.

> **Abigail:** Uncle, the rumour of witchcraft is all about; I think you'd best go down and deny it yourself. The parlour is packed with people, sir. I'll sit with her.
>
> **Parris:** And what shall I say to them? That my daughter and my niece I discovered dancing like heathen in the forest?

Abigail: Uncle, we did dance; let you tell them I confessed it – and I'll be whipped if I must be. But they're speakin' of witchcraft. Betty is not witched.

Parris: Abigail, I cannot go before the congregation when I know that you have not been open with me. What did you do with her in the forest?

Abigail: We did dance, uncle, and when you leaped out of the bush so suddenly, Betty was frightened and then she fainted. And there's the whole of it.

Parris: Child, sit you down.

Abigail: I would never hurt Betty. I love her dearly.

Parris: Now look you, child, your punishment will come in its time. But if you trafficked with spirits in the forest, I must know it now, for surely my enemies will, and they will ruin me with it.

Abigail: But we never conjured spirits.

Parris: Then why can she not move herself since midnight? This child is desperate! It must come out – my enemies will bring it out. Let me know what you done there. Abigail, do you understand that I have many enemies?

Abigail: I have heard of it, Uncle.

Parris: There is a faction that is sworn to drive me from my pulpit. Do you understand that?

Abigail: I think so, sir.

Parris: Now then, in the midst of such disruption, my own household is discovered to be the very centre of some obscene practice. Abominations are done in the forest.

Abigail: It were sport, uncle.

Parris: You call this sport? Abigail, if you know something that may help the doctor, for God's sake tell it to me. I saw Tituba waving her arms over the fire when I came on you. Why was she doing that? And I heard screeching and gibberish coming from her mouth. She were swaying like a dumb beast over that fire!

Abigail: She always sings her Barbados songs, and we dance.

Parris: I cannot blink what I saw, Abigail, for my enemies will not blink it. I saw a dress lying in the forest.

Abigail: A dress?

Parris: Aye, a dress. And I thought I saw someone naked running through the trees!

Abigail: No one was naked! You mistake yourself, uncle.

Parris: I saw it! Now tell me true Abigail. And I pray you feel the weight of truth upon you, for now my ministry's at stake, my ministry and perhaps your cousin's life. Whatever abomination you have done, give me all of it now, for I dare not be taken unaware when I go before them down there.

Abigail: There is nothin' more. I swear it, uncle.

Parris: Abigail, I have fought here three long years to bend these stiff-necked people to me, and now, just now when some good respect is rising for me in the parish, you compromise my very character. (Act 1, pp. 7-9)

In the passage above we see Parris's paranoia regarding his "enemies" as a manifestation of "passers' anxiety" – this feeling of anxiety is typically felt by passers when their performance becomes threatened. In this case, Parris's identity performance as the devout Christian Reverend is now threatened as his daughter, niece and slave are found at the scene of a "crime". In an attempt to shift the blame Parris

later calls in a witch-hunter, Reverend Hale of Beverly to find the 'devil-sympathiser' responsible for cursing his family.

Shortly after Abigail's interrogation, the Reverend decides to call in a renowned expert in the arena of witchcraft. Following her interrogation, Abigail successfully pins the previous night's activities on the black slave Tituba, being black meant that Tituba held the least power out of all the other scapegoats, and this could be why we see Tituba as the first to be accused of witchcraft. Fearing for her life, Tituba reluctantly confesses to the witch-hunter expert, Reverend Hale of Beverly that she had conversed with the Devil, but never did his bidding. Chaos soon begins to unfold, as Hale accepts Tituba's confession but then immediately starts to enquire about who *else* she was with when she communed with the Devil. Tituba then begins citing the names of people she assumed credible scapegoats: Goody Osburn, a lady unable to cite the ten commandments (unable to *pass* as Christian) and so poor that she sleeps in ditches and begs for money outside the Church; Bridget Bishop, a woman who lived with her now-husband for three years before she married him, and Isaac Ward, a man that drank his family into ruin. These plausible scapegoats allowed Tituba and the rest of the girls to internally justify that these people in some way *deserved* to be accused.

In the following scene, Tituba is further interrogated by Reverend Hale and Reverend Parris after having just confessed…

> **Hale:** Who came with you to the Devil? Two? Three? Four? How many?
>
> **Tituba:** There was four. There was four.
>
> **Parris:** Who? Who? Their names, their names!
>
> **Tituba:** Oh, how many times he bid me kill you, Mr Parris!
>
> **Parris:** Kill me!
>
> **Tituba:** He say Mr Parris must be kill! Mr Parris no goodly man, Mr Parris mean man and no gentle man, and he bid me rise out of my bed and cut your throat! But I tell him 'No! I don't hate that man. I don't want to kill that man.' But he say, 'You work for me, Tituba, and I make you free! I give you pretty dress to wear, and put you way high up in the air, and you gone fly back to Barbados! And I say 'You lie, Devil, you lie!' And then he come one stormy night to me, and he say, 'Look! I have white people belong to me.' And I look- and there was Goody Good.
>
> **Parris:** Sarah Good.
>
> **Tituba:** Aye sir, and Goody Osburn.
>
> **Mrs Putnam:** I knew it! Goody Osburn were midwife to me three times. I begged you, Thomas, did I not? I begged him not to call Osburn because I feared her. My babies have always shrivelled in her hands.

> **Hale:** Take courage, you must give us all their names. How can you bear to see this child suffering? Look at her, Tituba. (*He is indicating Betty on the bed.)* Look at her God-given innocence; her soul is so tender; we must protect her, Tituba; the Devil is out and preying on her like a beast upon the flesh of the pure lamb. God will bless you for your help.
>
> **Abigail:** (*rises staring as though inspired, and cries out.)* I want to open myself! (*they turn to her, startled*). I want the sweet love of Jesus! I danced for the Devil; I saw him; I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus; I kiss his hand. I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil!
>
> (*as she is speaking, Betty is rising from the bed, a fever in her eyes and picks up the chant*)
>
> **Betty:** I saw George Jacobs with the Devil! I saw Goody Howe with the Devil!
>
> **Parris:** She speaks! She speaks!
>
> **Hale:** Glory to God! It is broken, they are free!
>
> **Betty:** I saw Martha Bellows with the Devil!
>
> **Abigail:** I saw Goody Sibber with the Devil!
>
> **Putnam:** The marshal, I'll call the marshal!
>
> **Betty:** I saw Alice Barrow with the Devil!
>
> **Hale:** Let the marshal bring irons!
>
> **Abigail:** I saw Goody Hawkins with the Devil!
>
> **Betty:** I saw Goody Bibber with the Devil!
>
> **Abigail:** I saw Goody Booth with the Devil!
>
> Act 1 pp. 38-40

Ultimately, while Tituba's false confessions led to the witch-hunt, Miller's framing of her is not wholly negative, but rather one of sympathy. It appears as though Miller recognised that Tituba would be the perfect scapegoat for Abigail to use, as her status in society along with her background and heritage would work against her. This is why Tituba's false confession was one of survival, as a black slave from Barbados with fewer rights than her white female *counterparts*, Tituba needed to *pass* for 'redeemed' to escape the harsh(er) implications of someone like *her* being accused of witchcraft.

Additionally, Miller succeeds in placing Tituba in a subversive role here, where in which she is able to criticise race, and declare how little she has in Salem, and how she is not allowed to return home. These are all the things that the devil is able to offer her, and Parris is not; and so, Tituba uses this moment to criticise Parris, and suggest that he is not what he appears to be and strategically threatens him, knowing that a passer's biggest fear is being 'found out'.

According to Çakirtas (2013):

> Miller has created two characters who represent people from real life. As he himself was unjustly accused of Communism, he is of the opinion that the motivation behind

> all these unfounded accusations is to intimidate people by creating a 'politics of fear'. So too Tituba is accused of witchcraft although she is not in fact involved in it. The other representative character, Abigail Williams, prefers to accuse other people around her in order to refute the accusation of witchcraft levelled against her. Tituba is the ideal person to accuse of witchcraft. Because she is different; she can be more easily associated with Devil; her colour is as black as the Devil's. Joseph McCarthy exhibits attitudes similar to Abigail's when he makes accusations against those who may be against him in his political career. Tituba and John [Proctor] have to obey what 'the authority' orders them to do "Because their lives are not their own" (Petry, 1991. p. 86), and Miller has to obey the rules; he has to be for America and not against it, because "a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between". (p. 20)

It can be argued, however, that falsely confessing to an identity to that which one does not truly belong, as Tituba, Abigail and Betty do, could imply that they were *passing* for witches redeemed. However, while that may be true, Miller works to emphasise Abigail's lack of piety and transgressive behaviours in more detail than that of the other characters, as he does with her uncle, Parris. Ultimately, being the niece of a Reverend in theocratic Salem leaves little room for Abigail to be anything but religious and devout, and although she works hard to pass for possessing these traits, Miller labours to demonstrate how far removed she is from them. As Munaro (2018) explains: "Generally, a person who passes does so because she wishes to conform to certain norms imposed, on a cultural level, by society, in order to not feel excluded by those belonging to the mainstream." (p.12). Although Abigail *passes* in these ways, she does not fully assume Christian devoutness but only appears to. It was Abigail, the niece of a Reverend, who had an affair with John Proctor, who coerced Tituba to perform a charm to kill John's wife, falsely accused Tituba of witchcraft to save herself and incriminated various villagers (Çakirtas, 2013).

It needs to be emphasised, however, that Miller's negative framing of *the witch-passers* in the case of the Salem witch trials is to some extent, extreme. In comparison to McCarthyism, it was far easier to refuse to pass, and refuse to lie and incriminate others as one's life did not depend on it, but in the case of *The Crucible,* however, passing as a previous 'devil sympathiser' turned 'devout Christian' should not be framed as an act of moral corruption, but rather as one done out of desperation. During the apartheid years in South Africa, people classified as coloureds who were able

to pass for white to escape discrimination and harsh racial laws, did so out of desperation for their own lives, and many examples of passing are similarly done out of fear for one's personal safety. This is why Miller's portrayal of Reverend Parris's religious passing is far more negatively framed than that of the witch-accused, as it was not an act of survival, but rather one that would allow him to obtain power.

The witch-hunt was "a perverse manifestation of the panic which set in among all classes when the balance began to turn toward greater individual freedom" (p. 5) and was misogynistic and marginalising at its foundation. The witch-hunt also allows for individuals fuelled by private pettiness and animosity to cry witch against their friends and neighbours (Blakesley, 1992).

Toward the end of the play, when the judges start to question the legitimacy of the claims, and after many innocent and honest people have been executed, John Proctor and his wife Elizabeth are both accused. Reverend Parris becomes increasingly concerned about the unruliness that may unfold if the court were to hang John Proctor and two other well-respected women: Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey, as Elizabeth was found to be pregnant, which meant that her death sentence would be postponed for another year. These three individuals are represented positively in the play and are contrasted with Parris for their virtues and genuine piety. They refuse to falsely confess, incriminate others and lie to the court, with the belief that they would receive eternal damnation in the afterlife for their dishonesty.

Miller frames these characters as morally principled people, who much like him, refused to *pass* for what they were not, and held firmly to what was the truth. However, one must bear in mind that Miller was limited in his view, writing from the perspective of a white male who did not have to "pass" in the many ways that the marginalised characters in his text do. This bias is further exemplified by Miller's reproducing of stereotypical gender roles. In particular, we see this in the way certain characters are framed. For example, Elizabeth Proctor is depicted as cold and unforgiving, despite John's affections and penance. By contrast, John is later framed as noble and principled when he forfeits his life, in effect abandoning his pregnant wife and two children for the sake of his honour (Schissel, 1994).

