

NARRATING THE SELF IN APARTHEID THROUGH HUMOUR IN TREVOR

NOAH'S *BORN A CRIME*

OLIVIA SIFA TOYWA

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Declaration

This research project is my original work and has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any other university:

Signature.....

Date.....

Toywa, Olivia Sifa

C50/87874/2016

This research project has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors:

First Supervisor

Signature.....

Date.....

Dr. Makau Kitata

Department of Literature

University of Nairobi

Second Supervisor

Signature.....

Date.....

Dr. Miriam Musonye

Department of Literature

University of Nairobi

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Hebrews 11:1, Jeremiah 1:12, Joshua 23:14, Psalms 48:1

Dedication

To my parents, McGeorge Samson and Gladys Toywa

your love, encouragement and support strengthened me in every step

Catamy

Abstract

This study examines the narration of self and apartheid through humour in Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime*. The autobiography captures Trevor Noah's childhood in South Africa and unravels the events through memories. Humour becomes a vehicle for pointing out at vices to individuals and the society at large. The study investigates how humour as a tool mocks the folly of apartheid in his autobiography. Apartheid leads to the oppression and breakdown of the black society, family and individuals. For instance, Nombuyiselo, Trevor Noah's mother faces double tragedy: first as a woman, second as a black person. In this case she has to surpass all this to survive. He uses humour as a medium to unveil the existing human follies by presenting himself as an object of oppression and discrimination when his own birth elicits fear to those around him. South Africa being a multiracial nation stirred identity crisis to individuals where one would desire to be of another race. For instance, a black person would aspire to be white so as to have a better life. The study is guided by the theories of incongruity, post-colonial and autobiography. I argue that Trevor Noah's use of humour aids in clearly portraying the dehumanizing conditions of individuals. Not only does he present his experiences but he also illuminates the harsh realities of multiracialism that disrupts the daily routines of black Africans in South Africa. Trevor Noah seems to reveal that despite the differences in culture, there are better ways of appreciating togetherness. Humour is therefore a tool for subversive change in opposition to racism.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Trevor Noah is a South African-born international stand-up comedian. He was born on 20th February 1984 to an African mother and a Swiss-German father during the apartheid period in South Africa. He began his career in South Africa as an actor, presenter and comedian. He directed his own one-man show in 2009 *The Daywalker* filmed as a documentary. In 2010, he started his own talk show *Tonight with Trevor Noah* on M-NET and DSTV. His career earned him international access to late night talk shows and British panel shows which led him to “The Daily Show” in which he succeeded Jon Stewart in September 2015 as host at the satirical news program, “The Daily Show” on comedy central in the United States of America.

Besides his performances, he has published a literary autobiography *Born a Crime* (2016) in which he recounts his life in a multiracial South Africa through humour that not only recognizes the absurdities of the world but also criticizes ills in the society. *Born a crime* is a humorous autobiography, divided into two parts. The first half focuses on his childhood and the other half on his search for identity. At the beginning of every chapter, there is a summary of intercalary chapters which relate to the main story either by providing historical facts or interesting asides. He raises both serious and frivolous issues in a humorous tone. The choice of humour as a technique employed in the autobiography is significant. Humour gives way to the unraveling of serious matters in the art of storytelling to connect with readers. The use of humour is a tool to criticize and satirize the ills in the society through his experiences. The use of a child’s perspective helps in appreciating his line of thought and perception of social issues.

Although Trevor Noah is a comedian, his autobiography provides deep insights to the reader. His use of humour not only makes the reader laugh but also think critically and appreciate the impact of apartheid and society in general. Humour therefore masks itself by using elements such as satire and irony to mock wicked people. It castigates prejudice to help people relieve their social sanctioned needs and to affirm one's presence. Ronald Knox thus defines humour as "a fresh window of the soul through which we see the familiar world of our experience" (52). I therefore argue that humour is a satirist weapon and a tool which brings therapeutic healing to not only himself but also to its readers.

Statement of the Problem

Humorous texts such as Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* run the risk of being dismissed by critics as non-serious literature because they seem to entertain readers at the expense of engaging with serious social concerns. Bearing this in mind, the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of apartheid and the self narrated through the protagonist's birth, education and social escapism. The study also examines the narrative styles used to discuss self and apartheid in *Born a Crime*.

Objectives

This study sought to achieve the following objectives:

- i) To examine the impact of apartheid and the self in *Born a Crime*
- ii) To explore the narrative techniques used in narrating apartheid and the self in *Born a Crime*

Research Questions

This study has been guided by the following Research Questions:

- i) What is the impact of apartheid and the self in *Born a Crime*?

ii) What narrative techniques are used in narrating apartheid and self in *Born a Crime*?

Justification

It can be argued that critics might categorize works of art as either canonical or non-canonical. However, it falls out to be a biased approach where books that touch on humour or comedy might be shunned from serious study without paying attention on them because of their own likeliness. It can be noted that although a text can be humorous it does not mean it is less serious. The lightheartedness the author manages to use by ridiculing human follies warrants serious attention.

By reading the autobiography, a reader has to be keen to reflect on the issues raised. Some of the words in the text such as “apart hate” might be misread as apartheid. This pun ‘apart-hate’ is used show how people are stirred to dislike one another based on their differences. Therefore, by reflecting on what has been said it helps the reader know the intensity of the matter at hand.

Humour is basically a style that acts as a significant element in a work of art which is used by the writers to reflect on their life experiences. Humour therefore seeks to engage the reader’s mind in the unity of thought and response. Additionally, humour is not limited to one specific genre but has various facets such as satire, irony, and sarcasm.

Humour touches on every social life and interactions and necessarily does not limit itself to film or a specific environment as Pickering and Lockyer observe (5). They argue that humour, go beyond comedy to lay bare vices in the society. For instance, in cases where politicians engage in corruption and greed at the expense of the people for their own gain, humour can be used to mock such social ills. Consequently, humour castigates prejudice or hostility to help people relieve their socially sanctioned needs as well as affirming one’s presence. Considering the central place of humour in human life, this study of humour in literature is a worthwhile

engagement as it narrows down to explore the style of narration in the autobiography, the impact of apartheid and the self in birth, education, and social escapism. This study sought to investigate the impact of apartheid and the self and also the interesting strategies used to narrate the self and apartheid through humour in the autobiography.

Literature Review

This literature review examines the style of narration, the portrayal of apartheid in South Africa in revealing the self, and scholarly reflections on Trevor Noah's "*Born a Crime*". The review also looks at various studies on humour in relation to literature and also how it relates to my study as it narrows down to identifying the gap that the study intends to fill. Jennifer Muchiri defines the autobiography as a story or an account of one's life written by oneself. She asserts that the interest lies with the self and not the outside world and must appear to give shape to the personality. Meaning the focus is on an individual. Muchiri's work is significant to guide my study when examining the self in *Born a Crime*. She further states that an autobiography is an interplay between the past and the present which records the movement of life in the exact time it took place (9). This is important as it helps in unravelling how author's personal accounts narrate past historical events and how these events became central to their identities. In *Born a Crime*, Trevor Noah narrates his experiences as a child growing up in South Africa through his past to the present as an adult.

Peter Abbs notes that individual experience aids in the cycle of learning. He points out that education is not necessarily the acquiring of facts and techniques but rather expresses and clarifies individual experiences (5). It is, therefore, evident that he believes it's through the autobiography that human life is understood. Trevor Noah's experiences in *Born a Crime* leads

to the unraveling of serious issues affecting his life. His experiences elicit the use of humour as a strategy in the criticism of human follies.

Through memory, past and present experiences are laid down. Kate Douglas asserts that, memory plays a major role in the writing of an autobiography. The author has to reminiscence past experiences of his childhood; thereby acting as an interplay between the past and the present of the child and the adult self, paving way for nostalgic memories (121). She further states that the use of humour in childhood autobiographies ease traumatic experiences and in doing, acts as a defense mechanism to the perpetrators of trauma. The use of memory has to take part in the authors' writing as in most cases it gives an accurate account of their experiences. Trevor Noah's use of humour disparages societal beliefs and its ideals on governance. It is important to note that the statements used in the expression of humour are fueled by the anger of a child thereby the autobiography not presenting itself as self-pitying. Douglas posits that childhood autobiographies shun regret and anger and resort to humour and resilience and go against bad experiences (147). Through this the absurdity of life and danger exposed on the children are brought onto the limelight.

Further, Douglas and Kylie Cardell posit that autobiographies have a rich history. Their touch on childhood reveals a child's cultural position and culture. The narrative may as well proceed from a child's point of view to the current life (2). Although the telling of a story is controlled by the adult, a child's experiences helps in understanding the adult's behavior. In the case of *Born a Crime*, the narration is told from a child's perspective by an adult thereby controlling what is disclosed to the audience. It can be assumed that most autobiographies are subjective in nature as they tend to rely on an individual's point of view. Autobiographers will tell bits of their life that draws pity or portray heroic acts in them while omitting acts that tend to suppress their true self.

This is so since for the subject in question to exist there ought to be circumstances that aid his/her being. The environment as well plays a major role in unfolding an individual's space and how he/she is able to cope up with the circumstances at hand.

Consequently, although a number of autobiographies have happy childhoods, some are narrations accompanied with traumatic experiences such as lack of housing; food, and violence which are occasioned by poverty; struggles of identity; abuse and discrimination. Although life writing has been dominated by the adults, young writers have as well ventured into this kind of writing in controlling the public in the representation of childhood and youth. In essence communication is built up together, marking art and marking themselves into culture. Just to echo this, most of the autobiographies have dominated the social media such as Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. In *Born a Crime* part of Trevor Noah's childhood is narrated in YouTube although my study will not delve into this.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson state that letters, photographs or conversations might be employed as evidence, though they can only be useful if they have been used to show support or account of an individual's remembrance. Additionally, autobiography's use of historical documents, interviews and family archives determine the evidence (6). In as much as autobiographies can be read as a focus on history, they cannot be represented as records of history. This is partly true as they only aid the reader in getting a glimpse of the happenings that took place although they lack the authorial trait in them. This is because writers tend to be subjective in portraying the issues affecting them. However, these writers can write to touch on a specific period which is in a way historical. To echo Smith and Watson's view, an autobiography is "a historically situated practice of self-representation" (14). Smith and Watson's work provide

an understanding of the nature and the functions of the autobiography which are key to the analysis of *Born a Crime*.

Smith and Watson further mention that one's young life is captured through development in terms of groups or classes. For instance, a religious setup in a community, race, gender and class (102). While this puts a great insight in a work of autobiography, it helps in understanding the authors' circle of growth and their surroundings. It is possible to question different circumstances of the authors' young lives as well as looking at those circumstances of their lives against the intended period of their growth with sets of comparisons. Henry Indangasi observes that in an autobiography, the writer "selects, reorganizes, rearranges and reshapes" facts about his life to demonstrate the reality at the time (114). In *Born a Crime*, the intercalary chapters present the happenings that took place during apartheid by tying them to Trevor Noah's life in convincing its readers thereby communicating a higher truth on apartheid.

James Olney questions the difficulties in the identification of an autobiographical writing since people tend to have different perceptions such as history or philosophy and sociology, or metaphysics. He thereby sees the autobiography as a preservation of black history that has delved into literature (29). I tend to agree with his assertions since most autobiographies lean towards history and thus capture an author's life either in adulthood or as a child. It is thereby through the period an author lived that much information can be put onto writing though with some bits of exaggerations. The Black experience and their history with regard to slavery is reflected in works such as *The Narrative of Fredrick Douglass*, *Olaudah Equiano's Travels* and Ezekiel Mphahlele's *Down Second Avenue*.

Charles Larson's notes that, there are ways an autobiography can be approached in African literature. For instance, the non-Africans can approach it by getting into the world totally

different from one's own with regards to values, beliefs and practices though majorly applicable in fictional works. The autobiographical facts of the author add insight in the understanding of a fictional work (3). Although getting onto a peoples' values, beliefs and practice maybe a way of understanding them, reading an autobiography which has aspects that one can quite relate to is more satisfying and easier to understand.

Charles E. Schutz sees humour as a reconciliatory effect as opposed to being a destructive mechanism thereby bringing balance between opposing forces on personal and social circumstances. Moreover, humour being psycho-logic is built upon its rationality in both psychological and emotional need of man in the society in fulfilling a social purpose (63). He adds that humour is a defence mechanism to hostility, continued bitterness of social authority, suppression of society against man's compliance with standards or rule as well as social hierarchy which is generated from a personality in the social setup (67). In the case of *Born a Crime*, humour is used to expose and satirize the inhuman acts of apartheid with a goal of stirring unity and appreciation of different cultures.

Juha Ridanpaa asserts that humour plays an important role fixed in social reality as well as being politically charged, especially in social injustice. In most instances, prejudice on regional matters often leans towards geographical jokes to make fun of a country. On the other hand, jokes related to race act as a way to separate one to the intended object for social self-identities. Therefore, through humour politics is touched on acting as a tool of criticism and awareness of social power relations (3). My study draws on this in analyzing how the autobiography is used to narrate the Apartheid period in South Africa and its impact on families such as Trevor Noah's. This study examines social and political instances in South Africa relying on the society's own prejudice on different races such as the blacks, coloureds and the whites themselves.

Ridanpaa further posits that humour acts as a voice through which ethnicity, gender and religion are defended as far as it is being represented and embodied. It is significant that narration functions as a social performance in which discourses of inclusion and exclusion are voiced. To note, humour stirs unity and preservation of group identity and bonding. It not only functions as a narrative tool but also as a way through which narratives are told and preserved. Ridanpaa asserts:

Humour is an inseparable element of narrativization; people use humour both as a rhetoric device and an outlook, in the process of fixing, organizing, representing and reasoning their personal experiences as well as in identity perception (3).

Humour is used to enable one to go through a catharsis effect by telling his or her story thereby identifying who they are.

Humour also gives us a channel through which we get to discuss taboo subjects. It can be used as a safety-valve for antisocial impulses and as a way in negotiating how taboo subjects can be introduced in the daily discourse. This is evident in *Born a Crime* where Trevor Noah introduces a society's taboos on their belief of the supernatural forces such as witchcraft. Jerry Palmer asserts that humour is used to give way to taboo subjects being mentioned (69) which Ridanpaa points out too. Humour subverts issues that have been banned from being mentioned or talked of in non-comic circumstances. Geybels Van Walter states that humour separates an individual from his environment so as to give an opportunity for him/her to approach it with more "freedom and responsibility" (15). Moreover, humour is a tool for practical wisdom thereby giving thought to matters that ought to be looked at which might have been neglected. Nevertheless, humour necessarily does not have to elicit laughter.

Sigmund Freud asserts that the thought of a substance being said stirs a joke since what is said is what expresses the joke. Therefore, to consider a statement as a joke it ought to have content presumed to be funny as well as delivered in a manner that is humorous. Freud further posits that jokes elicit pleasure to its hearers from the mental processes bearing an effect of it being intellectual or not (139). However, a joke can also be hostile, defensive, satirical or aggressive. In doing so, a joke in its hostility allows the author to point out a ridiculous act previously shunned. It is therefore through the mind that a joke comes out being humorous. What is perceived as humorous might fail to be one to another person. It can be argued that humour and a joke slightly relate. For instance, although a joke might be subjective humour on the other hand relies on the joke to create an amusement. This is also pointed out by Miriam Musonye who asserts that a joke told five years ago might not be relevant to the present day. Just like in standup comedies, it is easier to laugh at a joke because one can relate to it more if the joke is targeting a community one is familiarized in their talks and habits as opposed to a newly known community that one has no knowledge of.

Ebenezer Obadare perceives laughter as a leeway in performing various functions. Not only is it used as a coping mechanism but also used for revenge, escape, destabilize and resist matters aimed towards people therefore, termed as important. He further goes on to argue that humour does not paint a picture of disorganized society but goes against the social ills such as murder of political opponents. Obadare further posits that humour offers control as opposed to resistance, tackling social matters, breaking the dominant histories (5). Humour is a social tool to get through to those in power. My study draws on this sentiment as it's through humour that the authorities can be monitored. It is through jokes that a society might be understood. In the case of *Born a Crime*, humour allows the narrator to point out at Apartheid and its effects on

individuals. He goes ahead to point at political cartoons which are said to underscore the art of attacking those in power as it is through such that they can be criticized. Although this is partly true in most cases such acts will last for a short period then be forgotten without creating impact on the leaders. Furthermore, ridicule makes people deconstruct and construct meaning of what is there and strange. Obadare adds up to the nature of humour by pointing out its social technique and disrupting the social order capturing the absurdity of life (10).

Miriam Musonye postulates that *mchongoano*, commonly associated with the youths in the urban setup is used to elicit humour. She further notes that humour which comes from *mchongoano* is not limited to time, place or occasion and through this devise, communities are brought together. This infers that the creation of humour can be at any time or place with no restrictions made for its use. Musonye further argues that humour which emanates from this set is used to respond to issues in a society and also criticize ills in it (201). She further posits that with some kind of deliberate exaggeration, humour is realized which goes hand in hand with wit where one has to engage with the mind to realize the irony, sarcasm and something ludicrous in it.

Musonye further states that *mchongoano* through humour underscores other functions as opposed to amusement. For instance, it can point how adults are perceived, the socioeconomic situations and body appearance. It can also be noted that forgiveness, flexibility and developing critical attitude can be attained by laughing at ourselves. More so, being in a position to cope up with the absurdities of life and the inappropriateness of life. I will as well rely on her assertions in the development of my study. This is because in my study of *Born a Crime*, Trevor Noah makes fun of his own situation and that of others to point out at the inhumanity perpetrated to them. He thereby underscores this by being sarcastic or ironical to matters at hand.

Moradewun Adejunmobi acknowledges the importance of humour in both the political and African civic life although she leans towards media and the traditional ideas on performance. It is important to note that through the stand-up comedies, humour is elicited touching on social and occupational roles. Through their nontheatrical performances, truth is brought out thereby pointing a community's tendency for errors in judgment when confronted by social and occupational situations. Further, through stand-up comics, social ills facing a country are pointed out. He notes that comedians Basket mouth and Hellen Paul, for instance, touch on religion with regards to immorality in church and life struggles people go through (186-187).

Additionally, as Ronald Knox puts it, humour takes effect when a human being plays the role of the victim thereby making a fool out of someone else (55). It therefore emphasizes on the need of humour to disrupt some of decency to the racial system which has deprived people from their self to items. South Africa as a nation, can be looked at as a dying nation. Although people exist in it, the nation is empty. This is with regards to the oppression of the people stirred by racial factors. The humour intended here is not for self-glorification rather how beings make fool out of themselves despite being graded as the first-class citizens. In a way there is more to "brains" than the colour factor.

Chanelle Kendrick asserts that *Born a Crime*, portrays the stigma of identity that many people go through. He looks at Nombuyiselo, Trevor Noah's mother, as an embodiment of representation of those who fight to retain their identity that is applicable to the modern world. This is quite true as black characters in the autobiography are torn between two worlds; black and white. Although my study touches on the politics of identity in South Africa, it is only part of the of the larger focus of the study, which are Apartheid, the self and techniques of humour used in the writing of *Born a Crime* in the presentation of the author's childhood.

Truth, meaning, and reality are the core principles driven in *Born a Crime* as argued by Madison Palmieri. He argues that the autobiography not only portrays the search of belonging but rather its universality to connect to people. He therefore shares the same idea as Kendrick to incorporate *Born a Crime* in AP Literature (Advanced Placement Literature). Belonging and (un) Belonging are quite evident in the autobiography. The narrator tries to “fit in” to evade the harsh reality in South Africa a reason he would mimic another person’s culture to protect himself. My study goes beyond belonging as propounded by Palmieri and looks at the style used in narration. It relies more on the author’s artistry to convey his experiences.

Marianne Thamm in a review on *The Guardian*, argues that *Born a Crime* is a representation of Trevor Noah’s hybrid identity of apartheid thereby using laughter to write on his instability of identity. While Torbjorn Olausson argues that satire is used to discuss the acceptance of hybridity in postcolonial criticism in *Born a Crime*, he does not connect satire a technique in discussing humour, to fight against prejudice in the institutionalized South Africa. Thus, this study contends that humour is a tool to voice on arguments against injustice and cultural differences thus destabilizing the power of racial supremacy.

My focus of study is to examine how humour is employed to satirize the institution of apartheid in the writing of his autobiography. Of importance is the narrative style, the portrayal of the self and the impact of apartheid under the subjects of his birth, education, and social escapism of *Born a Crime*.

Scope and Limitation

This study confines itself to *Born a Crime*. It aims to bring out socio-historical nature of the autobiography by examining how the author uses humour to narrate apartheid and the self. To achieve this, this study pays attention to the impact of apartheid and the self and the narrative

techniques that the author employs in the autobiography to ridicule and satirize human follies. This study was guided by three theories namely incongruity theories, post-colonial theories and the theories of autobiography. Secondary texts are also used to enrich the scope of my study.

Theoretical Framework

Autobiography, incongruity, and Postcolonial theories formed the interpretive grid for this study. The theory of autobiography is associated with the German historian and philosopher, Wilhelm Dilthey and his student George Misch. They identify this theory as important where every individual has access to the understanding of self and other. Therefore, lived experiences and understanding of life expressions are key to an autobiography. To note experience plays a significant role in the autobiographical criticism which constitutes perception, judgment, and emotion. Dilthey adds that autobiographies take a central place which is key in understanding history, cultural manifestation and the sense of human culture. George Gusdorf argues that the autobiography is a second reading of experience which makes it more truthful than the first because it adds to experience itself.

The theory of autobiography basically states that there is a close relationship between the author and his work. Roy Pascal is concerned with the element of truth in writing autobiographies laying emphasis on the present moment in telling a story. This is because an autobiography has to be an image of reality. He adds that an autobiographer's centre of interest is on self and not the outside world. Autobiographers do have a particular intention when writing about self. So, the writer takes a particular standpoint from which to interpret his/her life. This results to discrimination, selection of facts and the choice of expression (10).

It can be noted that the autobiography is concerned with the nature of an autobiography so as to understand what constitutes an autobiography. The autobiography, by nature, heavily relies on

intention of the author, his inner compulsions and the moments in history that the individual feels associated with. Through this, the study identifies and investigates the author's representation of self, the silences in his work and the artistry he employs to communicate to his readers. This principle therefore marks out the nature of true autobiography from other forms of writing. In this study, I delve into how Trevor Noah employs humour to not only relay his experiences but also how truthful the narration is. To do this, I interrogate the silences and authenticity of his narrative.

Incongruity theory has been attributed to the work of Immanuel Kant. He posits laughter as a reaction to the unexpected situation of illogical, absurd or inappropriate event which frustrates our expectations. We perceive the world to be governed by rational chains of causes and justification however, when situations fail to conform to the rational conceptual of the world it is incongruous. Amy Carrell defines incongruity theory as one which is concerned with the stimulus where the audience is left to identify, perceive and resolve the incongruity already present in a text (312). It is therefore important to note that humour is anything that makes people laugh because they have been surprised by something seen as ludicrous, exaggerated or absurd. A person's response to humorous characters ranges from pleasant amusement to shock and disgust. The theory thus posits that human beings get amused after an experience contradicts the normal expectations of things.

Thomas Schultz concurs with Carrell's assertions of incongruity theory by defining this theory as a conflict between what is expected and what actually happens as a joke (12). This theory therefore holds that for humour to be experienced, there has to be a surprise of two conflicting ideas thus the violation of a set expectation helps in the appreciation of humour. Byrne argues that our brains have trouble changing ideas and effect tension occurs and we laugh to relieve the

tension (50). Incongruity theory therefore goes against the expected norm of what is expected. People laugh at what surprises them thus for humour to take place. John Meyer further points out that humour is a social phenomenon because it stems from what is socially and culturally accepted to be normal (4).

This theoretical approach is useful in this study in analyzing how the author wittily narrates his experiences through humour. Ideally, he presents factual events and actions contrary to what is expected by the reader. Additionally, I examine how the techniques of humour presented in the text bring out the trauma owing to the institutionalization of prejudice against the Black people in South Africa.

Postcolonial theories are theories which centre on the dominant group and the lesser group. The theory has four proponents who include: Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Frantz Fanon and Gayatri Spivak. Edward in his article *Orientalism* laments how the scholars in the Western Europe came up with subjective assertions with regard to the colonized peoples in the colonized world. These scholars, he argues, depicted the colonized people as backward, sub-humans, indolent, immoral, and lazy and in so doing justified their colonization. The stereotypes in a sense depicted the colonized people as being inferior. This study examines how Trevor Noah demonstrates the perception of the black people with regard to other races in Apartheid South Africa.

Homi Bhabha delves into two major ideas: hybridity and ambivalence. With regard to hybridity, the condition of the colonized after the collision of the colonizer's and colonized's culture, the colonizer's culture is superior. The conflict he argues leads to a state of up rootedness such that the colonized subject is displaced from his culture but then, he cannot belong to the colonizer's culture and is thus suspended in 'third space'. The colonized becomes a hybrid of both cultures. In this study, I examine the position of the Black people vis a vis the White people and determine

whether there is a cultural conflict, and if any, the impact of this conflict on the author and his people.

Additionally, Bhabha argues that the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer is ambivalent. That is, there is complicity as well as resistance in this relationship in that inasmuch as the colonized people may at times admire and feel drawn to the colonizer's culture to the extent of mimicking some aspects of it, he in a sense repels from it. Bhabha therefore argues that no culture is superior to the other and in so doing laments that the colonized's culture has been distorted by the colonizer. This study interrogates the aspect of double consciousness in Trevor Noah's autobiography and in so doing, grapple with the reality of White supremacy in apartheid South Africa.

Frantz Fanon argues that violence is the only way the oppressed will deliver themselves. It is the only tool of attaining human attributes they have been denied. The colonizers thus impose violence to the colonized as a way of controlling them. Therefore, violence becomes a tool of conquest, a strategy of the superior body dehumanizing the colonized or the controlled subject. In effect the capability of being human is shaded of by violence. Notably, the colonized opt to mimic the colonizers' language to climb the ladder. Learning of the master's language gives them opportunity to better their lives. This study examines the impact of apartheid on social, political and economic concerns of the colonized and the colonizer from Trevor Noah's experiences.

Research Methodology

The study employed autobiography, Incongruity and postcolonial theories as its theoretical framework. Using the theory of autobiography, I have examined the silences, paratextual elements, memory, experiences and the self in the narration. I have looked at the setting and the

plot of the autobiography and how they relate to the experiences of Trevor Noah's life. Furthermore, in Incongruity theory I have examined the techniques employed in the autobiography to advance humour amidst trauma stirred by institutionalized prejudice. Additionally, I have looked at the importance of humorous techniques such as satire and irony to communicate the institutionalized prejudice in his childhood. From the postcolonial perspective, I have looked at what happens when opposing cultures meet. The study has explored how language is a defense mechanism and how double consciousness is a vice to grapple with the white supremacy during apartheid.

CHAPTER TWO

NARRATING APARTHEID AND THE SELF IN *BORN A CRIME*

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I examine the impact of apartheid and the self in *Born a Crime*. In the autobiography, Trevor Noah takes a journey to the past, taking readers back to his childhood experiences that have shaped his present. He narrates the various concerns such as crime, violence, education, and ethnic divides through humour. I examine how the narrator uses different subjects to discuss apartheid and the self. This study will discuss the effect of apartheid on individuals and the self through humour which is a medium to elicit laughter but at the same time a mirror to society in a multiracial South Africa and also how this effects are brought out through humour.