In act four, Reverend Parris reveals to the Salem witch-trial judge, Danforth, that his niece Abigail and her friend, have stolen his money and left Salem. Upon hearing

that people were starting to question the validity of their claims and accusations, Abigail and Mercy leave Salem. To Parris's great displeasure, he realises that hanging John Proctor, Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse would only threaten the legitimacy of his position in the Church, as they were well-respected people in the community.

> **Danforth:** (*Inquiring for Abigail and her friend*) They are both gone?!
>
> **Parris:** They are, sir.
>
> **Danforth:** I will send a party for them. Where may they be?
>
> **Parris:** Excellency, I think they be aboard a ship. My daughter tells me how she heard them speaking of ships last week, and tonight I discover my – my strongbox is broke into.
>
> **Hathorne:** She have robbed you?
>
> **Parris:** Thirty-one pound is gone. I am penniless.
>
> **Danforth:** Mr Parris, you are a brainless man! *(starts to worry about the legitimacy of it all)*
>
> **Parris:** Excellency, it profit nothing you should blame me. I cannot think they would run off except they fear to keep in Salem any more. (*If Abigail's accusations are false, it would look badly on Parris, and so he finds another reason for her disappearance.)* Mark it, sir, Abigail had close knowledge of the town, and since the news of Andover has broken here –
>
> **Danforth:** Andover is remedied. The court returns there on Friday, and will resume examinations.
>
> **Parris:** I am sure of it, sir. But the rumour here speaks rebellion in Andover and it –
>
> **Danforth:** There is no rebellion in Andover!
>
> **Parris:** I tell you what is said here, sir. Andover have thrown out the court, they say, and will have no part of witchcraft. There be a faction here, feeding on that news, and I tell you true, sir, I fear there will be a riot here.
>
> **Hathorne:** Riot! Why, at every execution I have seen naught but high satisfaction in the town.
>
> **Parris:** Judge Hathorne – it were another sort that hanged till now. Rebecca Nurse is no Bridget that lived three year with Bishop before she married him. John Proctor is not Isaac Ward that drank his family to ruin. I would to God if it were not so, Excellency, but these people have great weight yet in the town. Let Rebecca stand upon the gibbet and send up some righteous prayer, and I fear she'll wake a vengeance on you.
>
> **Parris:** It cannot be forgot, sir, that when I summoned the congregation for John Proctor's excommunication there were hardly thirty people come to hear it. That speak a discontent, I think.
>
> (Act 4, pp. 101- 103)

4.11 John Proctor

An important character who subverts the power dynamics of the witch trials is John Proctor. John Proctor represents the archetypal 'tragic hero' – he is forthright and morally principled, although not without fault, and his death at the end of the play provides the final denunciation of the witch-trial frenzy.

The difference between John Proctor and Reverend Parris is that Proctor regrets having an affair with Abigail, and knows that this sin of adultery means that he can no longer claim himself a moral authority, even though others might, and he often refers to himself as a fraud: “I cannot mount the gibbet like a saint. It is a fraud. I am not that man. My honesty is broke, Elizabeth; I am no good man. Nothing’s spoiled by giving them this lie that we are not rotten long before.” (Act 4, p. 109). Essentially, Proctor feels *uncomfortable* passing as unblemished and righteous, when he is cognisant of the fact that he has committed a sin. This false persona affects him so deeply, that he has trouble attending church every Sunday, and his intense distaste for Reverend Parris can be read as ultimately stemming from Proctor being able to recognise another religious passer, as he too struggles with having to be one.

In later scenes when Elizabeth Proctor’s name is mentioned in the court by Abigail, no doubt to have her brought in for trial, Reverend Hale of Beverley the witch-hunter, arrives in the Proctor home to assess the character of Elizabeth. Upon his inspection, he finds nothing but a woman of sincere and devout Christian character – Miller frames Elizabeth as a cold person, albeit genuine and morally principled. Elizabeth is a genuine Christian, who does not need to pass as one, as she is framed as being *truly* devout and without sin.

Following his analysis of Elizabeth, Hale shifts his questions toward John. It is clear that John has been suffering in some way with his observance, and Hale mentions that he has noticed that his Church visits have become less frequent. John answers that seeing Parris in the church “preach nothin’ but golden candlesticks until he had them … hurt my prayer.” (Act 2, p. 56). Proctor’s distaste for Parris stems from his ability to recognise the Reverend’s identity performance. If the Reverend were truly devout (as is expected of a Puritanical leader), he would not covet extravagant displays of wealth, but rather place emphasis on spiritual gain. As such, John represents a threat to Parris, since he is able to see through his façade and potentially “out” him as a passer.

Reverend Hale then performs the ultimate test of true Christian character in act two and asks Elizabeth if she knows her Ten Commandments, as in his view a corrupted Christian soul would not be able to fulfil this task.

> **Hale:** Do you know your commandments, Elizabeth?

Elizabeth: I surely do. There be no mark of blame upon my life, Mr Hale. I am a covenanted Christian woman.

Hale: And you, Mister?

Proctor: I – am sure I do, sir.

Hale: Let you repeat them, if you will.

Proctor: The commandments.

Hale: Aye.

Proctor: Thou shalt not steal. Though shalt not covet they neighbour's goods, nor make unto thee any graven image. Though shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain: though shalt have no gods before me. Though shalt remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy. Though shalt honour thy father and mother. Though shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

Hale: You have said that twice, sir.

Proctor: Aye.

Elizabeth: Adultery, John.

(Act 2. pp.56-57)

Upon reciting his Ten Commandments, Proctor struggles to recall the sixth commandment, and in his failure to do so, Miller frames his internal struggle and unwillingness to *pass* as a "covenanted Christian [man]" as something that is honourable and somewhat bold, as failure to pass this test could be seen as indicative of his soul being corrupt and of Devil worship (Blakesley, 1992).

In the last scene of the play, moments before John Proctor is set to hang, Reverend Hale, upon realising that the entire which-hunt is a farce, and in a desperate attempt to save as many lives as possible, begs Proctor to falsely confess to witch-craft to save his life. Deeply conflicted, and after much time conversing with Elizabeth, John Proctor agrees to verbally confess to witchcraft, but is unwilling to sign his *name* to another lie. Deputy Governor Danforth however, claims that he is not willing to accept Proctor's confession without his signature, to which Proctor asserts:

> (*With a cry of his whole soul)* Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! Because I lie and sign myself to lies! Because I am not worth the dust on the feet of them that hang! How may I live without my name? I have given you my soul; leave me my name! (Act 4, p. 115)

Instantly Proctor then realises that he will not be able to live with himself if he were to sign his name to another lie, and in a valiant act tears up the paper and declares that he would rather hang than put his name to a lie.

> **Hale:** Man, you will hang! You cannot!
>
> **Proctor:** (*his eyes full of tears*) I can. And there's your first marvel, that I can. You have made your magic now, for now I do not think I see some shred of goodness in John Proctor. Not enough to weave a banner with, but white enough to keep it from such dogs.
>
> (Act 4, pp. 115-116)

Arguably, in Miller's framing of Proctor, he labours to demonstrate a sense of bravery in being genuine, morally principled and forthright. In Proctor's refusal to sign his name, one is reminded of the apartheid years in South Africa, where in which many individuals who could pass for white did so, in order to avoid the harsh racial discrimination and living conditions forced upon them by government. The many who did pass were often forced to change their *names* and cease communication with their families and adopt a brand-new persona (Hoegberg, 2018).

However, in *The Crucible* there exists a social order, but it is not truly based on goodness or morality. Rather, it is based on creating and preserving a hierarchy whereby religious leaders govern, and the society's undesirables remain at the bottom. The passing that occurred in this play was used as a means to gain power and respect, whereas the light-skinned non-white individual during apartheid used passing as a strategic way of avoiding discrimination and poverty, and here we are reminded of Tituba who had been framed negatively for doing exactly the same.

Miller falls short at the end of the play, however, when he has Proctor refuse to sign his name. In Proctor's refusal he gives legitimacy to the hierarchy even though he is well aware that it is a farce. He then sacrifices himself not to destroy the hierarchy, but to redeem his soul and save his name. We see John as foolish in his final act, as he did not understand the idea that the entire social contract of religious piety in Salem was a ruse, and the reader might consider that far more noble act would have been in Proctor's willingness to live, and work to transform the hierarchy which allowed for people like Parris to dictate who shall live and who shall die.

4.12 Conclusion

In line with Ladson-Billings's (2006) culturally relevant pedagogy, which takes into account learners' context, I use the lens of passing to draw parallels between the

hierarchies that existed during the apartheid regime and those of Salem. Passing has a rich history in South Africa, and we see numerous instances of this in the play. Most overt is Reverend Parris, who uses passing as a strategic tool to gain power. Additionally, there are clear similarities between South Africans who chose to pass to avoid racial discrimination and the witch-accused, who used religious passing in order to escape persecution. Without this lens, the context of the play would be inaccessible and culturally foreign to South African learners. The next chapter will explore Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* where the lines between religious passing and racial passing are not always as clear.

Chapter 5: African literature in South African English Classrooms: A Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Literacy Approach

5.1 Section 1: *Purple Hibiscus*

This chapter will perform a critical discourse analysis on two African texts, namely Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and Zoe Wicomb's *Playing in The Light*. This chapter will confront the social and political aspects of these texts to explore how issues of language and power are represented, how ideologies are communicated through these texts, and the ways in which South African learners can engage in critical ways with African literature. When content is relevant, it becomes easier to link certain aspects of what the characters experience to learners' own lives, thus making the content meaningful and allowing learners to engage with social issues in their own communities. In this chapter, the concept of passing will be explored in both texts as a threshold concept into thinking about the fluidity of identities.

Similar to South Africa, where the effects of apartheid still linger to this day, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* takes place after Nigeria's independence from British colonial rule. Nigerian society had been heavily influenced by British culture, with its effects lingering for many years after Nigeria's independence in 1963. Ultimately, once the British imposed their Western traditions on the people of Nigeria, their native systems and culture were systematically eroded, and once the missionaries came to Nigeria, a significant portion of the Igbo people converted to Christianity, often at the expense of distancing themselves from their indigenous culture and heritage (Foreman, 2017).

The novel begins with Kambili Achike, a fifteen-year-old girl living in Nigeria with her older brother Jaja, her mother 'Mama' Beatrice and her devout Christian father, 'Papa' Eugene. The story begins on Palm Sunday when her brother Jaja refuses to go to communion. Enraged by his son's disobedience, Papa throws his missal towards Jaja – it misses him and breaks Beatrice's ballerina figurines on the etagere. Kambili then goes on to describe the events which lead to Jaja's defiance and when things begin to "fall apart" (p. 3).

Eugene Achike or ‘Papa’ is a wealthy factory owner, philanthropist, publisher of the English newspaper called *The Standard* and a converted Catholic. He prides himself on his commitment to criticise and report on the new Nigerian Head of State, and his commitment to the church. However, behind closed doors, Eugene Achike is a violent and abusive man, who believes it to be his sacred duty to carry out religious punishments toward his family. For this reason, Kambili, Jaja and Beatrice often find themselves riddled with fear and are unable to express any criticism of Eugene’s violence and control.

Strobie (2010) describes Adichie’s portrayal of Eugene’s contradictory nature as follows:

> Adichie is at pains to reveal the complicity of widespread sectors of society in condoning violence and abuse. Moreover, she does not portray Eugene simply as a hypocritical villain, but reveals complexities and contradictions in his character, showing ways in which he is principled, courageous and justly honoured. Motivated by his Western ideals of democracy, freedom of speech and the importance of the media, as well as his psychological urge to occupy the moral high ground, Eugene is a fearless publisher of a newspaper that exposes state corruption. (p. 424)

Thus, despite Eugene’s violent presence in his home, his public image is of a respectable man and a good Christian.

Christmas arrives and the Achike family travel to their home village of Abba. Eugene’s father, Papa-Nnukwu, lives in Abba, but he never visits his own father because Papa-Nnukwu refuses to convert and become a Catholic. Eugene, however, allows his children to visit their grandfather, but only for fifteen minutes at a time, lest his father’s indigenous beliefs influence his children.