For a statement to be considered a joke, it should have content that is presumed to be funny and delivered in a humorous manner. According to Sigmund Freud “Our enjoyment of a joke is based on a combined impression of its substance and of its effectiveness as a joke” (135). Therefore, humour in the autobiography is based on the socio-historical background and the circumstances that surround his birth and upbringing.

I explore Trevor Noah’s experiences, by a close reading of the autobiography focusing on the narrative and plot and investigating how his experiences are portrayed through humour. Humour does not only rely on how it is created but also its effect on the intended object in question. Through humour, a writer can point at some issues that had ideally been difficult to point out. Writers have the ability and art to invoke strategies in their narratives whether fictional or nonfictional. These strategies are not only intended to make the readers to change but also make them to laugh at actions of the characters. It makes them realize human follies to prompt them to

condemn villains. In so doing, transformation takes place when the audience corrects the ills in a society.

Trevor Noah's satire is dictated by his choice of words. It is easier to use humour in touching on the ills in a society as opposed to picking a fight directly. This indirectness helps in communicating truth effectively and at the same time protects the narrator from any kind of attack. He entertains his audience and also criticizes inhuman values in the society. Even though the narration evokes a lot of laughter, the message passed across makes the readers empathize with the narrator. Humour conceals a melancholy born out of years of suffering and pain.

The pain and suffering results from the history of apartheid which led to many injustices bordering on human right abuse. Trevor Noah begins his narrative by situating his birth within the conflicted and contested socio-political context. His birth –its meaning and implication- is already contentious because there are laws that prohibit inter-racial unions.

2.2 Birth as a Contested Reality in *Born a Crime*

Trevor Noah in *Born a Crime* states in the intercalary chapters that the Immorality Act of 1927 in South Africa prohibit “illicit carnal intercourse between Europeans and natives” (vii). It was a crime to have multiracial relationships. The parties who violated this act risked imprisonment of between four to five years. Notably, coloureds of mixed race were still being born regardless of these racist laws. Trevor Noah is born of an African mother and a German-Swiss father. In effect, people from all races could not freely associate with one another for fear of being imprisoned. Ironically, despite the restrictions on white and black union, coloureds were recognized by the government. “For the purposes of the state, Colored people became the almost-Whites. The second -class citizen” (118) who could not be given the rights of the whites although they had some privileges. It can be noted that the Immorality Act exposed the

dehumanizing effects of racial segregation which inhibits freedom of association. Every year coloureds were promoted to be White. A pencil test was inserted on one's hair, if the pencil fell one was deemed White but if it stuck, one was termed Coloured. The mixed-race children are the evidence of sexual relations between whites and blacks.

Trevor Noah's biological birth was contested even before Nombuyiselo's and Robert's union since his mother had to ask Robert, his lover, to sire a child for her. His father initially objects to her demands due to claims of his strict adherence to religion and the unspoken fear of the laws put in place. However, after his son's birth he wants to be part of his life which forces the mother and son to sneak into Hilbrow in order see him. This illustrates that the apartheid system created fear in individuals' desire to forge genuine relationships. Roberts's first denial to sire a child for Nombuyiselo might have been stirred by fear of the apartheid laws. It is implied that Nombuyiselo's union with Robert was motivated by her desire for a child more than a man in her life. It might also be argued that Nombuyiselo's actions might have been a way of breaking down the set laws of apartheid or to give her an avenue to have a better life.

Frantz Fanon argues in the chapter "The Woman of Color and the White Man" that the coloured woman wants to get a white man to assist her rise up into riches and high status (54). She wants to use the man to overcome her disadvantaged position. Moreover, the blacks either men or women mimic the white man's language and culture. They don't necessarily like the white man, but they envy them and know that if they get closer to them their life will change for the better (*Black Skin, White Mask*). In this case, Nombuyiselo might not have loved or been in love with Robert but just looked at the opportunities that would set in. She uses him to get a child who will have a better place in the society. All this points out to the paradox of life. That she later opts to get married to Abel, a black man, might be an indication that she never loved Robert. While

reading the autobiography, one might think that she opted to get married to Abel out of convenience. She had seen the difficulties of having a white man and a coloured child and thus decided to get a man of the Black race so that she could relate without judgement and restrictions.

Trevor Noah deliberately uses circumlocution and hyperbole to present the fact of his birth in a humorous way. He states that when her mother's delivery was taking place, the doctors "cut open her belly, and reached in and pulled out a half-white half-black child" (26) who is essentially seen to have violated the "laws, statutes and regulations" thereby being born illegally. The tone implies that the doctors are not concerned about the humanity of either his mother or him. The words "half-white half-black child" distort the reality of colouredness, which is certainly not half white and half black. A child cannot be half-black or half-white. One is born either black, coloured or white. He makes fun out of his own birth painting himself as a child who is unwanted and not tolerated by the political establishment. In essence, he would have said she underwent a caesarean section. Additionally, Trevor Noah sums his existence as unlawful, which alludes to violation of "any number of laws" a proof to his parents' criminal act. He says: "I was born a crime" (26). Trevor Noah's birth is an extended metaphor to show the condition of the black people.

It is revealed that the aftermath of racial segregation leads to broken families with limited freedom. Women are subjected to single parenthood because of their absentee husbands working in the mines, exile, imprisonment, death or due to prohibition of interracial union. Ironically, if parents of one race such as whites give birth to a child categorized by the government to be too dark, the child is classified as Coloured regardless of the parents' documentation as proof. Consequently, they had to make a decision: whether to denounce their status and move to a

coloured area or separate, forcing the mother and the child to relocate to a ghetto while the father remained white to cater for the family (119). This shows that coming from a white race was not a guarantee of protection by the apartheid extremism. At any given time, one's race could be reclassified from coloured to black, white to coloured, black to coloured or coloured to white based on one's physical features such as skin colour, nose shape and hair texture.

A sense of otherness is represented through tragi-comic. The government stretched its arms to convict members of its own race because a child appears too dark. The government's strict adherence to labeling of people as too dark or white, fails to realize that a child from a white family being dark is a reflection of the fact that white people had black genes in them. The autobiography explains the paradoxical life in a multiracial South Africa of Trevor Noah's childhood. Apartheid had escalated to an extent that despite ones' race, both white and black people are emotionally tortured. Trevor Noah's birth is categorized as a crime because of the mixed racial relationship of his parents. His birth attracts fear and seclusion having been born of a Swiss-German father and a black mother. Just after his birth, his mother is termed single. Robert cannot be seen in the hospital. Neither is his name included in his son's birth certificate considering the power enforced by the government, "So my birth certificate... doesn't say that I'm Swiss, which the government wouldn't allow" (27). It is dangerous for Robert to be identified as the father on his own child's birth certificate. The oppressive laws interfere with the identity of the son with regard to his race, tribe, and nationality as that of his mother thereby dictating his existence in that particular society. No wonder Trevor Noah cannot connect with his white or coloured heritage later on in life.

Although the birth of a child is usually characterised by joy and celebration, it is sad that Nombuyiselo and Robert, fear to be spotted with their son. While imaginatively narrating the

history of South Africa, he focuses on his autobiography to tell his story and alongside that of South Africa. Living under oppressive apartheid laws, his father would walk across the street in order to conceal their association. Revelation of Trevor Noah's association with his father would result in either his parents' imprisonment or he could be taken away to an orphanage. At the age of three, Trevor Noah in a sense states that he dug a hole to find a way out of his grandparents' home in Soweto in order to play with other children. He is constantly locked indoors because he is a coloured child and is thus not allowed to live in the black neighbourhood. His escape worries his family who hurriedly form a search party to avoid the possibility of him being spotted by the police for it might have led to him not only being "taken off to a home for coloured kids" but also his family would have been deported, his grandmother arrested and the mother taken to prison"(30). He ironically exposes and ridicules the folly of apartheid.

His existence is a nuisance and a denial of freedom. It can be argued that he is a nuisance since he is the result of an illicit relationship and his existence has to be concealed. The mother considered him a nuisance at times as she said:

I chose to have you because I wanted something to love and something that would love me unconditionally in return ...and then I gave birth to the most selfish piece of shit on earth and all it ever did was cry and eat and shit and say, 'Me, me, me, me me' (77).

This illustrates her mother's liberal mind and frustration. Confined to their races, the two parents cannot walk together in public. Through a flashback he recalls an incidence when the mother told him how he once ran after his father in the park and called after him "Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!" (27), only for his father to panic and take off for the fear of being discovered due to the attention drawn to him by his son. Unfortunately, Trevor Noah does not let him go instead, he pursues him

even further. It is evident that Trevor Noah is genuinely puzzled and is longing to be with a man whom apartheid could not permit association.

As much as it sounds funny, it is sad that Trevor Noah chases Robert, not knowing why he is running away from him. His father must have felt guilty running away from his son but could not change the situation. It can also be assumed that he might have been a lonely child who could not only mingle freely with children in his mother's neighbourhood but also with his own father. The direct speech "Daddy!" is an insight to stir and ease laughter to the reader although it also shows how his son was fond of him. This incidence portrays how apartheid dehumanized the people in the society owing to breakdown of family relationships as evidenced by Robert's flight from his son. Apartheid made people, in this case Trevor Noah's family to live in fear, mistrust and isolation cutting themselves from interaction and any sort of communication.

Notably, he humorously narrates the injustice meted on a black man roaming alone in Eden Park neighbourhood. The presence of a coloured child with a black woman unaccompanied with a coloured mother was deemed dangerous. Consequently, Trevor Noah's mother is forced to hire Queen to act as Trevor Noah's real mother and thus walk with him beside her while Nombuyiselo the mother walked behind them as if she was the house help. He avers:

When we wanted to go out to the Park, my mom would invite her to go with us. Queen would walk next to me and act like she was my mother, and my mother would walk a few steps behind, like she was the maid working for the coloured woman (28).

Trevor Noah asserts that looking at his pictures, he sees the mother standing behind them. She seems to be intruding in the picture, yet she is the mother while Queen who almost looks like

him is an imposter. Such a scenario demonstrates that apartheid stirred psychological trauma to its victims as represented by Noah's mother. Although his mother's intention for having Trevor Noah was to have a child to love and be loved back, she is unable to fully get this satisfaction owing to dark forces imposed on her through apartheid laws. This illustrates that the laws had deprived people of their true self-expression and existence.

The mother would throw Trevor Noah "like a bag of weed," (28) when she saw policemen. This simile describes the act which is a manifestation of the brutal law towards the people with mixed race children. From the above instances, Trevor Noah satirizes the situation caused by the stringent laws that characterized South Africa in the 80s. It is ironical that although he is coloured, he is not lucky to enjoy a coloured's privilege considering that he is raised in a black family. He satirizes the police for their brutality; instead of protecting the people, they are the ones instilling fear in them.

Frantz Fanon posits that it is only through violence that the black man can be tamed but in the capitalist countries the masses are always persuaded by moral teachers and counselors. He asserts that:

The policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native and advise him by means of rifle butts and plan not to budge (36).

He argues that for decolonization to take place, blacks have to use violence with some lives being lost so as to get out of their oppressed life. There are frequent bursts of violence and clash between the blacks and the police as evidenced in Alexandra where blacks resorted to violence. The policeman and the soldiers are the colonizers' agents of oppression whose aim is to

prosecute rather than protect. He says that there are “epics of violence...a cop’s car chasing gangsters ...a gun battle going off” (205). The blacks were perceived as violent and could only be controlled through brutality. The institutionalized racism dehumanized the black people creating a culture of violence and fear among the black community. The blacks were the recipients of brutality and violence. Blacks are depicted as violent while whites are calm and organized people such that “in white areas you rarely saw the police” (29). For instance, blacks in Soweto are portrayed as violent and could only be controlled through violence.

Trevor Noah uses animal imagery to describe blacks as monkeys which he obviously wants to point out the dehumanizing effect they were subjected to. “Blacks are monkeys. Don’t swing from the trees like them. Learn to walk upright like the white man. Then all of a sudden it’s a *Planet of the Apes*, and the monkeys have taken over” (120). The black man is viewed as a lesser being and thus is compared as “*a Planet of Apes*” which justifies the police brutality. Soweto is portrayed as a centre of war in reference to bulls- eye. Police squads parade in peoples’ houses glancing through windows in search of any persons who might be in an ‘illegal’ union. Their main goal is to strip off blacks’ citizenship and ensure South Africa became a white nation. In so doing, coloureds, blacks, Indians and whites live separately with zones of empty land limiting their contact. People were grouped in relation to their races. Blacks were expected to live in black designated zones, while coloureds and whites were zoned differently.

Animal imagery and vivid description are used to refer to police as hippos. Hippos are huge animals and so the police are compared to “an occupying army. They wore riot gear. They were militarized” (29). They are said to be militarized ready for any action vented on the blacks. A black person could not stand and watch a police officer; they would rather run away. In contrast,

police in white neighbourhoods were not only friendly but also dressed in their coloured shirts and pressed pants.

Birth can also be contested in terms of the possibility of promotion and demotion of a person's race. It is paradoxical that coloureds could be Indians and vice versa. At other instances blacks could be elevated to coloureds or be demoted to blacks. One was therefore expected to denounce his or her family, people, and history. It is hilarious that despite belonging to a particular race, there were systems which divided one's livelihood or race. There was no assurance that a specific race fully belonged to an individual. Changes could be made at any time. Chinese were considered blacks and Japanese whites. Trevor Noah thus presents this facts hypothetically where a policeman has to ensure there is separation of races but unable to separate the Chinese from a Japanese. He speculates on what the policeman would say after spotting a Japanese sitting on a bench in a white's park.

Hey, get off that bench, you Chinaman!

Excuse me, I'm Japanese.

Oh, I apologize, sir. I didn't mean to be racist. Have a lovely afternoon. (75)

Situational irony in this hypothetical event reveals the absurdity of apartheid. Trevor Noah and Teddy his classmate are culprits who stole at the mall. However, Trevor Noah could not be identified. Struck by their prejudice, he appears in the camera like a white child. For them race is clear cut. One is either white or black.

In reference to racial mythology, whites are superior while the blacks are inferior. A reason Temperance Noah, his grandfather considers him “Mastah”. “Mastah” in this case refers to those considered whites. His grandfather sees him as the boss thus insists on driving Trevor Noah who has to seat on the back seat. Trevor Noah cannot tell him that his idea of race is misconstrued. Flawed by race, Frances exempts him from punishment while his native cousins Mlungusi and Bulelwa are beaten. She fears disciplining him because she asserts that hitting a black child is easier since their colour is retained but asserts that his coloured grandchild turns blue and green and yellow and red. Apartheid therefore created artificial racial limits which reveals the challenges of identity.

Trevor Noah’s life is quite ironical considering his race. Being a coloured attracted a privileged kind of life however, he finds himself in poverty-stricken circumstances. “Coloured people became the almost- whites. They were the second-class citizens, denied the rights of the white people but given special privileges” (118). It is evident that he was not welcomed by the whites and he could only find himself by associating with the blacks. At no instance has he mentioned associating himself with the whites. When they move to Highlands North, a white neighbourhood he can only interact with Teddy who is a child of a domestic worker in Linkfield. It is only in Alexandra that he opens up about being accepted. “Because I didn’t live in the hood, I was technically an outsider in the hood, but for the first time in my life I didn’t feel like one” (218). Derek Walcott presents a similar situation in his play, *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. One of the characters, Corporal Le Strade, is a coloured who confesses that his half black side accepts him more than his white side. Therefore, he considers himself black just like Trevor Noah does.

Language determined an individual's status in the society. English in this case was more important as opposed to any local language. Frantz Fanon states that white language is superior because it elevates the coloured man to the status of the colonizer if he renounces his language to a white man's way, "The Negro of the Anthills will be whiter ...come closer to being a real human being" (18). However, it is ironical that English language does not favour Trevor Noah rather his knowledge of local languages. Trevor Noah gets acceptance and protection in school and in the neighbourhoods. He notes that one is safe if he/she speaks the language of the aggressor. In this case the native language works best for Trevor Noah. He protects himself from other children who speak in Zulu when plotting to mug him because of his whiteness. He resorts to Zulu asking them if he could join them and steal. "Kodwa bafwethu yingani singavele sibambe umuntu inkuzi? Asenzeni. Mina ngikulindele" (55) translated to "You guys, why don't we just mug someone together? I'm ready. Let's do it" (55). It also signifies that being white was risky in a black neighbourhood. His prowess in languages is seen as convenient as he uses it to reach out to the isolated race. Trevor Noah and Theesan Pillay, his Indian classmate move around the school and interact with fellow black students and in so doing, point out that it is difficult for a child to understand confinement and prejudice. Trevor Noah's expertise in languages gives him acceptance among the black students and courage to interact freely without feeling alienated. It also makes its speakers appreciate the African culture and accept their identity; it instils a sense of pride and ownership of who they are. Implicitly, Trevor Noah asserts that speaking another person's language bribes the person to see him as part of them. This is the reason the black students loved his company. He uses multiple African languages to interact with the black students such as Zulu and Xhosa while in school and thus create oneness. He calls it 'simulcast; giving one the program in their own language.

He satirizes apartheid's move to belittle other races. For instance, the blacks' language is viewed as backward. Trevor Noah points out how he is questioned for denying himself a chance to get coloured privileges by speaking native languages. What the government had done was to cause people from different races to hate on themselves and see no point of sticking to their races but strive to be white. "Why do you speak that click- click language? Look at your light skin. You're almost there and you're throwing it away" (121). It implies that native languages were a hindrance to one's development. Thus, the assumption that speaking English created opportunities. English was a survival technique in the black society that was used to fit in. In so doing, it oppressed other races especially the blacks. It made them denounce who they were since they perceived English as an answer to everything. Frances would always assign Trevor Noah to pray in English since she believed prayers made in English were answered. He says that "she believed my prayers were more powerful, because I prayed in English" (40). He argues that natives lost their confidence and love for their culture, thereby undermining it.

Neologism which is synonymous to apartheid is used in propagating ideologies of apartheid. For instance, "wrong color kid in the wrong color area". Everything was determined by colour. Limited locations directed one's race where the protagonist's race dictated his movement and interaction. Trevor Noah as a kid growing up in Soweto is locked indoors at his grandmother's house and is restricted to play in the yards or streets while his fellow black children are allowed to play and roam freely in the neighbourhood. He becomes an isolated child which he metaphorically states "I lived inside my head" (30) as a loner where he could plan his own entertainment. Isolated, he grows more comfortable alone rather than associate himself with other kids. Additionally, apartheid interfered with his human nature such that it stirs him to withdraw to self and has to remember to be with people.

He satirizes the laws passed to the natives in South Africa by pointing out the savagery rooted in them. He says that the laws which govern people's location prohibited blacks from living in a coloured or a white area, coloureds too are not permitted to cross over to a white or a black area. Everyone was confined to their respective places. Being a coloured, Trevor Noah, is prohibited to live in Soweto, a black designated area, neither is he to be seen in Johannesburg where Robert previously lived. Trevor Noah tries to communicate that he was never privileged but underwent the same troubles as any other black child.

Frantz Fanon asserts that natives and colonialists occupy different places. The colonialist's areas are affluent with "brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leaving" (37). This is opposed to the natives who live in congested areas with men living on top of each other. As portrayed in the autobiography, he vividly describes how the natives living in Alexandra are faced with dirty, smelly and congested place. They are said to live in a roughly built hut build on the back of another person's shanty hut. They pour dirty water in the streets which has already turned into a river, with dumped motor oil. "There's little in the way of basic sanitation. Trash everywhere, typically a garbage fire going down some side street" (205). Additionally, the natives in Alexandra are compared to electricity which is on the move at all times, coming and going out, idling around a corner or a thug getting busy because of limited opportunities. They spend their excess energy in violent acts.

With respect to intersectionality, one's race could either be a blessing or a curse. In this regard, Nombuyiselo is limited in movement. Being black she can only be in Johannesburg at certain hours to avoid arrest. This resulted in hideouts and sleeping in public restrooms. She could disguise herself as a maid in maid's overalls to avoid being questioned. One's race determined a person's pattern. Either to be within a specific area or not. Individuals are faced with identity

crises. For instance, when at Eden Park, Trevor Noah is termed an outsider because of speaking in African languages which is a black race identity while some hated him for being competent in English. He becomes an enemy of the society. He records an instance where he is duped by coloured children who pretend to be friendly only for them to steal his bicycle. In another instance, he is bullied by a group of six boys who hit him with mulberries. It can be noted that apartheid's aim was to trigger hatred among races within or without. Although he belonged to the coloured race, he tends to dissociate himself from them because of the violence meted towards him by the coloureds. At no point in time does he refer to himself as a coloured. It is only once when at the court that he finds himself choosing the whites because the coloured criminals would harm him if he appears to join the blacks.

Trevor Noah juxtaposes a violent and a non-violent relationship through Abel and Robert who are black and white respectively. The manner in which Abel relates with the family is in contrast to how Robert relates with them. In this case the white man looks like he has an ideal family. The illegal relationship looks like the happy one in that Robert spends quality time with his son at any opportune time like going to the park despite the fear of the laws in place. He ensures his son celebrates his birthdays every year and during Christmas time "he had Christmas lights and Christmas tree... fake snow and snow globes, ... lots of wrapped presents from Santa Claus" (106). Moreover, he would cook for him what he wanted to eat. But with Abel, with whom the mother is legally married, the family is unhappy. Abel is described as a violent man who not only beats his wife but also men. His strength is exaggerated when he is said to have hit a grown person with an open arm that caused the victim to crumple. This inculcated fear in Trevor Noah who would change his sitting position once Abel arrives home.

Abel does not spend time with them and at most time he is always out drinking. He beats up his wife and does not accept Trevor Noah as his child. At no time was he fatherly to him. At a young age Trevor Noah would have expected to see Abel buy for him presents just like his father did. He thereby justifies his identity as a rejected son where he is not only coughed out by apartheid but his stepfather too. It shows pain of living with the absence of a father figure considering he is nine years old when the mother gets married. He becomes resentful of Abel who comes to change their orderly life. In one occurrence Abel resorts to disciplining him after forging Nombuyiselo's signature. His stepfather throws blows at him and he feels it is not done from a platform of love. It seems his plan is to make him pay for her mother's past. His violence to the protagonist might be vengeance against the white race that Trevor Noah represents. Abel is jealous because Trevor Noah is a reminder of his wife, an ex-lover. It can be reasonably argued that the violence meted out by Abel against Trevor Noah is as a result of a combination of sexual jealousy and racial bitterness.

The narrator's birth is contested in that although one would have assumed that Trevor Noah's childhood would be luxurious, considering his father's existence, poverty becomes part of his life. He vividly describes the conditions of poor blacks by deliberately looking at the comical side of their situations and uses them to narrate his family's experience. By doing so he creates a connection with the reader who not only laughs at his style of rendering the story but also empathizes with the family's situation. He narrates the absurdities of life which surrounded him and the neighbourhoods in South Africa disclosing the dystopian nature of the society. Constrained in poverty, he often ate a meal of mopane worms that he had to cry to Nombuyiselo for a change of diet. He exaggerates the kind of food given to him to show disgust at his poor life

by intentionally mentioning nauseating words like “worms” and “shit”. If the food can be eaten it cannot be as terrible as he portrays it; snails are appreciated as escargot by the Chinese.

Trevor Noah’s birth is an extended metaphor of the condition of black people in South Africa such that he is born of a European father and an African mother and thus torn between the two worlds. He cannot belong in the privileged white society due to the pigmentation of his skin colour. In as much as he is fluent in English and belongs to the coloured race, he is raised by his mother who stems from the black race which naturally grounds him in a disadvantaged position that is associated with poverty and inferiority. He is multilingual and thus able to converse in English and African languages which enables him to make friends in the black society.

However, this does not give him a sense of belonging as brought out by Abel, his stepfather, who dislikes him. Having been rejected by Robert, his biological father, Trevor Noah is a metaphor of not only the coloured people but also the black people who are torn between the white and black culture. Trevor Noah’s neglect and ultimate rejection by his white father, Robert, resonates with the apartheid government’s neglect of the black people in South Africa. The black people are rejected by a system which renders them into third class citizenship and denies them social and economic opportunities. The black race, just like Trevor Noah, are rendered into abject poverty. The neglect of the black people by the white system has resulted in bitterness and violence which is depicted through Abel, his step father. The apartheid system has resulted in the breakdown of not only the black society but also families as exhibited through his violence against his mother. Abel’s violent nature and bitterness depicts the ripple effects of apartheid which tears apart not only the family but also the individual.

Despite the struggle against poverty and racism, Trevor Noah manages to attain some level of success owing to formal and informal education which enables him to take care of his ailing mother.

2. 3 Portrayal of Education and Oppression during Apartheid

Apartheid cripples the black man through an inferior education. The government built Bantu schools which taught metrics and agriculture only. The blacks were not taught science, history or civics. This was the white's supremacy measure to control the oppressed psychologically thus interpellation occurs where the people are conditioned to think in a similar way.

Education has been likened to palimpsest where history has been rewritten to serve those in power. In so doing, there tends to be a multi-layered record of natives not given the true history or account. *Sarafina!* South African movie points out how education for the blacks is limited. Teachers are only allowed to teach the authorized syllabus which excludes the true history of black South Africans. In *Born a Crime*, Trevor Noah juxtaposes education in Germany to that of South Africa. All facts are given about the Holocaust and its gravity in German education but in South Africa the atrocities of apartheid are not given with facts. The blacks are not exposed to emotional or moral dimensions. For instance, he uses situational irony to state how teachers and students at King David School get annoyed by a performance made by Trevor Noah's group who cheer Hitler, one of their members, as he danced. Trevor Noah's group calling the name Hitler was offensive to the Jews considering the atrocities committed by the Germans to the Jews. However, Trevor Noah's group thinks the Jews are racist because they did not acknowledge and appreciate their black culture. This points out that the black education is not comprehensive, a

reason black parents would name their children and dogs, Hitler, Napoleon and Mussolini with no idea of who these were.

In Alexandra, after “completion” of education most blacks’ resort to crime due to unemployment. This implies that this education is superficial since it does not empower the people. The Bantu education is merely rote learning and is spearheaded by epistemological representation where historical events are taught in passing so that the kind of knowledge one is taught, and the reality is different. Eventually, their identity is lost thus making them see themselves as a lesser race. He points how Temperance would sing songs taught to him in the Bantu schools “Two times two is four. Three times two is six. La lalalala” (61) while the whites were given the right education, resources and computers (190). The natives mind was not equipped to reason. Trevor Noah says: “We weren’t taught how to think, period” (195).

Trevor Noah contrasts government education to missionary education. The missionaries played a key role in shaping the black’s life patterns as they worked to “Christianize and westernize the natives” (61) by teaching them English, European literature, medicine and law. However, government education through apartheid targets to sabotage the mind of the natives by introducing Bantu education system that only taught metrics and agriculture and demanded a closure of the missionary schools. In effect, the blacks find themselves submissive to the government and its white ruler ship. The blacks “worked on the farm or in a factory or in a mine or a maid” (23). This points out that brainwashing the black man was the easiest target to endanger him a reason to Nombuyiselo’s determination to educate Trevor Noah at a tender age.

Trevor Noah recounts that his mother’s attainment of education was due to luck owing to existence of a mission school in her village. She was taught how to read and write by a white pastor. It is after an international protests over apartheid government’s human rights abuses that

she lands a job opportunity as a secretary at Bramfontein in Johannesburg owing to her competency in English. Skilled-labour jobs were reserved for the whites. Trevor Noah argues that exposure to the English language gave them an upper hand since the white education had been made powerful.

Private and government schools were different with regard to what they offered. Maryvale College, a private school, accommodated students of all races. All students were dressed in the same school uniform attire. He says they “wore the same maroon blazers, and same grey slacks and skirts” (56). They are taught by the same teachers and given equal books. Therefore, he could not spot any difference. This is however opposed to government schools where teachers were incompetent. It is clear that private schools protected them from the reality of racial segregation and were aimed at not only empowering but also ensured learners’ improvement.