The narrative then takes a positive turn as we are introduced to Eugene’s sister, Aunty Ifeoma. She arrives in Abba with her three children from Nsukka and comes to celebrate Christmas with Eugene and his family at his enormous compound. She and her children visit Papa-Nnukwu for longer than fifteen minutes and Kambili is not sure what to think about her aunt and her cousins’ freedom. Aunty Ifeoma, a widow and university professor in Nsukka, is fearless and strong – she directly challenges Eugene and the government, and her daughter Amaka and sons Obiora and Chima are similar to her: intelligent, outspoken and full of life.

The next afternoon, Ifeoma convinces Eugene to let Jaja and Kambili visit her in Nsukka. Some weeks later when Kambili and Jaja arrive, they are shocked at Ifeoma's poverty and her small flat that is home to her and her three children. Some days after the children arrive, Aunty Ifeoma learns that Papa-Nnukwu is ill and that she should come to Abba to fetch him. Kambili grows increasingly anxious about her grandfather, a "heathen", sleeping under the same roof, but does not tell her father that he is coming to stay with them when he calls that night. Upon her grandfather's arrival, Kambili can hardly believe how loving Aunty Ifeoma's children are towards him.

The following day Aunty Ifeoma wakes Kambili early to watch Papa-Nnukwu performing his morning ritual. Her grandfather's ritual consists of prayer and requesting forgiveness from the gods. As Kambili observes her grandfather, she recognises that his ritual is somewhat similar to that of Catholic confession, and her impression of him as being a heathen shifts.

Eugene eventually discovers that his father is staying at his sister's house and comes to fetch his children from Nsukka, but not before Papa-Nnukwu passes away in his sleep. When Kambili and Jaja arrive home in Enugu, Eugene punishes his children for not telling him that they were living under the same roof as a heathen. He calls Kambili to the bath and proceeds to throw boiling hot water over her legs and feet. However, during this episode, she notices what appears to be *tears* in his eyes.

In these abusive instances, we see Kambili as being able to form a "critical perception" of her father, "through her discernment of [...] moments in which what [Eugene] does contradicts what he appears to feel" (Ouma, 2009, p. 55). In spite of her fear of the punishment that is to come, Kambili nevertheless takes a mental note of the tears in her father's eyes as he carries out her punishment. This episode illustrates that Eugene takes no pleasure in administering these punishments; we later learn that these punishments were part of his education under the Christian missionaries. Eugene therefore believes his actions to be justified as he attempts to emulate their practices, regardless of how inhumane these rituals may be.

When Kambili and Jaja arrive back in Nsukka, Aunty Ifeoma tells them that she may lose her job for speaking out against the 'sole administrator' appointed by the

government. Within the next few days, the political situation deteriorates quickly, as the university closes after a student riot and men from the government arrive at the flat and ransack it, trying to intimidate Ifeoma.

After Eugene comes to fetch his family from Nsukka, the next day is Palm Sunday, the moment when Jaja stands up to his father that was described at the beginning of the novel. After that Sunday, things start to change, and there is an air of defiance in the house as Eugene falls ill. A few weeks later, Aunty Ifeoma calls to tell the family that she has been fired and is going to try to obtain a visa to leave for America.

A few days later, and after Aunt Ifeoma takes Kambili on a Pilgrimage to Aokpe, Beatrice calls the house and informs Ifeoma that Eugene was found dead at his desk. The family then leaves Nsukka to go to Enugu. When Eugene's autopsy is complete, Beatrice admits to having poisoned her husband after he caused her second miscarriage. When the police arrive, Jaja takes the blame for the crime.

Strobie (2010) frames Beatrice's first and final act of defiance as a necessary evil:

> Excluded from access to forms of power that will protect herself and her children, Beatrice resorts to violence herself. The murder is not portrayed as a triumph, but as a sad necessity, and causes deep pain as Kambili yearns for her father, Jaja altruistically claims responsibility for the poisoning and is jailed, and Beatrice becomes deranged by guilt. (p. 427)

The story ends three years later when Jaja's prison sentence is almost over. With time, Beatrice has become withdrawn and hardly speaks at all, and it is clear that Kambili has matured in many ways. After Kambili informs Jaja that he will soon be released, she allows herself to finally feel hopeful about her future and her freedom.

5.2 Passing in *Purple Hibiscus*: A critical discourse analysis

Janks's (1997) framework for critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be used to analyse some of the ideological underpinnings found in *Purple Hibiscus*. Through CDA, the relationship between the text and social practices will be explored, along with the way certain social issues have been represented by Adichie – this is done by exploring some of the dominant ideologies embedded in the text and bringing them to light. CDA will be used more explicitly here to explore Adichie's stance on

passing, and, in particular, how Eugene Achike strategically uses passing to further himself socially in colonial Nigeria.

On the character of Eugene Achike, Adichie (2003) writes:

> I wanted to write the modern take. I wanted Papa [Eugene] to be a man who did horrible things but who, ultimately, wasn't a monster. Unless he was complex it would be easy to dismiss him. There are lots of people who are kind and generous and thoughtful but, in the name of religion, do all sorts of awful things. (p. 4)

Eugene is a complex character. On the one hand, we see a man who is generous and unfailingly kind, while on the other, we are presented with a physically abusive husband and father who carries out, what appears to be, punishments based on his religious beliefs. However, these conflicting traits are not uncommon in fictional passers, who out of fear of being *found out* or *discovered* go to extreme lengths to ensure the longevity of their identity performance. For the sake of this thesis, Eugene's domestic violence will be viewed as a manifestation of his anxiety of being *discovered.* Ultimately, for Eugene's *real* identity to be *discovered*, it would then indicate that Eugene believes that he is playing, or passing for something that he does not believe he was allocated at birth (Harsh, 2017).

After Eugene's conversion to Catholicism and eventual disassociation from his Igbo culture, it can be argued that Eugene begins to play white. This is made obvious as we see him identify as a black, English speaking, Catholic man with Western traditions.

Eugene's dissociation with his familial roots and Igbo culture occurs soon after Eugene's conversion to Christianity. Although not mentioned explicitly, it becomes overt that in his youth, Eugene had been taught about his culture and race by the missionaries and English educators, who had painted a negative image of the indigenous African community. This degrading image of his people had Eugene believe that if he disassociated himself with his familial roots and adopted a new persona, he would be able to separate himself from that image (Léglise & Migge, 2008).

In the excerpt below, Ngũgĩ (1986) illustrates how the Colonists would enter Africa, and through education, expose the indigenous people to degrading images of themselves in an effort to maintain superiority over all others.

> [A child was] exposed to images of his world as mirrored in the written languages of his coloniser, where his own native languages were associated in his impressionable mind with low status, humiliation, corporal punishment, slow-footed intelligence and ability or downright stupidity, non-intelligibility and barbarism, this was reinforced [and internalised] by the world he met in the works of such geniuses of racism. (p. 392)

As a result of the negative perception Eugene holds of not only his culture and familial roots, but of himself as well, Eugene assumes a different identity that he associates with power and privilege. He changes his name to Eugene, modifies his speech and behaviour and elects to converse only in English. Not only does Eugene assert control over his own body by changing his accent and language use, but he succeeds in controlling that of his entire family, including his wife, Beatrice. His children have to not only be seen as perfect, but are forced to maintain this same semblance of perfection in all of their endeavours, especially academically. Any slip-ups on their part require severe punishment from Eugene. Arguably, it becomes clear that Eugene's need to control his family's behaviour has more to do with his fear of being viewed as an African "native" in the eyes of the white settlers, and all of the negative traits he believes are associated with such a term, and less to do with him being a violent human being. This fear can be viewed as the driving force behind Eugene Achike's domestic violence (Mcbean & Johnston, 2018). While this is no justification for domestic abuse as depicted in the novel nor as is widespread in many parts of the world, it is an alternative way of understanding Eugene's character that allows for seeing his actions as the negotiation of a *non*-black, *non*-heathen identity through acts of violence.

As Munaro (2018) explains: "Passing often derives from a simple wish for something more, for a more peaceful and equal environment. The huge inferiority and inequality of the minor races, in fact, is paralleled by the equality and fairness experienced by the mainstream" (pp. 1-2). In the case of Eugene Achike, however, his racial inferiority complex is propelled by colonial ideology, and it drives him to seek perfection in every facet of his life. By controlling and dominating his family, Eugene is able to ensure that outward displays of "perfection" are achieved, even if this is achieved through abuse.

5.3 Eugene Achike: The religious passer

Eugene Achike is a man ruled by his sense of fear. He lives in constant fear of his familial roots impeding on his Catholic, "civilised" life and what others, like Father Benedict, might think of him should his family fall out of line; he even goes as far as to excommunicate his eighty-year-old father in his refusal to give up his 'pagan' culture and convert to Christianity.

This strict religious adherence can be seen in the following quote where Ifeoma confronts Beatrice about Eugene's refusal to reconnect with his father:

> Eugene quarrels with the truths that he does not like. Our father is dying, do you hear me? Dying. He is an old man, how much longer does he have, *gbo*? Yet Eugene will not let him into this house, will not even greet him. *O joka*! Eugene has to stop doing God's job. God is big enough to do his own job. If God will judge our father for choosing to follow the way of our ancestors, then let God do the judging, not Eugene. (pp. 95-96)

Ultimately, it is essential to Eugene that he is accepted by the Church and Father Benedict, and that he is regarded as dutiful, devout and religious by all means necessary, even if this means excommunicating his father. Stemming from Eugene's belief of his inherited inadequacy, he strives for an impossible level of perfection.

One aspect of his constructed image is his public image as a generous man in the community. According to Foreman (2017), it was crucial to Eugene that he be regarded as kind, generous, and pious. This is made clear when Eugene hands out money to children but insists that they show their parents the money before spending it: "Papa gave them each ten naira from a wad of notes he pulled out of his hold-all. 'Greet your parents, make sure you show them this money'" (p. 54). From this, we see how important it was to Eugene that the parents of the recipients knew *who* gave their children the money, and that they would think of him as generous.

This act on Eugene's part is viewed by Foreman (2017) as being incongruent with true Christian devoutness, as it contradicts Biblical teachings of modesty. However, Foreman then goes on to demonstrate that while these acts demonstrate hypocrisy in Eugene, they also succeed in demonstrating how Eugene engages in a performative type of charitable Christianity which allows him to strategically gain respect from the community.

At the beginning of the novel, Kambili tries to hide her pride for her father, when Father Benedict makes reference to all of the good that Eugene has done for the Church and the Nigerian community as a whole. And although Eugene claims modesty to be of the utmost importance, he does not interrupt Father Benedict from singing his praises during church:

> During his sermons, Father Benedict usually referred to the pope, Papa and Jesus- in that order. He used Papa to illustrate the gospels. “When we let our light shine before men, we are reflecting Christ’s Triumphant Entry,” he said that Palm Sunday. “Look at Brother Eugene. He could have chosen to be like other Big Men in this country, he could have decided to sit at home and do nothing after the coup, to make sure the government did not threaten his business. But no, he used the *Standard* to speak the truth even though it meant that the paper lost advertising. Brother Eugene spoke out for freedom. How many of us have stood up for the truth? How many of us have reflected the Triumphant Entry? (pp. 4-5)

Ultimately, Eugene demonstrates how one can strategically construct an identity to gain respect and admiration from society. In Eugene playing the role of the generous and devout Christian, he thinks that he is able to attain a similar level of respect normally afforded to the white Christian colonists. In the next section, I will examine another aspect of Eugene’s identity through his use of language, which he uses to reinforce his perceived image.