He demonstrates how racial segregation was rooted in government schools such as H.A Jack primary school. Students are separated on the basis of race in their classes. A class versus the B class (white and black). He points out that an aptitude test had to be taken to determine a student’s grouping. One’s race determined a person’s occupation thus the system of education was biased. Trevor Noah is advised by his school counsellor not to go to a black class since it would disadvantage him from getting opportunities. This is a pointer that whites were privileged to higher and better chances of life. Black students were considered failures who lacked a future and thus the school counsellor advises Trevor Noah to remain in the A class. The counsellor says that “you are a smart kid. You don’t want to be in that class” (59).

Black students could not mix with the whites. Each had specific classrooms and playground. Trevor Noah is surprised to see a multitude of black students on the playground comparing them to an ocean. “It was an ocean of black, like someone had opened a tap and all black had come

pouring out” (57). This implies that the black students were congested due to insufficient facilities and thus inferior quality of education. Black students played football, cricket was played by coloureds and tennis was played by the whites. This had a lot to do with how they were brought up historically or the facilities presented to them. A reason township students found themselves hanging out together.

He satirizes the impact of black education. Whites were privileged to improve on their quality of living but a majority of the blacks were left behind. While the whites were prepared to advance their education, the blacks were lured with songs and chants which kept their intellectual capacity at rudimentary levels. The black education lacked skills and resources. Hulk could not help himself because he lacked skills and education thereby resorting to theft. He uses analogy to point out that education alone cannot be the solution to end poverty in the black neighbourhood. Resources are also needed to facilitate them. He says:

People love to say give a man a fish and he’ll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he’ll eat for a lifetime. What they don’t say is that, and it would be nice if you gave him a fishing rod (190).

Nombuyiselo believes that English is superior, a reason Trevor Noah learns English as his first language because it is an important language in South Africa. It is the language of money and is equated with intelligence. Frantz Fanon asserts that by learning the white man’s language, a native is placed in a higher position to his fellows and is therefore in a position to enjoy some privileges.

Trevor Noah vividly describes how his mother played a major role to help him attain informal education. He was not allowed to listen to music that would negatively influence him. He quotes

one of the prohibited musicians “Boys 11 Men”, a secular group of musicians. He compares his mother-son relationship to the cartoon “Tom and Jerry” to show how the mother always chased him to discipline him and he was always running away from her to avoid punishment. Nombuyiselo would throw something at him with the intention of hitting him, subconsciously he had to get hold of it, place it down before running away. “In a split of a second, I’d have to think, is it valuable? Yes, is it breakable? Yes, catch it, put it down, and now run” (10). This is because he would get double punishment if anything gets broken.

He describes how his mother would carry him on her shoulders for him to see houses in the white zones as Trevor Noah describes to her what he sees. The mother exposes him to everything including what is considered belonging to the white world and she justifies with the words “even if he never leaves the ghetto, he will know that the ghetto is not the world” (74). The mother teaches him to think out of the box, something the formal education could not do. His mother’s exposure prepares him for the future in that he is able to reason at a level higher than his age; thus enabling him fit in any group. He develops his entrepreneurial skills while in school where he is a tuck boy. He delivers food to fellow students and entertains them by cracking jokes. He says: “Fat guys were my number- one customers. They loved food but couldn’t run” (140). Apparently, Trevor Noah makes a living as an entertainer owing to the skills he developed while in school.

He has a tough education while growing up. He walks five kilometres from school to the garage where they live. At the time, he performs poorly in school because he cannot find adequate time to do his assignments since he has to take part in the family business. The sleeping conditions too do not provide a serene environment to sleep as he has to spend most of his nights in cars at the

garage. When his mother's car breaks down, he has to push. Out of shame, he is forced to remove his sweater to cover himself to avoid being seen by other students.

Education can be a way through which one might make something out of his/her life however, it is unfortunate that it might not work for everyone. Some are always caught up in a web and feel trapped resorting to a variety of set defense mechanism such as robbery, alcoholism or even violence as discussed in the next section.

2.4 Social Escapism as a Way of Coping with the Excess of Apartheid

Apartheid is intentionally misspelt in *Born a Crime* as 'apart hate' to show the divisions that the government created among South Africans. There is animosity and mistrust not only in the races but also in the diverse ethnic groupings majorly the Zulu and Xhosa. A number of the blacks both in the apartheid and the post –apartheid era are disadvantaged. These characters are either not skilled enough to take power and responsibilities or have been laid off. As a result of this, they find solace in religion, crime, domestic violence, drunkenness, prostitution, and entertainment as a way of social fulfilment. It can be noted that the blacks resort to violence so as to purge their frustrations of poverty and historical injustices. At first, South Africa is at war with apartheid but after apartheid, it is at war with itself; when the Zulu and the Xhosa engage in violence against one another.

He introduces the autobiography with an event of him being thrown out of a moving car by Nombuyiselo when they were in danger due to tribal differences. Trevor Noah alludes this act to Hollywood to make it look like it is not a big deal. Initially the ruling class uses ethnicity to create a division amongst Africans. One side, Zulu, feels sidelined with the other one, Xhosa, feeling superior to the other. They are driven to tribal clashes because they feel their life could be better if their own person was in power. Frantz Fanon says that colonialists oppress and make

them submissive while on the other hand the black resort to violence against another black. Since a black cannot fight a white man, he resorts to direct it towards a fellow black who is unable to control his anger. The term “neck-lacing” sounds fancy but after he explains the reader realizes what happens to the victims is inhumane. He thereby talks of serious issues in a light way intentionally to make the reader ponder on what is raised.

The white man told the blacks that Jesus would save them, and they knew that they needed to be saved not from anything else, but, from the white man himself. However, they decided to try it out. The narrator sarcastically refers to his mother as “team Jesus all the way” (6). Trevor Noah trivializes Christianity by referring to Jesus as “a guy who turns water into wine” (6). He does not figure out the reason Africans’ native religions and Native American religion are regarded as primitive and savage. According to Frantz Fanon:

The Church in the colonies is the white people's Church, the foreigner's Church. She does not call the native to God's ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor (40).

The blacks have been forced to the ways of the white man. In so doing, the blacks copy and believe in what is imposed on them. Christianity is viewed as sacred. It is a guide to living right in the society. Further, Frantz Fanon asserts that with religion the blacks have been trained to think in the same way and to consider the white man or colonialist as the authority that they have to be submissive to. They can neither question authority nor demand for justice.

Women in Soweto resorts to religion as a way of comfort because of their absentee husbands “religion filled the void left by absent men” (39). The absence may be caused by the racial restrictions like in the case of Trevor Noah’s father. Others are on exile, in jail and at work.

Nombuyiselo's responds to his son's question saying "Just because I live without a man doesn't mean I've never had a husband. God is my husband" (39) suggests that she has let God to take care of her needs and to provide guidance that a husband could have given her. It is a defense mechanism to shelter her from her loneliness. Notably, religion is a source of hope that enables them to face the struggles they undergo. It is a way of making them live positively in the world with its prevailing conditions. The women in the neighbourhood led by Nombuyiselo, his aunt Sibongile, and Frances his grandmother, are on the forefront in holding prayer meetings. Their prayers are exaggerated when they are said to extend the word 'amen'. Lengthening the word amen might be a way of trying to show how the prayers felt like they were not going to end. In some other way he might also be viewing the prayers as a meaningless litany where a word is just said to show one is spiritual.

He analyses the different churches he attends with his mother with regard to race. He would attend three churches in a day with Nombuyiselo on weekly prayer meetings. "Tuesday night was prayer meeting...Wednesday night was Bible study... Thursday night was youth church...then on Sunday we went to church" (6). It is quite true that religion makes the oppressed find contentment although in most cases it is considered womanly. He satirizes religion as for him, going to church does not equate to being righteous as he labels Friday and Saturday a time to sin. Women and children go to church, but men do not. When Velile, his uncle, would be invited to join them he would always excuse himself saying that men hardly took part in it. "I would join if there were more men, but I can't be the only one here" (39). Nombuyiselo is so staunch that she is desperate for "spiritual food" forcing him to attend different churches in the long run inciting him to be choosy. Mixed church has jubilant praise, white church analysis of the scripture and black church passion or catharsis (Holy Spirit).

The white church takes only one hour, and the black church takes between three to four hours. Trevor Noah believes the black church takes more hours because they needed more time with Jesus as they suffer more. The blacks seem more religious than the whites. It is ironical that white church takes one hour while black church takes longer hours yet it is the white religion. The blacks seem to take solace in religion as a way of escape from many problems. Therefore, they will not question the role of racism in their problems but will leave all to God and will not act for their freedom.

He ridicules how black churches offer deliverance to their congregation when he equates ushers who press down the demon possessed people for the pastors to come and shake out the spirits. Pastor Ray McCauley of the mixed church is said to be on stage working really hard “to make Jesus cool” (7). The narrator seems to imply that it is a kind of marketing and acting and the pastor, having been a former body builder with Arnold Schwarzenegger, seems to show it is all showbiz. Trevor Noah is sarcastic when he suggests that the pastor having failed in body building is using the charm in winning people to Christianity to earn a living. Trevor Noah likes mixed church because of the music he calls Christian Karaoke. He goes to Sunday school at the white church to listen to stories from the Bible where, Noah and the flood is his favourite. He claims he has a personal stake probably because Noah is his name. His approach to Christianity is more realistic compared to the mother whom he considers emotional and impractical from their arguments.

Juha Ridanpaa asserts that humour can be a way of negotiating how “taboo subjects can be introduced in day to day discourse” (11). For instance, Toilet humour is used to illustrate an incidence when he opted to ease himself in the kitchen due to fear of being rained on and attacked by flies. He goes ahead to the process of relieving oneself. He uses it to show how all

human beings are similar. He says that a toilet function “is a powerful experience, shitting. I think God made humans shit in the way we do” (43). Ironically, when his stool is found in the dustbin it sends an alarm in the whole community. Trevor Noah uses this instance to ridicule religion in that everything that happens is associated with witchcraft. It is absurd that the whole community assembles to pray so seriously over such a simple issue. Grandmothers carry their bibles chanting and speaking in tongues to attend. This is a mockery to religion which has blinded them from reality. Religion has also been misused where no longer has it been used as a way of worship but as a wish and thought of human beings to forget their miseries and fear. The blacks are quite optimistic that something would happen to lift them up from their predicament. He also uses the act in presenting the nature of man.

It shows that there is a clash between faith and superstition because it is in the subconscious. Even though they have accepted Christianity they are still influenced by their former practices and superstitions which is quite paradoxical as they are not supposed to believe in witchcraft as Christians when they pray for protection. Achille Mbembe compares reason and irrationality where he presents science verses witchcraft, light verses darkness, and faith verses superstition. In the autobiography, the women, Nombuyiselo being among them believe both in Christianity and witchcraft which is a conflict in beliefs.

He sarcastically narrates how he is usually made to pray because the grandmother believes that his prayers are more powerful since they are in English and everyone knows that Jesus is white and speaks English. In a biblical allusion to Mathew 19:14 Trevor Noah shows how Jesus says that little children should go to him and calls it a powerful combination; praying in English and being a child. Trevor Noah is convinced that his prayers get answered and feels like he is helping people. The women pray about money issues, about a son who has been arrested, a daughter who

is sick or a husband who drinks. Some of these problems can be solved using a practical approach. At the time when grandmothers gather thinking they have been bewitched, he is made to pray. At the end he regrets to have bothered God. He says “with all the pain and suffering in the world, he had more important things to deal with than my shit” (47).

Dialogue between Trevor Noah and his mother features noticeably in the autobiography. They differ in their perception of the church. Although he is a child, he tries to prove a point using scriptures against his mother’s beliefs. He tries to outsmart her, but this does not guarantee him a way out. He knows when the mother is serious, and he has to obey. Nombuyiselo believes the misfortunes that accompany her along the way such as facing death or the Volkswagen breaking down is God testing them. Trevor Noah tries to argue that it is God’s way of preventing them from going to church and having them to rest but she insists they should go to church. He calls his mother’s argument faith-based obstinacy and knows that he can never convince her otherwise. She uses Biblical evidence to show human suffering as a leeway to overcoming a test as she alludes to Job in the Bible who also suffered. “Sometimes Jesus puts obstacles in your way to see if you overcome them. Like Job” (10). Even at the face of death, she sees it as “part of God’s plan” (17). It can be observed that religion has been turned to a source of comfort to the blacks. They believe that they have to spend a lot of time praying to the extent of attending three services in a day or spending more hours in church. This is how they have been made to believe causing them to denounce their indigenous faith for Christianity since white has been made to appear supreme. “When white people pray to a guy who turns water into wine, well that just common sense” (6). Religion has blocked people’s minds from reasoning and solving their immediate problems. They use it to get out of their desperation.

Trevor Noah mocks the act of sitting and standing many times by the Catholic faith as a punishment. As a child, he could not feel it or understand why they were subjected to all this. The long hours in church make him starve. It is paradoxical how religion is a contradiction of itself. He is obstructed from sharing the sacrament since he is a non-Catholic yet Catholics share Jesus blood and body who is not catholic considering the fact that the priests and the nuns failed to provide any logical reason for their stand. This shows that with religion, Christians have been made to follow the white's faith without any sort of questioning. The ruling class uses the church to make the blacks subscribe to their doctrines set by the church to tame its believers. Moreover, it is ironical that although confession is purported to be confidential, Trevor Noah is set up by his schoolmate in a confession after stealing sacrament. The priest who is to keep Trevor Noah's confession reports him to the school authority. He demonstrates that the rules set are not adhered to by the Catholic Church while they expect the rest to subscribe to them.