5.4 Eugene: The colonial product

According to Ngũgĩ (1986), colonists would propagate the notion of Western superiority through missionaries. In particular, their teachings would portray the indigenous people as uncivilised, unintelligent and inferior to the European race. Bearing this in mind, one can argue that Eugene’s first experience with the British missionaries was not too different to the one Ngũgĩ illustrates, and it is due to this picture that Eugene struggles with his feelings of inadequacy. As Nutsukpo (2017) explains:

> Eugene’s formative years spent with a Reverend Father who disciplined him through physical abuse seem to have left their mark on him. Should he then be absolved from his atrocities which are wreaked only on his wife, children, sister and father, the very people he should have been protecting? In my candid opinion, forgiveness – yes;

> absolution - no! Eugene, the “man of integrity”, “the bravest man”, “the philanthropist”, is the same man who scalds his innocent daughter’s feet, maims his son, batters his wife, denies his sister of material support and encouragement, and turns his back on his aged father when he needs him most. All these atrocities he endeavours to carefully and effectively conceal from the public in order to preserve his hypocrisy. (p. 124)

Nutsukpo (2017) maintains that Eugene masks his true violent identity, by hiding behind the facade of the “man of integrity”, “the bravest man” and “the philanthropist”, all the while abusing his wife and two children. However, another reading of Eugene’s identity performance is that Eugene carries out the same violent discipline that was meted out to him as a child. He does this to his family, not because he has a tendency for violence, but rather because he believes it to be what white people do, and white people, as Eugene notes, “[do] things the right way [...] not the way our people do [things].” (p. 68). These pronouncements on Eugene’s part demonstrate not only his investment in coloniality (Mignolo, 2005), but also show how he tries to emulate whiteness due to its link to righteousness in his mind.

Upon her visit to Abba, Kambili draws a strong comparison between the way Eugene treats his father, as compared to the way he treated her mother’s father. Considering the negative image Eugene holds of his familial roots and culture, one can understand why he so strongly approved of his father-in-law over his own father, Papa-Nnukwu.

> If Papa-Nnukwu minded that his son sent him impersonal, paltry amounts of money through a driver, he didn’t show it. He had never shown it. It was so different to the way he treated my maternal grandfather until he died five years ago. When we arrived at Abba every Christmas, Papa would stop by Grandfather’s house at our ikwu nne, Mother’s maiden home, before we even drove to our own compound. Grandfather was very light skinned, almost albino, and it was said to be one of the reasons the missionaries had liked him. He determinedly spoke English, always, in a heavy Igbo accent. He knew Latin, too, often quoted the articles of the Vatican I, and spent most of his time at St. Paul’s, where he had been the first catechist. He had insisted that we call him Grandfather, in English, rather than Papa-Nnukwu or Nna-Ochie. Papa still talked about him often, his eyes proud, as if Grandfather were his own father. He opened his eyes before many of our people did, Papa would always say; he was one of the few who welcomed the missionaries. Do you know how

> quickly he learned English? When he became an interpreter, do you know how many converts he helped with? Why, he converted most of Abba himself! He did things the right way, the way the white people did, not what our people do now! (pp. 67-68)

Eugene held Beatrice's light-skinned father in such high regard because he was the embodiment of everything that Eugene aspired to be (Harsh, 2017). Like Eugene, Beatrice's father spoke only English, was well educated and well-liked by the missionaries, spent most of his time at St Paul's and converted most of Abba. All of these traits are congruent with what Eugene values most, and align with what Eugene attempts to carry out as he performs the role of Eugene Achike: the intelligent, sophisticated, noble and charitable Christian, traits he associates with whiteness. It is thus also significant that Grandfather was light-skinned, as in the colonial framework constructed in the novel, this associated him more closely with whiteness and its concomitant power.

For Eugene, it was critical that he *appear* as separate and dissimilar to the people of his homeland as possible, and there is evidence in the novel where Eugene would change his accent to sound more sophisticated, one step further from his father-in-law, "who spoke English with a heavy Igbo accent" (p. 67). Later in the novel, Kambili explains how her father would often *alter* and change his mannerisms to appear more cultured when he spoke to people who he held in high regard (Ogwude, 2011). "Papa changed his accent when he spoke, sounding British, just as he did when he spoke to Father Benedict. He was gracious, in the eager-to-please way that he always assumed with the white religious." (Adichie, 2003, p. 46).

Kambili later claims that when the family travelled to Abba for Christmas, the villagers would speak English around her father, as though implying that speaking Igbo around Eugene was disrespectful, as though he could not speak or understand it because he was not one of them. "Papa liked it when villagers made an effort to speak English around him. He said it showed that they had good sense" (p.60). Ultimately, we see Eugene use language to construct his new identity, and this is the reason why we later see the children being forced to speak English in public. For Eugene, speaking Igbo is tied to an identity he wishes to disassociate from, but speaking English alludes to Eugene's ideas of superiority, culture and sophistication (Léglise & Migge, 2008).

Although Eugene maintains a semblance of being "sophisticated" externally, inwardly, Eugene's anxiety, combined with his feelings of inadequacy, seem to regularly require an outlet. Although this often happens in the form of domestic violence, in the passage below, Kambili describes what happens when her father loses his temper, and finds himself speaking entirely in Igbo:

> Papa was staring pointedly at Jaja. "Jaja, have you not shared a drink with us, *gbo*? Have you no words in your mouth?" he asked, entirely in Igbo. A bad sign. He hardly spoke Igbo, and although Jaja and I spoke it with Mama at home, he did not like us to speak it in public. We had to sound civilized in public, he told us; we had to speak English. Papa's sister, Aunty Ifeoma said once that Papa was too much of a colonial product. She had said this about Papa in a mild, forgiving way, as if it were not Papa's fault, as one would talk about a person who was shouting gibberish from a severe case of Malaria. (p. 13)

In the excerpt below, Léglise and Migge (2008) give reason as to why Eugene associates speaking English, especially in public, in front of others, with appearing sophisticated and "civilised":

> First, colonisation gave rise to a new language hierarchy in which the language of the coloniser was inscribed as the most prestigious language and came to dominate the administrative and mercantile structure of each colony. [...] the British, in accordance with their "divide and rule" policy, supported the dominant languages in their colonies but this had the same effect of affirming the European language as the most prestigious language. These practices had a crucial impact on the local linguistic situation. African languages, for instance, were firmly assigned to the bottom of the language hierarchy and, at best, received auxiliary status. [...] The coloniser's language, by contrast, became a necessity for all those who wished to advance socially and to participate in the colony's public sphere. Especially socially up-ward mobile people quickly came to eschew the local languages and to favour the colonial language. The educated increasingly opted to raising their children in the colonial language rather than in an African language. (pp. 5-6)

Because speaking English alludes to not only Eugene's ideas of superiority, culture and sophistication, but to those who wished to "advance socially and to participate in the colony's public sphere" as well, it becomes clear why Eugene places such strong emphasis on his entire family speaking English (Léglise & Migge, 2008, p. 6). Not only does Eugene use language to separate himself from his Igbo roots, but he is

also required to use it in his identity construction if he is to attain upward social mobility.

Eugene's identity is based on his charitable acts, his external appearance as a devout and pious Christian, and his use of English to separate himself from his Igbo roots. However, there remains one person – Aunty Ifeoma – who is able to recognise and challenge his pretences.

5.5 Aunty Ifeoma: The thorn in Eugene's side

Ifeoma, like Tom Buchanan and John Proctor in their respective texts, represents the personification of the anxiety Eugene feels. Eugene respects Ifeoma, but this is only because he is terrified of her: he is aware that she can see through his pretence, and if provoked, Ifeoma might share that Eugene is not always what he appears to be.

Aunty Ifeoma is framed as provocative, bold and independent. Like John Proctor is able to see through Reverend Parris's façade, and Tom Buchanan through Gatsby's pretence, Ifeoma sees through her brother's false sense of piety. It is through her that the children are able to see through the cracks and are thus able to eventually liberate themselves from their father and his abuse (Nutsukpo, 2017). Consequently, it is "Aunty Ifeoma's self-consciousness and refusal to be contained in the limits established by her brother [that will awaken] a new consciousness in the main narrator and character, Kambili." (Udumukwu, 2011, p. 199)

According to Udumukwu (2011), "[Ifeoma] speaks out of a different perspective that translates as a conscious negation of the perception of Eugene as a god. As we have seen earlier Eugene has a self-image of himself that makes him construct others in terms of ownership [and] it is this self-image that Aunty Ifeoma [...] is meant to demystify" (p. 197). Another aspect of Ifeoma's character is her ability to assert her individuality against Eugene, unlike the rest of the females in Eugene's life. In her defiance, she saves herself from living under Eugene's dictatorship, even if it means turning down money from Eugene that she needs for her family (Emmanuel, 2017).

> Aunty Ifeoma was whispering, too, but I heard her well. Her whisper was like her- tall, exuberant, fearless, loud, larger than life. "Have you forgotten that Eugene offered to

> buy me a car, even before Ifediora died? But first he wanted us to join the Knights of St. John. He wanted us to send Amaka to convent school. He even wanted me to stop wearing makeup! I want a new car, *nwunye m*, and I want to use my gas cooker again and I want a new freezer and I want money so that I will not have to unravel the seams of Chima's trousers when he outgrows them. But I will not ask my brother to bend over so that I can lick his buttocks to get these things." (p. 95)

Ultimately, Ifeoma's trenchant disapproval of her brother's persona of devoutness represents an obstacle to Eugene, and Ifeoma consistently works to push and challenge his boundaries throughout the novel, although not quite understanding the severity of the consequences for his family should she push him too far (Ogwude, 2011). Ifeoma's provocative character also triggers feelings of anxiety in Kambili, especially in instances when she witnesses her aunt blatantly challenge the father she fears and loves:

> Every time Aunty Ifeoma spoke to Papa, my heart stopped then started again in a hurry. It was the flippant tone; she did not seem to recognize that it was Papa, that he was different, special. I wanted to reach out and press her lips shut and get some of that shiny bronze lipstick on my fingers. (p. 77)

In viewing her father as "special", we see that Kambili is convinced by Eugene's identity performance. Her aunt's critical perspective of Eugene, however, is therefore a crucial turning point in the text, as Kambili begins to see beyond the image of Eugene as the perfect father. This realisation is strengthened when she visits her aunt and discovers that her father's edicts are suffocating, and prevent her from experiencing a healthy childhood.

5.6 Conclusion

This section has explored the ways in which Eugene uses his identity to achieve his goals. Like our previous fictional passer Gatsby, we see Eugene denounce his heritage in an attempt to disassociate himself from the negative image painted by dominant white groups. In the next section, we will explore *Playing in the Light*, a text whose main theme centres on the denouncement of one's past and familial roots in order to achieve upward social mobility.

5.7 Section 2: *Playing in the Light*

The last section of Chapter five will perform a critical discourse analysis on Zoë Wicomb's *Playing in The Light.* Moreover, this section will work to highlight the social and political elements found within the text with the intention of exploring how racial ideologies are communicated. By exploring the social and political elements embedded in the text, South African educators are able to consider the different ways in which South African learners could better relate to texts of this nature. By employing threshold concepts like passing and exploring texts that specifically address these ideas, classrooms can become spaces that work to challenge powerful ideologies. In this section, the concept of passing will be explored as a threshold concept into thinking about the fluidity of identities.

Although this text is not currently prescribed in the South African curriculum, this thesis maintains that more texts of this nature *should* be prescribed, as they allow for powerful critical discussions of identities and social realities in South Africa, and can be tools for fostering greater consciousness in learners of power relations in societies. *Playing in The Light* would present learners with a narrative that is unique to the South African struggle. Learning about racial passing through characters that learners can connect with and understand makes the content all the more empowering and meaningful, especially as they attempt to subvert the powerful racial apartheid classifications, the effects of which still linger to this day.

The novel *Playing in the Light* offers an array of insights into the enduring discrimination and racism in post-apartheid South Africa, and it does so through a narrative focusing on racial passing. Moreover, it presents South African literature as "a medium through which to come to terms with racial fluidity as well as reconciling a violent past that depended upon static categories of race" (Wiltshire, 2018, p. 90).