Various characters resort to domestic violence and crime as a way of escaping from reality and bringing meaning to their lost or wasted lives. Trevor Noah uses flashback to take us into his thoughts running in his mind on instances he had seen Abel fight his mother and grown men. He relates this to what is going to happen to him to make the reader understand his panic when Abel tries to beat him. It can be noted that the natives use violence to liberate themselves. In the case of Abel, he uses violence to find his freedom. It gives him confidence and restores self-respect. The black woman has double tragedy. The first tragedy is being black and second is being a woman.

She suffers violence from the black man and also undergoes discrimination from the apartheid system. Although the dialogue between Nombuyiselo and Abel might be hilarious, she gets beaten up after and it turns tragic. Ronald Knox asserts that when one slips on a banana peel and

falls, it is at first funny but once he breaks his legs, laughter is inappropriate. Dramatic irony is achieved when Abel thinks the woman is disrespecting him since he is unable to provide when he comes home drunk late at night. When Nombuyiselo gives him a piece of her mind he beats her to silence. It can be assumed that he uses physical strength which is the only advantage he relies on to assert his authority and show his wife that he is in control because he feels inferior for having a smart and independent woman. It can be argued that men's violence might have been heightened by apartheid through the economic issues like low wages, lack of jobs, racial and cultural effects which make them feel emasculated. The culture has put the man in a tricky situation where they are supposed to provide. So, when the woman is more industrious, they feel emasculated. When Nombuyiselo supports his workshop and get praises for running it efficiently, Abel resorts to drinking up all the profits and beating her up.

Although Nombuyiselo is beaten she does not quit her marriage. She cannot get any help after reporting to the police. For instance, when she reports to the police, the man is not seen as the problem but the woman "did you make him angry?" (256). Trevor Noah satirizes the police who appear to be doing their work but in reality, uphold inhumanity. Their insensitivity is realized when they do not take any action in domestic violence despite several reports made. Moreover, when Frances say all men do it, shows Africans are interpellated. They think the same and the society has accepted the man to get away with domestic violence with the phrase "all men do it". It points to women having been socialized to see it as a normal act.

Instances where women beat men might be because the women are fed up with the men who feel inferior thinking the women disrespect them since they are the bread winners. Trevor Noah employs two characters to represent the disruption of South African families in the multiracial South Africa. Sibongile, wife to Dinky as the name suggests is the controller of her family. Her

name means a strong woman, metaphorically referred as “the mother hen” (37). However, Dinky on the other hand is timid. He could not exercise his power in the house although he tried bragging how he controls Sibongile. Dinky tries to masquerade as a patriarch, for which he is not. He is often beaten by Sibongile or threatened with a pot of boiling water. In a sense, Trevor Noah is showing the insignificance of patriarchy where love can take its place. Trevor Noah recalls the talk he heard as a child that if you don’t hit your woman you don’t love her. This shows that violence is learnt at an early age by men.

The blacks will use any opportunity to survive in a kind of existential society. In *Born a Crime* the persona satirizes the life lived in a post-apartheid world in Alexandra where life had its own absurdities. Most of the blacks get into crime because of poverty and lack of basic needs. Because of this they become envious and lustful of what they have been denied. They become jealous of the life lived by the whites who are privileged and engage in crime with an intention of possessing what they cannot afford. Sarcasm is invoked to portray the dehumanizing effect of the laws set to control them. For instance, Hulk is arrested for stealing video games which are deemed inexpensive to that of driving a car with an unlicensed number plate. He however cannot defend himself since he has been constrained by colour and financial constraints to hire a lawyer. Trevor Noah is calling out for justice because of the inhumane acts directed towards most blacks. It can be assumed that he resorts to crime because when working for his oppressor his wages were quite low and after the fall of apartheid he had nowhere to be employed. The pressure in the society presses him down whereas a man he has to provide for his family. Failure to have attained education or skills becomes Hulks motivation to crime. It is also unfair that although Trevor Noah’s crime was a more serious offence, he gets released because he can afford money to bribe the state attorney. However, Hulk, whose crime is less serious, is arrested and charged.

Crime turns to be a survival tactic and preparation of the life ahead because of unemployment in a society where “gangsters hustling, guys on the corner doing nothing, kids running. There is nowhere for all that energy to go, no mechanism for it to dissipate, so it erupts periodically in epic acts of violence” (205). People turned on one another and at no time could one let another leave their state. “The hood has a gravitational pull. It never leaves you behind, but it also never lets you leave” (219). Once you live in the hood you never get out of it. You become too comfortable because life is cheap and there is a sense of belonging. People who leave may not fit in with the challenges in the real world. Olando Patterson in his novel *The Children of Sisyphus* portrays life in the dungle which is the ghetto of Jamaica. The protagonist is Dinah who tries to escape from the dungle but she finds out there is no real escape. It is proven to be true when she leaves only to come back and die in the dungle. Although she desired to live a better life, she comes back to the ghetto because her fate was sealed. It is humiliating in that there is no escape from the bad situations in which they find themselves in. John Paul Sartre and Albert Camus propound that an existentialist is not satisfied with what he has but feels like an alienated person, with a sense of purposelessness and lack of harmony with the environment. They may lack a reason to live. When they feel hopeless, they are driven to crime. In *Born a Crime*, People in the ghetto are trapped to live a life of “knowing no tomorrow” trying to fix their past by ensuring everyone behind them is in the name of hustling due to “black tax” which Trevor Noah points. In the case of Nombuyiselo, though she succeeds to make a way out to the city, she returns only to get back to her old troublesome life in the name of helping her family.

It is ironical when the protagonist presents crime as a source of opportunities to individuals who resort to it as a way of survival. Trevor Noah therefore personifies crime when he says “Crime cares. Crime is grassroots. Crime looks for the young kids who need support and a lifting hand.

Crime offers internship programs and summer jobs and opportunities of advancement ...crime does not discriminate” (209). By use of personification the narrator reveals how crime was the centre plan of survival by the blacks. Crime became the only vehicle to give them assurance of their survival. It is often assumed that at no point can crime care rather it disrupts the social and economic order. He therefore points out that crime became the benefactor to people’s lives and a treasured act to promote their well beings. He uses Alexandra to symbolize and satirize the inhuman nature of crime stirred by poverty. The fact that people are ready to risk their lives for money clearly illustrates despair and hopelessness.

Barter trade is the order of the day. People are deceived to buy stolen goods like a DVD player in exchange of money, sell pirated CDs to minibus drivers yet the business is not profitable in the long run. Trevor Noah and his crew end up eating goats’ head and maize meal despite their day to day business. “The tricky thing about the hood is that you’re always working, working, working, and you feel like something’s happening, but really nothing’s happening at all” (217). He points at the cyclic life of the hood. He says:

After lunch, business would die down, and that’s when we’d get our lunch, usually the cheapest thing we could afford, like smiley with some maize meal. A smiley is a goat’s head. They’re boiled and covered with chili pepper.... the cheeks and the tongue are quite delicious, but the eyes are disgusting. They pop in your mouth. You put the eyeball into your mouth and you bite it, and it’s just a ball of pus that pops. It has no crunch. It has no chew. It has no flavor that is appetizing in any way. (214)

The narrator points out that much effort is used but there is no return. He points out that survival in Alexandra was by eating *kota* (quarter loaf of bread) too. He recounts this clearly to make it seem appealing despite the cheap cost. “You can get on next to nothing” (207). Filled with fried

potatoes, a slice of baloney and pickled mango. Money was therefore significant. If anyone had more money, the meal was better. One could add hot dog, sausage, fried egg or cheese which he often resorted to. "Cheese on anything was money" (207), that although they had a hard life to live, they had a way to access food that made them yearn for moreover people had other avenues of complementing their life. They necessarily did not have to succumb to it.

Entertainment helps them evade bitter realities of life. It gives them a sense of belonging and acceptance. However, entertainment also has its own crimes within it to survive. He uses situational irony to give an instance where Trevor Noah has to impersonate himself as Spliff star, a rapper from America, after being deceived by Tim to get some pay. Knowing the audience cannot understand English, he guesses some words as he raps to the audience which turns out well for them. Despite the hard times they face, people do invent ways of coming out of situations and have fun. He performs in the townships as a DJ in street parties during New Year's party. Frantz Fanon argues that blacks resort to dance as a form of expressing or removing anger. It unites them forming a community of their own and see themselves to share the same culture and values (59).

When a party takes place in front of someone's house, it is a rule for the family to have a share in the alcohol. Temperance and Abel would always go and indulge in the shebeens in most cases. Although alcoholism accompanies their sort of enjoyment, it drains their resources and causes problems. At no time did Abel report home sober. Noah says "an average day was a six-pack of beer after work... some Fridays and Saturdays he just didn't come home" (254). Alcoholism stirred violence in that, a party would not end before someone being shot or a bottle breaking on someone's head. Abel would always resort to domestic violence.

Prostitution is another means to recover missed opportunities. Nombuyiselo is said to have run away at the age of twenty-two years to Johannesburg after being unhappy living in Soweto with her mother Frances. This is because all her earnings were being used on her family, a situation they metaphorically call the “black tax”. Trevor Noah narrates incidences at Johannesburg where he recalls that many Xhosa women are known to be prostitutes who teach her how to survive. He says “They taught her how to dress up in a pair of maid’s overalls to move around the city without being questioned. They also introduced her to white men who were willing to rent out flats in town” (24). The harsh realities of apartheid and post-apartheid has made people to engage in many activities that make them forget even for an instance, their misery. However, this is not a solution to their problems as it leads to even more terrible ordeals or just postponement.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the impact of apartheid and the self in *Born a Crime* under the subtitles birth as a contested reality, portrayal of education and oppression during apartheid, and social escapism. Humour is used to portray the rhythms and the dysfunctions of a society. Societal, family and individual collapse is as a result of oppression imposed on the blacks in South Africa. The oppression is entrenched in religious, educational, social and economic system for which he mocks humorously. He conveys his painful past and in a sense ,not only criticize the vices of apartheid but also celebrate his past, upbringing apart from looking back at the challenges he has been able to surmount. Marshall McLuhan notes that “We look at the present through a rear-view mirror. We march backwards into the future.” This means that once we appreciate where we come from then we can appreciate more of our present and where we are coming from.

CHAPTER THREE

NATURE AND STYLE OF NARRATION IN *BORN A CRIME*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the nature and style of narration in *Born a Crime* by paying attention to the nature of an autobiography, the relevance of the titles to the chapters in the autobiography and significance of the intercalary chapters that introduce each main chapter. The intercalary chapters are short commentaries on the events that precede the story line in the main chapters. There are eighteen main chapters with twenty intercalary chapters that are presented before each main chapter. I look into peculiar issues raised in some of the intercalary chapters in relation to the subject matter and how they set the stage for what is to be narrated at length. The section examines how the intercalary chapters are used in the intersection of the self in the history of South Africa. I examine how some of the intercalary chapters are structured as humorous preludes which introduce the reader to the serious issues portrayed in the main chapters. The author puts himself at the centre of historical events that were happening at the time he was growing up in South Africa. The issues raised include racism, ethnicity, religion and cultural beliefs.

The intercalary chapters provide background to the story in terms of historical, political and socio-cultural issues. It should be noted that these intercalary chapters prepare the reader for what is to be told in the main chapters. Most of them are in the omniscient (third person) narrative voice although there are shifts of voice to second- or first-person narrative voice within an intercalary chapter. Using this kind of narration allows for details. However, sometimes the writer uses the first-person narrative voice when he wants to reveal a lot of information about himself and in so doing, connect his life with the history of apartheid South Africa. For instance, after reading the Immorality Act, the reader understands why Trevor Noah claims he was born a

crime. Notably, the titles in the main chapters relate to the intercalary chapters and what they communicate. I rely on the author's style of narration in the autobiography paying specific attention to how he captures the events with humour.

By interweaving his narrative with intercalary chapters, he tends to sway away from a child narrative voice to an adult perspective. This enables him to present facts without necessarily being biased. It thus justifies his arguments as presented in the narrative. Simon Gikandi argues that narrated experiences belong to childhood but the language is that of the adult narrator (15). Meaning the narrators writing is affected by growth. The experiences presented might be true but written in understanding, writing his narrative as he thought his experiences must have been. This is observed in *Born a Crime* as these intercalary chapters' present issues that seem to have been researched on, such as apartheid which are then crafted into the narrative.

3.2. Self-representation of Experience in *Born a Crime*

An autobiography is a representation of a writer's lived experiences which details specific events that the author decides to include in his narration. In an autobiography, one is initiated to adulthood by way of knowledge, experience, and understanding. Trevor Noah presents his experiences as a child as he matures to an adult thus making *Born a Crime* a bildungsroman. The writer therefore is in a journey of self-discovery. In this case the protagonist identifies himself through the narration as he tries to present himself to the world as a biracial child who endures the atrocities of apartheid in South Africa.

It is important to note that Trevor Noah presents his life depending on how he understood his past. One's own reality may not necessarily be the truth. It may be distorted to fit in to their fantasy. Miriam Musonye observes that a narrative is told from a narrator's point of view (11). Thus, narratives touching on the historical times are told with regard to how the narrator

understood the past. This is because life is a lived autobiography; an understanding of oneself. However, there are some instances presented by the narrator that can be contested. Various incidences in the autobiography account for truth while some are questionable. For instance, Trevor Noah captures various events that happened to him in his childhood due to the impact of apartheid. However, looking back at the year he was born, tends to show by then apartheid was fading away. It can therefore be argued that Trevor Noah might have tried to associate his experiences to apartheid so as to be part of apartheid victims.

Experience stretches to their historical, economic, cultural and social relations giving certain identities. This helps an autobiographer to know himself as part of a particular lived experience in presenting his identity. Experience is a primary source of evidence in an autobiography and an authoritative act in persuading the reader on the narrative's authenticity, giving validity to the claim purported to be truthful and making the reader to believe the story. Trevor Noah presents his experiences from a historical state such as apartheid, cultural and social relations through the blacks' belief in superstitions and how they grapple with poverty in the ghettos. He narrates how living in a ghetto made one to be part and parcel of crime: "Crime is in your life in some way or another...my life in crime started off small, selling pirated CDs on the corner" (209). The narrator points out this to illustrate how criminal life is normalized in the ghettos and is in a sense, a means of survival.

Trevor Noah paints the blacks and the coloureds as superstitious. Owning a cat in a black neighbourhood labelled one as a witch which is equally seen among the coloureds. This is when Trevor Noah goes with her mother home one evening at Eden Park only to find their cats hanged by their tails from their front gate, their heads chopped off, skinned and bleeding out (96). Such events can be believed because they are from memory.

3.2.1 Memory and self- narration in *Born a Crime*

Memory is a key aspect in telling the truth. The autobiographer decides on what to remember and what to forget thereby influencing what to recollect, record and what is not clearly expressed in the narrative. In some cases, the author may end up only writing what they have achieved in life leaving out their failures and painful experiences. Trevor Noah combines both. He presents his tough life in Soweto as a coloured child who is always locked in the house, denied freedom to play with other children, thus prompted to run away from home. Running away is not a problem but the fact that he says he dug a hole is quite unbelievable. At three years, a child cannot have the wit and capacity to dig a hole under the gate.

It can be noted that as observed, writers sometimes only record their achievements, leaving out painful events such as mistakes they made. Muchiri argues that such silences establish an autobiographical truth. Trevor Noah being a comedian might opt to omit or twist his stories to fit his audience. This can be seen when Trevor Noah does not build further his relationship affairs but only mentions them in passing such as the case of Zaheera and Babiki whom he does not say whether he pursued further or not. This is probably because they are embarrassing/private issues that leave a painful memory. However, it can be assumed that at times the autobiographer opts to clearly state his mistakes especially the embarrassing and thus aid in building trust with the reader.

He wittily does this by narrating how as a child he relieved himself in the kitchen by first taking the reader through the whole process of excretion or defecation. The narrator mentions how he engages in crime when they steal alcohol chocolate at a mall. He narrates stealing the Holy Communion in school after he was excluded from its partaking. He does not also conceal his

mother's life but rather paints it to the public. He reveals the struggles she goes through as a child up to the time when she suffers domestic violence from Abel.

Memory helps in giving a truthful account as the narrator further exposes his life to the public. Since autobiographies rely on memory, they help the writer to present his past. Smith and Watson point out that a writer of an autobiography depends on memory to have the ability to tell a retrospective narrative that captures the past and gives the present through experiential history (16). History helps in the act of remembrance by detecting what people remember, how they remember and who they remember since history is contextual and does focus at a particular circumstance and time. In addition, events taking place in the society's culture at a particular moment contribute to making remembrance attainable. Trevor Noah captures his societal cultural events such as superstition and witchcraft. For instance, he satirizes religion when his excretion is blamed on witchcraft that villagers are called to a prayer meeting to counter. In some instances when people die it is attributed to witchcraft even when the cause is clear. In a court scenario, Trevor Noah narrates how an attorney general is unable to defend a person accused of witchcraft. He records the atrocities committed by apartheid through discrimination where school students were separated according to race. Additionally, not only were blacks separated but also given shallow education. He is caught up in the situation where as a Coloured child, he is favoured and thus taken to a white class only to realize the existence of the black students in another class. Apart from the education, people are separated depending on their races. The blacks live separately from the coloureds and so did the whites. He remembers tribal clashes between the Xhosa and Zulu where he becomes a victim by being thrown out of a moving minibus by his mother to protect him from harm. Although he conveys the stereotype between the Zulu and Xhosa as fighters and thinkers respectively, at no point in the narrative does he present them as

fighters and thinkers. He does not justify or theorize this general tribal stereotype but only uses it to elicit humour.

Memory is retrieved from personal sources such as family stories which are private. Trevor Noah mentions his biracial origin of a Swiss-German father and a Xhosa mother. He mentions his extended family dating back to Koko his great grandmother, Temperance his grandfather and Frances his grandmother. Trevor Noah also narrates an incident where his aunt Sibongile and uncle Dinky engage in domestic violence in which Sibongile would be seen chasing Dinky with a pot of boiling water threatening to pour it on him. Moreover, a sense of smell, taste, touch, and sound and sight aid to evoke memory. People who have traumatic experiences tend to have memories which resurface to preoccupy their present. The narrator lives under poverty in his family eating mopane worms, remains of meat and soup bones. As a grownup he recalls going to a restaurant ordering bone marrow thinking it was such a delicacy only to get furious when he sees it to be one of his past meals “ dog bones” he used to have as a child. In this case the sight of the meal itself brings back memories of his struggling past.

The narrator uses dialogue through memory to validate his narrative by involving other characters. It can be a way of verifying truth since the narrator is persuading readers of the credibility of his story. However, in some instances he does not acknowledge the source of the information when recording a dialogue. The dialogue between his parents is questionable for example during the time he claims the mother asked for permission to have Robert sire her a child. Rarely does a woman ask for permission from a man to sire a child for her in the manner he portrays:

“I want to have a kid,” she told him.

“I don’t want kids,” he said.

“I didn’t ask you to have a kid. I asked you to help me to have my kid. I want a sperm from you” (26).

The protagonist narrates the incident as if he was there when they had the discussion yet he was neither born nor conceived. It would have been more convincing if he identified the mother or somebody told him.

Although the narrator uses memory, there are some missing links as discussed in the next section. However, these are necessary in building up the humour of the text.

3.2.2 Silences in Self-Portrayal in *Born a Crime*

The narrator is selective with his truth, which is equated to silences in the autobiography. Although he touches on the violence meted out on the blacks in their neighbourhood, he does not point out the violence between blacks and whites. He is quite selective in his truth by being vocal on the whites against blacks. It cannot be true that only blacks suffered under the hands of the whites. The whites might have faced it rough too with blacks especially through crime.

Trevor Noah reveals his life as a broker in Alexandra. He realizes it is a crime when a camera of a white family on vacation is sold to him by Mr. Burns, his friend who had stolen it from the airport. Trevor Noah convinces himself that white people have insurance so stealing from them was not loss to them. The only time he seems to sympathize with them is when he gets a camera that has pictures of a white family on vacation. It is common knowledge that in such a period where there are atrocities of violence, both whites and blacks are bound to have experienced losses and even deaths might have also been rampant as there was shedding of blood in the

people's quest to attain their independence. This is likely to be a point in time where war might have affected everyone.

The narrator also portrays the mother as a flawless character throughout the narration. He appears to put blame on others for her shortcomings. At the time she goes to Abel's home, she does not stay with the women doing the household chores but follows Abel to where the men are and dramatically rolls herself on the ground when she is supposed to greet the men. After this Abel resorts to drinking and claims that his wife does not respect him. Abel is portrayed as a violent man who does not care for his family and does not spend time with them. He is irresponsible and does not provide for them. However, there is a time Abel protects Trevor Noah from the Coloured children who pelt him with mulberries. The narrator does not appreciate this and says that it alerted him of his dangerous side. His self-praise is ironical. The step-father might have had good intentions but could not fit in the place of Robert whom Trevor Noah idolized.

Robert is portrayed as the ideal father that Trevor Noah was denied because of apartheid. In the post-apartheid era, Robert could have decided to make a family or meet his son more because it was no longer illegal. However, the narrator justifies his father's disappearance by blaming it on Abel and later he justifies why the father never got married. "Most people marry because they want to control another person" (104). Even though the mother got married, it is expected that he would look out for the welfare of his own child. However, Trevor Noah makes him get off easily. He does not even introduce him to the relatives, yet the narrator says he was a wanted child to the father. When the narrator tries to find out about him, he says that he does not give him any information and says he is just secretive. The mother is the only one who struggles to provide for him in his education and he is given a scholarship for the underprivileged and the

mother has to buy him oversized clothes so that he cannot outgrow them. The idea that Nombuyiselo buys him oversized clothes elicits humour even though the reality being narrated is grim.

He mentions how he accidentally set a white man's family house and a servant quarter on fire at Orange Grove after leaving a magnifying glass and matches on a mattress to go buy some snacks. He claims that he did burn himself, part of his front hair and eyebrows completely burned after dropping a match in a pile of gunpowder only for it to explode. In all these incidences the reader does not have concrete evidence of the events that would have been made believable by letters and pictures.

3.2.3 Letters and Pictures in the Verification of Truth in *Born a Crime*

Letters and pictures are important in validating truth in an autobiography. In *Born a Crime*, Trevor Noah only presents one picture at the opening of the narrative which does not give the work authenticity. While walking at the park with his mother and Queen, he notices Queen walking close beside him while his mother walking a distance behind. He asserts that he got dozens of pictures when walking beside Queen while his mother would be standing behind them as if she was photo bombing the pictures. Admitting the existence of the pictures, creates expectation in the reader that the photos will be displayed. The story would be more authentic if he attached some of them in the autobiography. This would add credibility to the narrative. Sarah Worth asserts that photographs aid in presenting truth. In so doing, the photographs become the backbone of an autobiography by providing evidence of what is being said.

Although he mentions communicating through letters with the mother as a means of communication in the house, he does not provide the actual letters they wrote. He could have taken photographs of the letters when commenting on how he corresponded through letters with

the mother. The reader can therefore not know if what is being read is a fabricated piece or the actual letters. To examine the authenticity of an autobiographical writing language and naming are important which are discussed next.

3.2.4 Language and Naming in the Verification of Truth in *Born a Crime*

As readers we question Trevor Noah's diction in the letters written between him and his mother. He uses words such as "correspondence," "delighted" and "genetically" which we could argue are too pompous for a child of his age. In the letters, the protagonist seems skilled in the style of writing despite the argument that his mother's presence at her office at most times exposed him to letter writing.

Trevor Noah at this time is seven to eight years old. The fact that he is able to give reasons for not performing a specific task also questions its truthfulness. The narration of these correspondence is done in a highly humorous manner to the extent that one may argue that the writer sacrifices truth for the sake of humour. Linda Steinmetz argues that an adult narrator looks at his childhood in a more nostalgic way as opposed to that of a child who looks at the immediate and current situation (137). Most autobiographers write their narratives mostly as adults who are able to look back in time and pass judgment on others and themselves. However, this may work against them since narrating one's childhood as an adult makes the autobiography lose its depiction of a childhood experience from a child's perspective. This is because the narrator will tend to narrate incidences from a mature perspective and understanding. Being a child, it is expected that his choice of words would primarily be simple. Trevor Noah narrates instances where the mother would discipline him and ask him out to a movie only for him to respond to her "What kind of a psychopath are you?" The word psychopath is not expected to come out of a child's thoughts. As earlier mentioned, it is questionable how Trevor Noah knows about his

planned birth and also the doctor's reaction after his birth as a light skinned baby. In these two instances we see a case of the narrator adopting omniscient narration in order to present his complex birth and childhood in a hilarious manner.

The narrator in some instances presents his childhood accounts with the reasoning capacity of an adult and thus make his autobiography less convincing. He presents himself as a very courageous child who would question his elders. This starts at home when he questions his mother's religion. When told to go to church he could give his opinions why he thought going to church was not the best idea at that moment. He says, "the Lord knows that today we shouldn't go to church, which is why he made sure the car wouldn't start, so that we stay at home as a family and take a day of rest, because even the Lord rested" (10).

When his mother throws him out of a moving minibus, Trevor Noah interrogates his mother's motive and further laments that even though the men wanted to kill him they would have woken him up before they committed the act. At nine years old it is not convincing that he would have had the mind and courage to logically question anything that happened in his life in the manner in which it is presented. When in school he questions his teacher; he asks why she thinks B class is best for him. The fact that he answers back his teacher when she tells him "Because, those kids are... you know ..." "No, I don't know ..." (59), Trevor Noah answered her. It is rare for children to question and answer back their elders as a child's language should portray the innocence that is associated with childhood since the mind is at formative stage.

The aim of the autobiography is to answer the question who am I? The autobiographer is in a journey of self-discovery whereby not only does he/she share the knowledge of himself/herself with the reader but he/she also gets to know himself/herself better in the process. Knowing oneself is not all about one's race, name or birth: there is more to a person's identity than these.

A name verifies the author's identity in presenting the true image of the self. Consequently, when his work is read by the public it is found credible. An author's name is an autobiographical signature which seals trust between the author and the reader. In the autobiography, Trevor Noah mentions his name which gives the story credibility. He provides the exact date of his birth, 20th February 1984, which is significant to his identity. This specific event of his birth is very key in the autobiography.

Apart from the name and the date of birth given, the reader is able to know about Trevor Noah's inner struggles as an individual. The reader gets to know about his racial ambiguity and the fact that his birth was a crime, in the context of apartheid which leads to the struggle of trying to fit in the society. He becomes the other in a society in which he always finds himself ostracized. In school when students break for recess he is alienated because he does not fully belong in any group. Nevertheless, in the police cell he says he was forced to pick a side to go to "every time and every place I ever had to be a chameleon" (240). This could explain why he eventually ended up being an entertainer since he learned how to fit in. The background of his struggles and by extension the nation's challenges is provided in the intercalary chapters discussed below.

3.3. Narration and Relevance of the chapter titles in *Born a Crime*

This section looks at some of the main chapter titles in the autobiography. The chapter titles are used to link the intercalary chapters and the main narrative. For instance, the chapter title *Born a Crime* links its preceding intercalary chapter 3 and the main narrative of *Born a Crime*. By reading the intercalary chapter 3 the reader is aware of the racial restrictions put in place.

The chapter title metaphorically communicates the intensity of the racial stereotypes in South Africa. The reader gets to know why the narrator's birth is considered a crime. This chapter title is metaphorical because one's birth is not a literal crime. Trevor Noah tries to compare birth and

crime to aid in the understanding of people's behaviour in the society. In effect he expounds on the challenges his family is faced with in protecting themselves and him from the law of racism. It should be noted that this chapter title is quite significant since it is linked to the main title of the autobiography. The main narrative recounts instances where people of different races lived separately from one another. Various restrictions were put in place such as blacks could not access the white premises. This chapter reveals his birth and restricted family life.