5.8 *Playing in the Light*: A summary

Playing in The Light starts with Marion Campbell, a young woman of English and Afrikaans background living in Cape Town in the late nineties. The novel introduces

Marion, a travel agency owner and daughter of deceased mother Helen and widowed father John. Her father is elderly and frail, and at many times expresses racist viewpoints and beliefs.

As a travel agency owner who hates travel, Marion begins to engage in her own "contemporary fuss about authenticity" (Robolin, 2011, p. 40). After becoming emotionally shaken and haunted by the face of a woman on the front page of the *Cape Times.* Marion begins to confront her troubled past with the help of Brenda, a young and new employee at her travel agency the first coloured woman she has ever hired.

Marion realises that the woman in the *Cape Times* reminds her of her childhood domestic worker, Tokkie, whom she remembers with love. Upon confronting her father, John, about what had happened to Tokkie, John's vague response and obvious veiling of the truth sends Marion on a journey to Tokkie's hometown. Marion always knew her family had been keeping something from her, and when she discovers that Tokkie was not her housekeeper, but her maternal grandmother, she learns that her parents are mixed race, and have been passing for white.

Upon Marion's discovery of the family secret, she finds herself resenting her parents for "playing white"; however, it was only when she went to the library in hopes of finding more information on *play-whites*, that she comes to terms with her parents' sacrifice:

> Play-whites: a misnomer if ever there was one. There was nothing playful about their condition. Not only were they deadly serious, but the business of playing white, of bluffing it out, took courage, determination, perseverance, commitment – the list of qualities from which schoolteachers draw up end-of-year reports for star pupils like Helen. Not even in the privacy of their home, between their own four walls, could they let up, act the fool, laugh at those who'd been duped, or mimic their public selves. In the blinding light of whiteness, they walked exposed: pale, vulnerable geckos whose very skeletal systems showed through transparent flesh. With a child to raise, a public-private distinction was a luxury they could not contemplate; the public selves required all their energies. Playing – as others would call it – in the light left no space, no time for inferiority, for reflecting on what they had done. Under the glaring spotlight of whiteness, they played diligently, assiduously; the past, and with-it conscience, shrunk to a black dot in the distance. (pp. 122-123)

One interesting aspect of the excerpt above is Wicomb's use of the word "playing". The word 'playing' has connotations of childhood games that can stop and begin at any given time, something that is carefree and enjoyable. However, in Marion's view, the word is inappropriate, especially with reference to Helen and John playing with the real-life consequences of their choices, and the fact that they could never be at ease or carefree in their lives. Their identity performance means they can no longer be their true selves in public or private, lest they are "found out". Thus, this performance is all encapsulating and is certainly not what one would refer to as 'playing'.

The novel describes a key incident in which John was mistaken for a "boer" (a white Afrikaans farmer) at the traffic department, and how this led to both him and Helen (who also had paler skin) passing for white. Helen differed from John, however, in her need to "settle for no less than respectable whiteness" (p. 131). She resented John, who was more than content to "relax into whiteness as if it were nothing. He had a decent name which he ought to live up to" and Helen "could not forgive Campbell for taking things so easy" (p. 131). John and Helen "did not exchange anecdotes about close shaves. If there were cold shivers when colleagues talked about hotnos or uppity coloureds, they did not tell each other, did not giggle about it in their bedroom, for that space had lost its privacy too" (p. 124). The implication of these passages is that race is an element that consumes the public and private spaces for those engaged in *passing*, and indeed, in the racist society of apartheid South Africa, the novel suggests that all social interactions were tainted by the policing of racial boundaries. Even private moments between John and Helen are filled with anxiety that they could be exposed as transgressing the strict boundaries that determined social and political power.

Ultimately, Helen refuses to settle for anything less than what she deems the most respectable form of whiteness. She understands that even within whiteness there are social hierarchies, and she chooses to aspire to the highest form thereof: white, English-speaking Christian identity. John, however, is content to perform the role of white Afrikaans - an identity he feels is more closely related to that of his own. However, Helen is unsatisfied with this choice and insists that John, too, play the role of an English Christian. Her fervent quest to reinvent herself as a white Christian is reflected in her newfound puritanical behaviour; the phrase "their bedroom... had lost

its privacy" suggests that she has adopted a rigid and detached approach to her marital relations and intimacy with John.

After much thought and deliberation, Marion decides to travel to Europe for a few weeks to find out more about her Scottish ancestry; the fraction of her identity she once believed to be whole (De Michelis, 2012). “Marion’s eventual acceptance of [her] hybridity and [...] fluidity come only after she departs from South Africa and travels to Europe” (Wiltshire, 2018, p. 8). When she arrives home in Cape Town, she finds her sense of emptiness begin to recede and that “she is now able to situate her complicated upbringing in its historical context while praising [her] multiple belongings” (Nishi, 2019, p. 342).

The novel ends with Marion announcing that she will be selling her flat, and buying a new place for her *and* her elderly father to live. Nishi (2019) views this final act as a “symbolic moment” which can be seen as a “departure from her sense of dislocation, [...] a consequence of [the immense] pressure of social and cultural uprooting initiated by her parents” (pp. 342-343). This symbolic moment is Marion’s acceptance of her roots and her reconciliation with her father, as well as her heritage. Neither Helen nor John come to terms with their roots or ancestry, it is only Marion who comes to understand that not only does she have agency over her identities, but she also has the ability to subvert the social construction of race by “playing” with it in a democratic South Africa, seeing herself as neither “coloured” – a widely-used term in South Africa to refer to mixed-race people – nor white. Instead, she is both of these things, a hybrid identity, mirroring the image of the mermaid which is used throughout the text which is both of the land and the sea.

5.9 Racial passing in *Playing in the Light*: A critical discourse analysis

Janks’s (1997) framework for critical discourse analysis will be used to analyse the ideological assumptions found in *Playing in The Light* and to identify and explore how Wicomb frames social issues and practices embedded in the text. Furthermore, CDA will be used to examine how Wicomb brings dominant ideologies to light and attempts to subvert them.

In strong contrast to Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, which framed Reverend Parris and Abigail Williams as disingenuous and insincere in their attempts to further themselves for personal gain, Wicomb uses passing to offer insights into the racism experienced in post-Apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, Wicomb demonstrates passing as a concept that can be used for critical literacy, which works to deconstruct essentialist ideas of identity and race as being fixed (Djelloul & Houcine, 2018). This we see in Helen and John's ability to pass for white, although they were both born and classified by the apartheid government as coloured. This is also evident in Marion's ability to understand that if she so wished, she could "keep crossing to and fro" (p. 107) from one identity to the next, from white Afrikaans, to mixed race, and back again. Essentially, what Wicomb works to demonstrate here, is how Marion is able to assert her agency over both her identity and race, and in doing so, reveals their socially constructed nature. And once Marion illustrates this, she then goes one step further by directly challenging these 'fixed' constructions by crossing back and forth (Propst, 2014).

On the topic of hybridity in the novel, Wiltshire (2018) illustrates:

> Hybridity correlates with Wicomb's presentation of the breakability of apartheid narratives that overlook or intentionally ignore the complexities of apartheid. *Playing in the Light*, [...] reveals the multiracial presence, particularly in post-apartheid South Africa, to be a presence in which, although one's identity is stripped of any sense of belonging to a particular racial group, identity is reconfigured within the context of the nation-wide struggle to overcome an oppressive past. (p. 46)

Although John and Helen prefer to remain fixed in their white identity, Wicomb uses Marion's character to strategically demonstrate and subvert John and Helen's "preoccupations with whiteness and racial purity" as well as their tendency to "cling to notions of race as strictly categorical" (p. 6) and this happens through Marion's "eventual acceptance of [her] hybridity and [...] fluidity" (Wiltshire, 2018, p. 8).

Although Marion's full acceptance of her hybridity happens only towards the end of the novel, it becomes overt that from early on she is able to see beyond the scope of her parents' understanding of identity as being rigid (Ommundsen, 2010). Upon Marion and Brenda's visit to Wuppertal, they encounter an elderly-coloured man named Outa Blinkoog, "harnessed to a ramshackle cart that he drags behind him, and

whose colourful, patchwork clothes, the shiny, outlandish decorations on his cart, and its load of handmade tin and glass toys and other objects all make him appear to be ‘a bundle of bric-a-brac’” (Jacobs, 2008, p. 13).

Blinkoog’s most valuable asset, however, remains a linen cloth adorned with embroidered line drawings containing his life story. The embroidered cloth with its roughly written texts offers Marion

> [an]... alternate concept of identity, not as something fixed at birth but as continually in process of being made and re-made, shaped by the agency of the self but also by others. As a maker of ‘Beautiful Things’ from scraps and broken bits, and as himself ‘a bundle of bric-a-brac’ with one green eye and one black one. Blinkoog is an emblem of the creative bricolage of coloured culture and identity. (Hoegberg, 2018, p. 18)

Although Wicomb uses characters like Blinkoog to demonstrate to Marion how identities can be shaped and reformed, Marion still faces the predicament that

> in contemporary South Africa, theoretically or politically, the notion of “race” is deconstructed and is something that can supposedly be overcome. However, her anxiety is based on the fact that for many, [such as her late mother and now elderly father], “these categories” of race are still socially valid and create different experiences for racialized bodies. (Nishi, 2019, p. 347)

These categories of race will be explored in the next section, with particular reference to John and Helen’s strongly internalised notions of race during the apartheid era. This, in part, discouraged John and especially Helen from “crossing to and fro” (pp. 107), and even much later in contemporary South Africa, we see John struggle as he attempts to grapple with his mixed-race roots after living for so long under the façade of what he believes to be racial superiority. Interestingly enough, it is Marion who is eventually able to “reflect on her white privilege, and is critical of it, but her father is never able to do this” (Andrews, 2021, p. 235), and this may be in part due to John’s deep-rooted internalised and degrading beliefs about any identity that is not white.

In an interview with Wicomb (2018), she expands on her motivations for writing *Playing in the Light*, and goes on to illustrate how racial passers, like John, experienced an ontological crisis in newly democratic South Africa; they now had to grapple with

their painful pasts, and the family they left behind, while, coming to terms with their now false internalised beliefs about race:

> Playing in the Light deals with the South African business of 'playing' white, and the central metaphor of light references the darkness of deprivation under apartheid. It also refers to the advantages of light which paradoxically masks the category of whiteness. The 'playing' is anything but ludic. [...] Now in political terms you may have contempt for play-whites; but as a writer I am interested in what it means for individuals born into a society that is hyper-religious and committed to family values to renounce their families. [...] And the contemporary setting allows me to look at the 1990s in South Africa, which was a period of euphoria after the turmoil of the liberation struggle. But for the play-white, 1994 would have been an historical moment when freedom from the vulgarity of apartheid [and] freedom from constricting racial labels [...] produced not euphoria, but an ontological crisis [...]. Their whiteness, for which they betrayed their families and lost their integrity, turned out to be of no consequence, indeed, to be an embarrassment. [And] for them, there was no liberation, no public discourse of freedom and justice.

From the excerpt above, one can argue that Marion's ability to make peace with her identity and hybridity has a lot to do with the contemporary setting that she grew up in. Marion did not have to sever ties, nor renounce her family, and then in 1994's newly democratic South Africa, experience an ontological crisis that she was able to solve through hybridity. Marion's father, however, who spent many years separated from his family, experiences great difficulty in dealing with the idea that it was all for nought in the end, that there would eventually be a liberation from the constrictive racial labels, and that he had betrayed his family for upward social mobility. There was no Truth and Reconciliation Committee for people like John, and thus there was no real public forum to voice the narratives of racial passing. It is important to note, that while the text centres on Marion's eventual acceptance of her new identity, it is John who experiences the true ontological crisis, as he comes to terms with a past he has been forced to suppress, as well as a daughter that he has lied to, and a sister he has betrayed (Phiri, 2018).

Through Helen, however, Wicomb works to demonstrate how damaging these deep-rooted false notions of race can be, and in Helen's character we are shown the lengths that racialised bodies are willing to travel, to alleviate some of their emo-

tional, social and physical degradation. Ultimately, Helen believes that it is her responsibility as a light-skinned coloured woman to redeem her forebears from the sin of miscegenation with “hotnos and slaves” (p. 126), and so deep-rooted was her belief, that as a young adult Helen changed her surname from Karelse to Charles, and used her light skin strategically in an attempt to further herself socially.

For Helen, playing white was a necessity, and it becomes explicit throughout the text that “she would settle for nothing less than respectable whiteness, certainly not for a destiny determined by [her] distant European ancestors” (p. 131). John, however, who finds himself accidentally “caught in a beam of light” (p. 127) at the traffic department after being mistaken for a *boer*, decides that he enjoyed the respect it earned him, and would be willing to maintain the façade, despite being unaware of the lengths that Helen would eventually go to maintain their social status.

5.10 John and Helen Campbell

John and Helen’s project of passing begins at the Cape Town Traffic Department, when John applies for a job, which, unbeknownst to him, is a job reserved for whites only. The administrator “heard with nostalgia the sunburnt young man’s rough, rolling r’s as the language of a white farmer” (p. 127), and “hears it as a reference to the language of his own rural childhood” (Hoegberg, 2018, p. 8). John soon gathers that he has been mistaken for white, and decides to test the assumption: “Ja-nee Oubaas, he said to the kindly superintendent- although the Campbells would never, not in a million years, have called a white man baas- we can’t have any messing about with the heartbeat of the city” (p. 127). When John sees that “the boss did not flinch at the Oubaas, [but rather] read it as an affectionate mark of respect rather than a sign of racial deference” (p. 127), John realises that in the context of the Traffic Department at least, he is now successfully and effectively white (Hoegberg, 2018).

To Helen, John’s acceptance as white strikes her with “an almost miraculous revelation of the possibilities for individual agency in the process of identity construction” (Hoegberg, 2018, p. 8). For her, it was “a gift, a sign from above that they should set about the task of building new selves” (p. 128), understanding now, that she is no longer restricted to the coloured identity imposed on her by the apartheid regime,

and also disinclined to settle for the white Afrikaans identity the superintendent imposed on her husband at the Traffic Department. Helen instead aims for “a higher form of whiteness and sets about with religious fervour to build a white English identity by means of deliberate citations according to the example John has provided” (Hoegberg, 2018, pp. 8-9). Having already anglicised her maiden name, Helen insists that she and John now marry and relocate to a respectable white neighbourhood.

In the excerpt below, Wicomb (2006) describes how Helen plans to construct her new identity by completely severing ties with the coloured community:

> Then, wide awake, she knew that there was no need for half measures, for sending John off daily into a white world of lies and evasions only to return to darkness in the evenings. She would secure new identities for both of them. But first they had to marry. There was no point in being known in the coloured neighbourhood when, frankly, there was no future in attachments to such people, when the new lives she envisaged demanded a clean slate. (pp. 128-129)

In Helen’s ability to develop such plans, we see that she understands the fluidity of her own identity, and the privilege she was afforded by light skin. She also understands that this fluidity applies not only to herself, but to John as well. Although she has the agency to pass back, to live a double life, she consciously chooses not to as a result of her internalised inferiority complex (Seroto, 2018). This contrasts with Marion, who lives in newly democratic South Africa, and although these racial classifications still exist for her, Marion is able to make peace with her heritage by coming to terms with her identity and thus embracing its hybridity.

According to Hoegberg (2018), although Helen

> embraces the creative possibilities provided by a textual model of identity construction, her self-concept remains tied to biological concepts of race and race-mixture. Feeling trapped by a biological “destiny determined by the vagaries of their distant European ancestors,” she imagines her project as a “crusade” to “redeem” her forebears from the sin of having sex with “hotnos and slaves” (p. 9).

Helen’s attachment to the “shame-inducing terminology of miscegenation” (p. 9), ensures that she remains bound to the hierarchies imposed by the apartheid government, even as she strategises her escape from one of its inferior racial categories.

She is essentially reproducing the racist logics of apartheid for her own benefit while simultaneously transgressing these logics, effectively reinforcing the superiority of "white" over "coloured".

Since Helen deems her own generation as sinful, she uses the redemptive teachings of religion to create a white Christian identity for herself. Much like Christianity's doctrine of "original sin", Helen believes that she has inherited her ancestors' sin of miscegenation, which motivates her constant need to control her environment and her anxiety about being outed as a non-white. This anxiety is also experienced by Eugene Achike in the previous chapter, who we see use violence and abuse to control his family, lest their mishaps "out" him for being imperfect in the eyes of the missionaries. According to Hoegberg (2018), "Helen sees racial passing not as a clever game of posturing but as a difficult calling that demands a life of discipline, vigilance, and self-denial" (pp. 9-10).

Ultimately, Helen treats passing for white as a religious practice that requires a lifetime of dedication. She leaves her neighbourhood, prevents John from seeing his sister, and is even violently opposed to having children, for fear that they would have a darker skin colour (Dass, 2011) and thus expose John and Helen's heritage. We see this puritanical behaviour in the inhabitants of Salem in *The Crucible,* who lionise hard work and utter devotion to their faith. As with the Puritans, who shun those who put seemingly little effort towards religious observance, Helen grows to resent her husband, who she believes puts little effort into passing for white:

> John simply did not pay enough attention. He fell short of her vision; he did not take the task of reinvention seriously. Innocent of the nuances of whiteness, he settled into ignorant complacency. "I am mos a Boer", he said with conviction, and while there may not have been, in cultural terms, much to choose between coloureds and rural Afrikaners, the affinities blinded him to the finer points of advancement in the city. He was content to be mistaken for a Boer. Indeed, that was what had sparked the idea of becoming white – not an act of imagination on his part, no, merely a happy case of mistaken identity. (p. 126)

With Helen's growing anxiety and John's laid-back attitude towards passing, their relationship becomes strained and tense over time. Helen struggles to forgive John for "taking things so easy, [and] appearing to relax into whiteness as if it were nothing"

(p. 131), and she also blames John for her pregnancy, after having managed to avoid it for twelve years:

> The pregnancy unleashed a hatred she found impossible to hide. It was all his fault; he was an animal who had ruined their lives. John thought that it would pass. [...] he could not see why there should be any problem with the child's looks. Which was typical of his thoughtlessness, his irresponsibility, [...] and by the time the child arrived with pale skin and smooth hair [Helen] was too addicted to anxiety to be relieved. (pp. 124-125)

John's resentment towards Helen grows once he realises that her constant vigilance and caution was futile. Achieving whiteness, he begins to understand, is about being at ease in a world that is completely yours, and John does not believe that neither he nor Helen could ever progress beyond that feeling of constant vigilance. As such, John happily settles to pass as a Boer, while Helen aspires for more:

> Vigilance is everything; to achieve whiteness is to keep on your toes. Which, John reasons, indicates that they cannot achieve it after all; being white in the world is surely about being at ease, since the world belongs to you. [...] Only once, with a gleeful, spiteful vision of her destruction [...] does he think of saying this [to her]. But for the sake of sparing the child, of giving her the ease of whiteness, he keeps the peace. (p. 152)

It is clear throughout that John and Helen's motivations for passing as white are very different. For John, it is an avenue to a more convenient and privileged life that he stumbled upon by chance. In contrast, Helen's passing is a mechanism for self-advancement and upward social mobility, in a similar vein to that of Gatsby, who abandoned his heritage and reinvented himself. So fervent was her desire to become white that her mother, daughter and John's family are treated as collateral damage in her crusade for whiteness.

Despite their differences in motivation, John and Helen hold the same internalised beliefs regarding apartheid-era racial constructs – in particular, the superiority of the white race over all others. As a result, though they were able to use their agency to pass from coloured to white, reverting would be abhorrent owing to their intense racial inferiority complex imposed upon them. Ironically, these essentialist beliefs about race as seen in (Biko, 2004) perpetuate apartheid ideals even in contemporary

South Africa where, politically at least, presenting as white confers no advantage by law.

In stark comparison, Marion understands that she can cross between racial categories at will:

> My parents were the play-whites; *they* crossed over. I was white, now I will have to cross over; but if those places are no longer the same, have lost their meaning, there can be no question of returning to a place where my parents once were. Perhaps I can now keep crossing to and fro, to different places, perhaps that is what the new is all about – an era of unremitting crossings. (Wicomb, 2006, p. 107)

Ultimately, Marion's realisation that her racial identity is flexible, rather than something imposed on her externally, leads her on a journey of acceptance, healing and integration in newly democratic South Africa.

5.11 Conclusion

Up to this point, this dissertation has analysed four novels through the lens of passing. Each analysis focused on the way in which characters used the concept of passing to various ends, and in turn how they were portrayed by their respective authors. The next chapter will use these ideas to rethink how these novels can be taught in South African classrooms. In particular, passing will be used as a threshold concept to educate learners in a way that is more culturally responsive and relatable to their lived experiences.

Chapter 6: A Culturally Sustaining Critical Literacy Framework for English Literature

The previous chapters examined four different texts through the lens of passing. Two of these are Western texts commonly taught in South African classrooms, while the others are African novels not currently prescribed by the government school curriculum. These texts describe characters passing in a variety of different contexts, and while each of these characters' situations is unique, they all share in their desire to be accepted.

In the excerpt below Dawkins (2012) explains the core concept behind passing, and while the definition associates passing with race, the act is not limited to such.

> Passing, usually understood as an abbreviation for "racial passing," describes the "fact of being accepted, or representing oneself successfully as, a member of a different" group. Generally speaking, passing refers to the means by which non-white people represent themselves as white. (p. 1)

Passers are therefore aware of the fluidity of their identity; in the four texts analysed, we see that every fictional passer uses this awareness strategically to gain power or prestige. In *The Great Gatsby* and *Playing in the Light,* we observe that both Gatsby and the Campbells adopt new identities to become part of an elite social group. In both cases, the characters change their names, location and cut ties with their families, all in an attempt to further themselves socially. In *The Crucible*, Reverend Parris works to develop his image as a devout Christian in order to gain the respect of the community in the Puritanic town of Salem. Similarly, Eugene Achike in *Purple Hibiscus* strategically plays the role of a righteous English-speaking Christian to further himself from the negative image he holds of his familial roots, as portrayed by British colonists.

6.1 Passing as a threshold concept

As demonstrated by the above characters, the act of passing is pervasive throughout human history, and its presence in disparate cultures suggests that it is part of the human condition (Dawkins, 2012). For some, passing is a method of survival – an

avenue that allows one to thrive in a treacherous social environment – while for others, passing is a way of progressing in a world that penalises the circumstances of their birth. It is therefore clear that passing is a relatable concept, and one that is particularly relevant in the local context, given South Africa's oppressive history.

I argue that passing is an ideal threshold concept because of its relevancy and how it illustrates the fluidity of identity, where identities that were once seen as fixed (for example, racial, gender or religious identities) are now able to be consciously altered by individuals. This allows learners to critically reflect on their own identities and offers them entryways into texts that might have seemed unrelatable to their lives or contexts.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* are two matric set-work texts that are commonly prescribed in the curriculum. However, an analysis of the South African DOE matric contextual questions between 2014 to 2020 illustrates that *The Great Gatsby* and *The Crucible* have not been taught in a way that is particularly empowering, nor relatable, to the South African context. This is not to say, however, that these texts should not be prescribed due to their lacking relevance. Instead, we should aim to reframe these texts in culturally responsive ways. As Lawrence Wright (2018) argues:

> If English-speaking elites, even in non-English speaking countries like Poland or Sweden, for instance, approve of their children making Shakespeare's acquaintance, what would be the implications for South Africa, where English has a strong foothold as the *de facto* language of national communication, were our working-class children and the rural poor to be deprived of this choice? Are they not up to the challenge or is the reward not worth the struggle? (p. 57)

I propose that these texts can be made relevant through the concept of passing which serves as an entry point for South African learners, allowing them to gain new insights into these texts. Such an approach is known as a *threshold concept* and is described by Meyer and Land (2003) as follows:

> [...] akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, or interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress. As a consequence of comprehending a threshold concept there may thus be a transformed internal view of subject matter, subject landscape, or even world view. This transformation may be

> sudden or it may be protracted over a considerable period of time, with the transition to understanding proving troublesome. Such a transformed view or landscape may represent how people 'think' in a particular discipline, or how they perceive, apprehend, or experience particular phenomena within that discipline (or more generally). (p. 1)

In this chapter, I describe a framework for teaching these texts in a way that is accessible to South African learners. In particular, I propose pairing an African novel with one of the commonly taught Western set-work books. This chapter describes how initially teaching the concept of passing in the African text creates an avenue for understanding the subsequent Eurocentric text through a lens that is more relatable and empowering. This is an example of culturally relevant pedagogy, which values the cultural identity of learners and recognises their cultural context to enhance learning (Ladson-Billings, 2006). In particular, I demonstrate how *Purple Hibiscus* and *Playing in The Light* can serve as introductory texts to teach *The Crucible* and *The Great Gatsby* respectively. This will allow for intertextuality to be explored between seemingly disparate texts, promoting a deeper and more critical understanding in learners.

6.2 Relevant thematic ideas in *Purple Hibiscus*

Introducing *Purple Hibiscus* to learners before *The Crucible* creates an avenue for understanding the latter through a lens that carries more cultural significance to the African context. Through Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*, learners will be able to relate to themes unique to the African struggle, namely: colonisation, internalised inferiority and identity struggles, all of which resonate with South Africa's collective trauma.

We see this inferiority complex manifest in Eugene, where he rejects his heritage and indigenous beliefs in an attempt to be seen as sophisticated and on par with the Christian missionaries in Nigeria, who are viewed by many as enlightened. He also works to maintain a good reputation and ensures that he is regarded as a charitable, educated and religious Christian. From a young age in the missionary, it is clear that Eugene's education leads him to believe that his Igbo culture is 'primitive' and lacking in sophistication in relation to that of the West. This internalised false conscious-

ness steers Eugene into believing that unless he removes himself from his 'unsophisticated' familial roots, he will always be regarded by the 'enlightened missionaries' as inferior. Ironically, even when he does all of these things to "pass", he is still seen as inferior.

In the lesson plan below, the objective is to first introduce *Purple Hibiscus* and its relevant themes.

Lesson plan

Topic	*Purple Hibiscus*
Purpose	• Understand effects of colonisation on indigenous population • Understand fluidity of identity and how characters use it to their advantage
Lesson objectives	• Discuss effects of colonisation on Igbo people • Discuss concept of passing • Identify instances of passing in text • Identify how Eugene uses passing strategically
Concepts	**<u>Colonisation</u>** • *Definition for learners:* "Process of occupying land and establishing influence over the people who live there." • In Nigeria the British took control and influenced the indigenous people. For some time, South Africa was also a British Colony. • The Christian missionaries came with the British to Nigeria and influenced Eugene Achike. • Missionaries would use education to show indigenous people how enlightened and cultured they were, in comparison to them. • Missionary education often caused indigenous people to internalise false images about themselves as being primitive, unintelligent, lacking sophistication and that their beliefs and lifestyles were barbaric. • Eugene wanted to remove himself from that image, and so, he became like missionaries. **<u>Classroom discussion</u>** Ask learners their thoughts about self-image of people who were colonised. <u>Talking points:</u> ○ **Internalised inferiority** – Eugene's equating English with being "civilised":

	"Papa changed his accent when he spoke, sounding British, just as he did when he spoke to Father Benedict. He was gracious, in the eager-to-please way that he always assumed with the white religious." (p. 46) o **Identity fluidity** – Eugene changes his persona to seem disparate from his familial roots and to gain favour from missionaries and the community. o Eugene performs different roles: noble editor of *Standard* newspaper which speaks out against the new Nigerian government and their corruption, a philanthropist, a devout Christian and a loving, kind father and husband. o Igbo vs English and Traditional vs Christian. Eugene disavowed his father, views indigenous Igbo religion as heathen. English is the "civilised" language **Passing** • *Definition for learners:* "racial passing, describes the fact of being accepted, or representing oneself successfully as, a member of a different group" (Dawkins, 2012, p. 1) Talking points: • Identity is fluid, it changes and can be reshaped • Race is a social construct • What does it mean to be white? • How did Eugene pass, if he did not pass for white? • Eugene did not perform racial passing, but a religious and cultural passing **Eugene passed in the following ways:** • When giving charity to children, Eugene always made sure that the children told their parents who the money was from. Eugene wanted the parents to know that he was charitable, he wanted to appear as a philanthropist. • Spoke English only, and spoke in a strong British accent to the Christian missionaries, so that they would regard him as one of them. • Although his children were instructed to remain modest, Eugene allowed Father Benedict to sing his praises in the Church. He

	wanted everyone to know how good, kind, and religious he was, as it was part of his "identity performance". • Eugene experienced "passers anxiety" intense fear of being "discovered" by others, for playing a role incongruent with his past. • Eugene's sister knows that Eugene is performing an identity, and so Eugene respects and fears her, lest she out him for being an abusive father.

One major theme in *Purple Hibiscus* is the image cultivated by the Christian missionaries who denigrate the indigenous culture and instil a sense of inferiority in Eugene. Therefore, an interesting classroom activity would be to interrogate the way in which Africa is portrayed by Western media to determine if this ideology persists to this day. Learners would be asked to find images and headlines associated with Africa (which often portray images of war and corruption (Oguh, 2015), and then contrast them to that of the West. This activity is best understood through decolonial theory, which foregrounds how one's consciousness has been shaped to serve colonial systems (Biko, 2004).

6.3 Teaching *The Crucible* through its intertextuality with *Purple Hibiscus*

In *The Crucible*, Reverend Parris's instances of passing will be explored in relation to Eugene's passing. Ultimately, Eugene's passing in the previous text will enable learners to recognise and distinguish how passing takes place in a Eurocentric narrative entirely unfamiliar to their culture and lived experiences. In this way, Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* can be viewed as a stepping-stone that works to "open[..] up a new and previously inaccessible way of [understanding Eurocentric texts]" and make them relevant (Meyer & Land, 2003, p. 1).

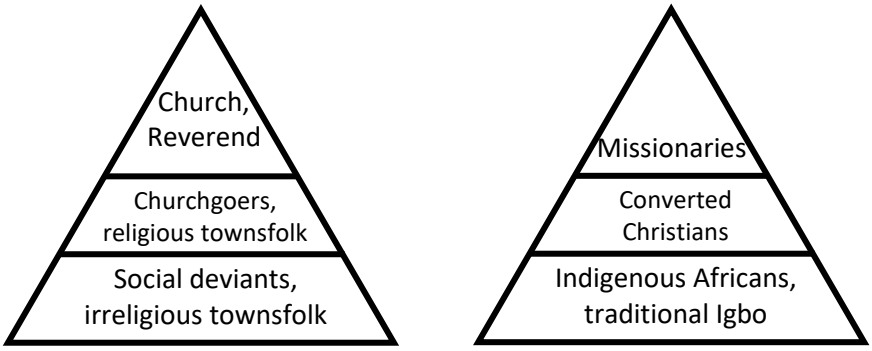
In *The Crucible* Reverend Parris, much like Eugene, strategically uses his position in the Church and with the community as a means to assert power over others. For Eugene, we see this in the way he dominates and controls his wife and children, but because of his good reputation within the community, no one ever suspects him of domestic violence. Like Eugene, Reverend Parris believes his reputation within his community to be of the utmost importance. This is made clear when his daughter

takes fright after being discovered in a forest where witchcraft is believed to have occurred. To prevent his name from being besmirched, Parris shifts the fingers being pointed in his direction elsewhere and initiates a full-blown witch-hunt.

Another parallel is that of John Proctor and Aunty Ifeoma. Both are the personification of the anxiety felt by Reverend Parris and Eugene, as they are able to see through the passers' pretences. Both serve as scourges to the ambitions of the Reverend and Eugene: Ifeoma constantly provokes Eugene, while Proctor remains steadfast in his refusal to bend to the Reverend's edicts.

In the lesson plan below, these similarities will be covered in relation to the characters from both texts.

Lesson plan:

Topic	*The Crucible*
Purpose	• Use prior knowledge of Passing to recognise instances in a European text • Understand fluidity of identity and how characters use it to their advantage
Lesson objectives	• Discuss the concept of passing in relation to *Purple Hibiscus* • Explore similarities between Reverend Parris and Eugene Achike • Explore similarities between John Proctor and Ifeoma
Concepts	**<u>Intertextuality</u>** • *Definition for learners:* "A term which describes the relationship between two texts" • How is this text similar to Purple Hibiscus? • The similarities between Eugene Achike and Reverend Parris, and John Proctor and Ifeoma **Similarities in Social Hierarchies** 

	• Social deviants = drunks, fornicators, non-Christians • Converted Christians = Eugene • Indigenous Africans = Papa-Nnukwu. **Similarities between Reverend Parris and Eugene:** • Eugene, Parris both make use of religious passing as part of their performance – want to appear devout • Motivation for actions – want power, control ○ Parris controls town, Eugene controls family. Relevant quote "I have fought here three long years to bend these stiff-necked people to me" • Ifeoma and John Proctor are the "thorns in their sides". Both represent threat to the passers – can out them and bring down their façade.

A potential activity could involve a class discussion about how people act differently in different social situations (or pass). An example of questions to stimulate discussion could include whether learners have ever observed someone they know begin to act differently because their position in life has changed. Learners could then be prompted to relate this notion that identity is fluid.

6.4 Relevant thematic ideas in *Playing in the Light*

As with the previous section, which used intertextuality between two texts to cultivate relevancy, this section will do the same with *The Great Gatsby* and *Playing in the Light*. As mentioned, teaching a relevant text can create avenues for understanding subsequent texts that are not wholly significant to our local context. The ultimate goal here is for learners to be able to better identify instances of passing in Western books after having learned about it in a relatable context. Furthermore, critical literacy, whose aim is to expose societal power structures (Janks, 2003) is a powerful tool to understand the racial hierarchy in apartheid South Africa, as well as the class dynamics in 1920s Long Island, a contextual setting South African learners may otherwise find inaccessible.

In Wicomb's *Playing in The Light,* the learners will be exposed to racial passing in a more overt way, as this text addresses racial passing directly and narrates the lived experiences of two South African passers, namely John and Helen Campbell. It is clear throughout the novel that John and Helen's motivations for passing as white

are very different. For John, it is an avenue to a more convenient and privileged life that he stumbled upon by chance. By contrast, Helen's passing is a mechanism for self-advancement and upward social mobility, in a similar vein to that of Gatsby, who abandoned his heritage and reinvented himself.

For Helen, playing white was a necessity, and it becomes explicit throughout the text that "she would settle for nothing less than respectable whiteness, certainly not for a destiny determined by [her] distant European ancestors" (p. 131). Helen instead aims for "a higher form of whiteness and sets about with religious fervour to build a white English identity by means of deliberate citations according to the example John has provided" (Hoegberg, 2018, pp. 8-9). Having already anglicised her maiden name, Helen insists that she and John now marry and relocate to a respectable white neighbourhood.

Lesson plan:

Topic	*Playing in the Light*
Purpose	• Understand effects of apartheid on discriminated racial groups • Understand the fluidity of identity and how characters use it to their advantage • Understand race as a social construct
Lesson objectives	• Discuss effects of apartheid on the characters in the text • Discuss the concept of passing • Describe how passing affects characters and their families
Concepts	**<u>Classroom Discussion:</u>** The effects of Apartheid on marginalised groups <u>Talking points:</u> • Social constructs remain even after apartheid officially over • Inferiority complex in non-whites – internalised degrading images, Bantu education • Broken families, displacement. People forced to work and live in different areas (Group Areas Act) • Some light-skinned people had the option of racial passing (as in the book) but with bad consequences – have to give up family, heritage, culture and community. o Lifelong identity performance

Passing

- Definition for learners: “racial passing, describes the fact of being accepted, or representing oneself successfully as, a member of a different group” (Dawkins, 2012, p. 1)

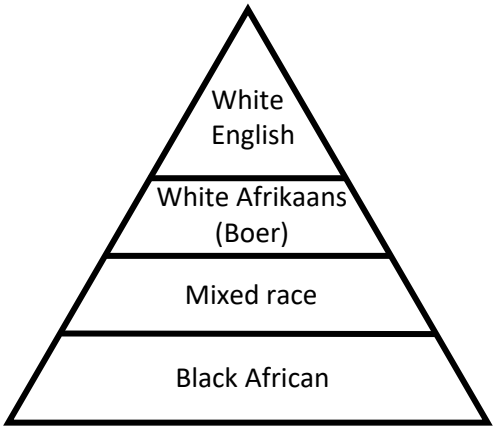
Talking points:

- Identity is fluid, it changes and can be reshaped
- Entire premise of book revolves around overt racial passing
- Race is a social construct. What does it mean to be white?
    - John is white because the traffic officer mistakes him for a white Boer.
- How did Helen and John pass?

Helen and John passed in the following ways:

- Moved out of coloured area into predominantly white neighbourhood
- Cut ties with their family and friends
- Daughter given White English name, sent her to White Afrikaans school

Helen Campbell’s Racial Hierarchy:



- John is happy to be treated as a Boer – still an improvement from coloured
- Helen wants to be at the top of the social ladder

An interesting activity related to the themes of *Playing in the Light* could involve asking learners to collect images and create visual collages of what they consider to be idealised versions of particular identities. This can serve as an entry point for discussing whether passers such as Helen are merely imitating the stereotypical aspects of the identity they are trying to perform.

6.5 Teaching *The Great Gatsby* through its intertextuality with *Playing in the Light*

In *The Great Gatsby*, Helen's instances of passing will be explored in relation to Gatsby's passing. Like Helen, Gatsby reinvents himself and works to create a more romanticised version of his past. He does so by removing himself from his working-class roots, settling in West Egg and changing his name from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby. This mirrors Helen, who changes her name from Karelse to Charles and moves out of the town in which she was born to settle in a predominantly white area.

Like Helen, Gatsby invents a past that he believes will allow him "entry" into white, "old-moneyed" elite social groups. In doing so Gatsby claims that he is "the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West – all dead now […] and brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all [of his] ancestors [had] been educated there for many years. It was a family tradition." (p. 64). This link to England is crucial, as there is the idea that culture, sophistication and class were still located in England which gave Gatsby an edge in terms of performing whiteness. In strong similitude, Helen is seen striving for what she deems "[the highest] form of whiteness and sets about with religious fervour to build a white English identity [worthy of elite English social groups]" (Hoegberg, 2018, pp. 8-9).

Like Helen, who believes that being a part of elite groups in South Africa will work to minimise intense feelings of self-hatred (triggered by apartheid's degrading racial classifications), Gatsby's *conception* of happiness appears solely built on the belief that isolating himself from his working-class roots and joining an elite social group will remove his feelings of inadequacy and emotionally fulfil him in some way.

Lesson Plan:

Topic	*The Great Gatsby*
Purpose	• Use previous knowledge of Passing to recognise instances in a Western text. • Understand the fluidity of identity and how characters use it to their advantage
Lesson objectives	• Discuss the concept of passing in relation to *Playing in The Light* • Identify instances of passing in text • Identify how Gatsby uses passing • Explore similarities between Jay Gatsby and Helen Campbell
Concepts	**<u>Intertextuality</u>** • Definition for learners: A term that describes the relationship between two texts • Define the similarities between Gatsby and Helen • How are *Playing in the Light* and *The Great Gatsby* comparable texts? **Gatsby passed in the following ways:** • Changes his name from James Gatz to Jay Gatsby • Removes himself from his working-class roots and invents a new past • Adopts a whole new persona, and way of speaking to imitate Dan Cody (“Old sport”) **Similarities between Jay Gatsby and Helen Campbell:** • Both Gatsby and Helen change their names to sound more sophisticated – as belonging to an elite social group • Reinvent themselves by moving to a new area • Cut ties with family so as not to be associated with them • Inferiority complex – both felt ashamed of their upbringing and working-class roots **<u>Classroom Discussion:</u>** England as a symbol for whiteness <u>Talking points:</u> • Society associates England with culture, sophistication • Gatsby claims to be educated at Oxford – inheriting prestige from English institution (not just any University)

	• Similarly, Helen doesn't just want to be white, she wants to be *English* white • East Egg represents old money, English culture, established empire. West Egg represents new money (American upstarts). Even extremely wealthy inhabitants of West Egg aspire to be those of East Egg

For *The Great Gatsby*, I propose an activity that involves the pedagogy of discomfort proposed by Boler and Zembylas (2003), where "learners are asked to recognise how their discomfort might reflect their privilege being challenged" (Andrews, 2020). Learners could be asked to gather images of spaces that they believe to be more accessible to people of different races or classes, and interrogated on the reasons for their beliefs. A follow-up activity could involve a discussion regarding how someone might go about passing to fit into these different spaces. Additionally, teachers could ask learners from diverse economic backgrounds to consider the privilege that the wealthy characters have in the texts, how this privilege might intersect with race, and how these characters, such as Daisy, are able to move in certain spaces or face no real consequences for destructive actions.

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter illustrated how texts not immediately relevant in the South African context can be made more accessible to learners through the use of a bridging text. In particular, I proposed using passing as a threshold concept to reinterpret two Eurocentric texts. The framework first proposes teaching an African text (in this case, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Playing in The Light*) where the themes of passing are more overt and relatable due to the relevance of their contexts. These themes can then be more readily identified by learners in subsequent texts, namely *The Crucible* and *The Great Gatsby*. In the final chapter, we discuss the implications of such an approach to decolonising the curriculum and future strategies for teaching literature in South Africa.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this thesis, I proposed employing the concept of passing as a critical intervention into the FET English literature curriculum in South African schools. This work adopted a broader definition of passing to also include forms of identity dissociation; in particular, it argued that the concept of passing could illuminate the fluidity of identity, where identities that were once seen as fixed (for example, racial, gender or religious identities) are now able to be consciously altered by individuals. The concept of passing, I posit, is a powerful tool that allows learners to critically reflect on their own identities, and could offer them entryways into texts that might have seemed unrelatable to their lives or contexts.

This thesis examined the ways in which two Western texts, *The Great Gatsby* and *The Crucible,* can be made more relevant in our local context by teaching them in conjunction with African texts that centre on issues such as colonisation and apartheid. The analysis in the previous chapters demonstrated instances of passing in the various texts, with the characters using their understanding of the fluidity of their identities to pass from one identity to another, or to stage or perform certain types of identities that are granted more social and political power. This is a particularly relevant theme in the local context, as many learners may have experienced the effects of racial oppression and can have a more intimate understanding of the motivations for passing as a result of the discriminatory apartheid classification system imposed on their families. This common thread was used to link African and Western texts. Importantly, instances of passing were first introduced in the African text, which provided learners with the necessary scaffolding to understand instances of passing in the subsequent Western text.

It is also worth noting that the texts explored in this thesis could more overtly be seen as dealing with passing, and the theme is not as prevalent in other texts that are already prescribed in South African FET classrooms. However, other commonly prescribed texts also contain narratives that could be linked to passing; for example, in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, the characters of the pigs could be seen as *passing as* human, or in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Dorian can be seen as

passing as young, innocent and beautiful when his true nature is different from this. The concept of passing, used in a range of texts, can allow learners to think more critically about how identities are socially constructed and performed, and how power is linked to the performance of certain types of identities.

7.1 Limitations

While this work centred around creating intertextual links between Western and African text through the concept of passing, it is beyond the scope of this research to explore other potentially relevant threshold concepts. The framework presented here is also only of a theoretical nature, and has not been explored in a classroom setting; the efficacy of it, therefore remains untested.

What remains unclear is whether teachers would have the resources and adequate support to adopt postcolonial African texts in the classroom setting, which would require additional training and the development of teaching materials. The proposed approach may also cause feelings of discomfort for not only teachers, but their learners as well, when issues of identity are discussed. Moreover, decolonising the curriculum in this way creates an additional burden for teachers, who now have to teach literature in a more critical and culturally sustaining manner.

Finally, this research only considered two African texts that are not generally prescribed in the South African government-school syllabus. This choice of texts for analysis in this thesis was guided by the decision to demonstrate the potential of teaching the concept of passing in relation to African texts, and how the introduction of new texts in the FET curriculum could work towards decolonising the curriculum by challenging limiting representations of identities. This is especially the case since many of the currently prescribed South African novels are written by white male authors, and the two novels explored, written by black female authors, can challenge the dominance of particular voices in South Africa's curriculum.

However, texts like Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country*, Athol Fugard's *Tsotsi*, and a range of poems currently prescribed in schools all contain elements that are relevant to the concept of passing, and thus the framework developed in this thesis could also be applied to these texts to allow learners to engage more critically with

identities that are represented in these texts. Unfortunately, a detailed analysis of these texts goes beyond the scope of the current thesis.

7.2 Recommendations

Ultimately, passing is a relatively new concept used in the educational setting; therefore, many educators not trained specifically in this area would experience difficulty engaging with these concepts in relation to texts. It is therefore recommended that further training is required in this area to support teachers in working to decolonise the curriculum.

It is also recommended that further research be conducted into the applicability of this concept in South African classrooms. Empirical studies on the challenges and potentialities of teaching texts with the concept of passing could provide valuable data to inform policy changes. Research could also explore other threshold concepts in addition to passing that might allow greater epistemological access to the meanings of texts and the processes of text analysis for South African learners.

More generally, this research speaks to the idea that decolonisation should occur not by simply removing Western texts that are often unrelatable and taught at a superficial level, but rather by developing novel methods for teaching content in culturally responsive ways. In this work, I suggest introducing contemporary ideas in a more relatable African text first, but there may be other ways of achieving similar outcomes. More research in this direction would result in a curriculum that is both sustaining and responsive. In summary, the philosophy of this thesis can best be articulated by Mcbean and Johnston (2018):

> Deciding to teach more unfamiliar postcolonial texts may challenge teachers to move outside their comfort zones into a pedagogy of discomfort. Megan Boler (2014) explains that “a pedagogy of discomfort recognizes and problematizes the deeply embedded dimensions that frame and shape daily habits, routines, and unconscious complicity with hegemony” (p. 118). For teachers to make a commitment to growth and change requires experiencing the discomfort of new thinking and a willingness to engage in in-depth inquiry with students regarding systems of domination and the difficult work of re-evaluating the relationship of one’s privilege to others in the world. Including postcolonial texts in the classroom can empower teachers and students to

> reflect on their own cultural understanding and to see themselves within historical contexts and potentially to allow their worldviews to be altered. (p. 81)

This thesis makes clear that there must be a paradigm shift when it comes to teaching Western literature to South African learners. This, I propose, can be achieved by placing African stories and voices at the centre of learning, while still relating ideas and concepts to prominent Western texts. Not only will this assist learners in understanding concepts within their own context (likely resulting in improved learning outcomes), but more importantly, it will communicate to young minds that their stories are worthy of being written and heard.

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