The title of the chapter *Run* is appropriate and metaphorical. Run might signify violence stirred by tribal clashes. In the main chapter there are two instances where run is mentioned. The narrator and his mother run away from danger. Trevor Noah is an athlete champion at Maryvale College of which he gives credit to his mother for his success because he routinely ran away from her whenever she wanted to whip him when he says, "she was always chasing me to kick my ass and I was always running not to get my ass kicked" (10). The townships are presented as violent places to live in. They comprise of the blacks who are in constant clash with the police a reason the police would come in with riot gears, armoured cars and helicopters as the blacks would "Run for cover. Run and hide" (16). The word "run" is metaphoric in that it signifies the fear the blacks had for the policemen. It implies that blacks are always on the alert, looking out for police so as to evade arrest.

The chapter titled *Loopholes* is metaphorical. Trevor Noah uses the term loophole to refer to his manipulation of rules put in place by both the mother and society. In this case, the narrator uses this word to convey his experiences as he grew up as a mischievous child. Although the mother is a strict disciplinarian, the narrator sets a house on fire and as a result, he is nicknamed 'Terror' by one of his uncles. When his mother resorts to letter writing to tame his son, Trevor Noah also uses the same practice to get back at his mother. He says "our life turned into a courtroom drama

with two lawyers constantly debating over loopholes and technicalities” (82). For instance, when Nombuyiselo comments on his poor performance in school, he would allude to her poor grades too and how naughty she was as a child. Trevor Noah sees loopholes in the catholic faith. He gets satirical how the catholic faith allows only Catholics to share in the Holy Communion yet Jesus is not Catholic and thus goes ahead to steal the Holy Communion having it all for himself.

The chapter titled *Cheese Boys*, is symbolic. The term “cheese” reflects the life lived by the blacks in the ghetto of Alexandra. In this case, the blacks commonly referred to as cheese boys live in slums which are congested criminal sites. Cheese boys are black boys whose lives are better off than others in the ghetto. They are aware of the outside world, live in better houses, and are educated although they have not been given the tools to use to prosper so they end up tied to the life in the ghetto. The cheese boys end up smuggling goods and selling them to fellow natives as a means of survival. This chapter title links to its preceding intercalary chapter which gives a summary of how Alexandra came to be. It can be seen that Alexandra has restricted growth because of its congestion by the squatters’ settlement. Therefore, the chapter title gives a glimpse of what the intercalary chapter entails and in so doing, reveal the gist of the main narrative.

The term *Chameleon* as a chapter title is metaphorical in the autobiography where the reader appreciates the ability of the narrator and the mother ability to simulcast. In the autobiography “simulcast” refers to the use of different languages by an individual and thus use multilingualism to cross boundaries, handle situations and navigate the world. Just like a chameleon can change its colour to adapt to its environment. Trevor Noah and his mother talk in local dialect or English to manoeuvre in the society. The term chameleon can also refer to the way his grandmother describes Trevor Noah’s appearance when beaten. He could change his skin colour to “blue and

green and yellow and red” (52). Just before the chapter on Chameleon, the intercalary chapter is introduced to give an overview of how people use language to fit in different environments. Therefore, the chapter title goes ahead to explain how characters in the autobiography use language to cross boundaries.

Finally, the title of the chapter *The Second Girl* is in reference to his mother. The reader learns about the challenges that she goes through in her childhood. Her parents’ marriage is an unhappy one that ends in divorce. Although she wants her father’s care at the expense of her mother, Temperance accepts Nombuyiselo only to take her to her relatives which in the long run helps her get into a mission school and then gets an opportunity to be a secretary. This title focuses on the life of his mother and how she also gets an opportunity to attain education given the existence of the missionary school in her auntie’s neighbourhood. Apart from the relevance of the chapter titles, the nature of the intercalary chapters as discussed next give more depth to the autobiography.

3. 4 Functions of the Intercalary chapters in *Born a Crime*

3.4.1 Presentation of Consciousness through Shifts of Voice

Child narration in literature aids the narrator in presenting reality from a child’s perspective so as to criticize social ills in the society. This is because a child is sincere and will tend to question reality innocently to bring change in society. However, most of the intercalary chapters of *Born a Crime* replace the narrative voice of a child with that of an adult. This is because the intercalary chapters are a collection of information read by the author which have been made into stories to present a certain perspective such as historical events.

This is how the narrative crafted convinces the reader to connect with what has been jotted down on history and how that history is woven in the character’s life. These intercalary chapters shift

from a child's voice to an adult's voice to relay both the social and historical context. The narrator uses the adult voice to show deep understanding of the events taking place. In so doing, they give a universal appeal based on the national and human stories. However, Linda Steimetz, an adult can adopt a child's way of thinking by using flashbacks or memories of his childhood or a childlike attitude (137). This draws back to the assumption that both the adult and the child voice aid in performing the same function.

Intercalary chapters use first person, second person and the omniscient voice in narration because of the various perspectives presented. Some intercalary chapters use the adult perspective while others center on a child's perspective. As argued by Mike Cadden, multiple narrators aid at bringing in plurality of voice, awareness and discourses within a narrative (4). Shifts of voice help in presenting a wider view of life opposed to the first-person narrative voice which is limited. On one hand, the second narrative voice makes the reader the focus point. The pronoun "you" gets the reader to a one on one conversation in seeing the impact of division. On the other hand, the first narrative voice is limited to physical and mental boundaries so that readers only get to know what the narrator knows, sees, and participates in. Intercalary chapters 5 and 15 manipulate the first-person narrative voice and the second person to address language. First person narrative voice "I" is used to give his personal experience on language and identity. By shifting it to the second person narrative voice "you", he seeks to bring the reader at par with him in seeing the whole idea of language. It makes the reader be part and parcel of the issue at hand so as to connect to the reader at a more personal level.

Intercalary 17 also manipulates voice as it shifts from the first person to the second narrative voice. These shifts in voice give the intercalary both a subjective and an objective view. This is because the shifts of voices sustain and prove the parallel and overlap between private and

collective ideas. Andrea Schwenke Wyilo argues that the first-person narrative voice “I” is important as the narrator sticks to the narrator’s perspective. The narrator reveals a lot of information rather than limiting himself (5). In *Born a Crime* Trevor Noah uses the first-person narrative voice to render his own views and the images of a ghetto environment. He presents himself as part of the tough climate or conditions he was exposed to. This aids in justifying his ghetto world where he compares Alexandra to other slums in favelas where he has been to. It serves to bring in voices of the villagers and thus cement the main voice. The first-person narrative voice and the second person narrative voice aid at group consciousness thereby giving room for a collective opinion. In so doing, it removes the story from a subjective point to an objective point in showing the universality of the issues or people’s shift in ideologies. The shift from “I” to the plural “we” in intercalary 4 encourages group consciousness to its readers. “You” in this case seeks to address the reader directly. It’s more of a one on one communication to show the reader of the gravity of the message in the people’s ideologies.

The omniscient voice gives an objective view to present the facts as they were without his personal bias. This voice is concerned with the general issues such as crime therefore portraying the historical state in South Africa. However, the shifts of voice from the omniscient voice to the first narrative voice creates harmony between the reader and the writer to communicate a historical message. In so doing, he shows the gravity of prejudice as seen in intercalary chapter 7 on individuals and the illogic nature of the regime. These shifts of voice not only give a universal view but also tries to associate himself as part of the affected individual. Additionally, this change of voice helps the narrator to present both his true depiction of the differences in the acquisition of knowledge and how it affects them as portrayed in intercalary chapter 16.

In the first-person point of view, he uses the plural pronoun (we) to describe how history was taught to the South Africans. “We were taught history the way it’s taught in America” (183). By use of the pronoun “we” the narrator achieves group consciousness in that not only does he get particular with his life but involves other characters as well to create a bigger picture of the whole. The third person point of view is also used to present an objective view of what took place without keying in his personal opinions. The events therefore that occurred can be narrated through irony to present the historical background of his childhood in the intercalary chapters below.

3.4.2 Irony and the setting of Tone in the intercalary chapters

Opposed to the narrative chapters which are emotional in their subjective nature, most of the intercalary chapters eliminate feelings and emotions through thoughtful tone. As far as this is the case, some of the intercalary chapters are subjective. It can be assumed that life writing not only focus on the author’s life but also a representation of history in a particular society where the author lives. Trevor Noah makes use of the intercalary chapters to inscribe himself to the history of apartheid South Africa which aids in exposing the atrocities of apartheid.

From the onset of Intercalary chapter 1, Trevor Noah makes use of a critical tone which captures historical injustices stirred by apartheid. This intercalary is a collective story of the impact of apartheid. Robert Allison assert that the inner chapters are authoritative (1). They give a robotic tone free from emotions and feelings as opposed to the main narrative. He implies that these intercalary chapters set the pace of the main narrative and give a unified whole with truth. The tone in this intercalary gives insight to the reader of the strict set laws of apartheid. For instance, this intercalary chapter 1 states the prohibition of “illicit carnal intercourse between Europeans and natives...” (iii). This is a disclaimer that a group and not an individual were controlled by

laws. The tone sets ground on the seriousness and finality of the rules passed. Individuals are subjugated by the government in order to assert their power.

It can be noticed that human freedom is controlled to champion for apartheid. Sanctions laid demonstrate racial boundaries as the core goal of the apartheid government of South Africa to maintain the status quo of white supremacy. Ironically, despite the laws and restrictions in place, coloured children exist in South Africa which is communicated in the main chapters of the narration. As it is argued by Ojukwu Chinyelu, “apartheid seeks to legislate, regiment and dictate all aspects” on South Africans both in their personal and private lives (36). In the play *The Blood Knot* Athol Fugard presents two characters Morris and Zachariah (coloured and black respectively) who decide to become adventurous with Ethel a white lady only for Morris to see their adventure as a danger considering the immorality act of the 1927 which prohibits any love relationship between people of different races. This is evident in intercalary chapter 1, where the expression of love between blacks and whites was prohibited. A person’s freedom was determined by the adherence to the laws put in place as violating them would lead to apprehension. This intercalary chapter aids Trevor Noah to give voice to the oppressed groups during apartheid.

In intercalary 2, the narrator inscribes himself to the history of apartheid South Africa. By use of a resentful tone, he narrates ethnic wars as a core issue stirred by apartheid due to the blacks multiple tribes. He states different ethnicity in South Africans such as Xhosa, Zulu, Pedi, Sotho, Ndebele and Tsonga to reveal what black South Africa comprises of. It can be noted that People are separated based on their racial and tribal groups, with different languages in order to divide and conquer. It is ironical that although the blacks were the majority as compared to the white South Africans, the whites used the blacks’ tribal differences to stir hatred amongst them.

Despite the blacks' common ancestral origin, apartheid makes use of their differences in local languages to divide them thus stirring a clash between the Zulu and the Xhosa. The Zulu are portrayed as the warriors while the Xhosa as thinkers. Trevor Noah associates his mother Nombuyiselo to former South African president Nelson Mandela, who belong to the same ethnic tribe (Xhosa) so as to be part of the black South African in the representation of South African history.

Trevor Noah's candid tone in intercalary 3 and 7 reveals the aftermath of slavery of the Dutch and British rule. He gives a summary of their rule:

Intercalary 3

The Dutch colonists went to war with the natives, ultimately developing a set of laws to subjugate and enslave them...the British took over...abolished slavery in name but kept the practice. While the Dutch used slavery to subjugate the blacks...British abolished it in name but kept it in practice...a few lucky capitalists stumbled upon the richest gold and diamond reserves in the world and an endless supply of expendable bodies was needed to in the ground and get all that out (19).

The narrator sarcastically refers to the blacks as "expendable bodies" to show the whites' perception of black people as those of little significance. It can be argued that Trevor Noah gets some of these information and development of apartheid from recorded documents as evidence to his narrative. In so doing, it validates his experiences. He therefore uses archives to explain the formation of apartheid in South Africa as from the year 1652 by the Dutch, British to the

Afrikaners. This intercalary chapter 3 can be viewed as a bid to trace the system of apartheid in South Africa.

Apartheid is an imperfect system as seen in intercalary 7:

Intercalary 7

Apartheid, for all its power, had fatal flaws baked in, starting with the fact that it never made any sense...Chinese people were classified as black in South Africa ... So Japanese people were given honorary... I always like to imagine being a South

African policeman who likely couldn't tell the difference between Chinese and Japanese... If he saw an Asian person sitting on a whites-only bench,

“Hey, get off that bench, you Chinaman!”

“Excuse me. I'm Japanese,”

“Oh, I apologize, sir. I didn't mean to be racist. Have a lovely afternoon” (75).

The candid tone illuminates racism as a tool which rips off humanity. The history of South Africa notes that although the Chinese and Japanese are all Asians, Chinese are classified as black and the Japanese as white because the government wanted to import cars and electronics from Japan. With the laws put in place to favour Japanese, it is ironical since it is not easy to differentiate the two races. The use of an imaginary dialogue between a policeman and a Japanese man who is confused for a Chinese illuminates the perception of law and oppression. It is used to mock and show the instability of the apartheid regime.

Notably, these intercalary chapters have been organized or pieced together like stand-up comedy commentaries in analysing the apartheid regime. In effect they serve to present historical events and experiences as part of his life. Trevor Noah's candid tone presents South Africa in intercalary chapter 10 as a multicoloured nation by shedding light how coloureds came to be an accepted race. He dates back historical accounts of the existence of the Khoisan, Bantu speakers to the existence of coloureds in South Africa. The coloureds in South Africa are believed to have been bred out of a complex mix that coloureds cannot clearly distinguish. Trevor Noah notes "the curse that colored people carry is having no clearly defined heritage to go back to" (115). A reason some of the coloureds are light and some are dark, some having Asian features and dark features. The neutral tone seeks to portray the irony of life that coloureds' fail to trace their origin because of the disrupted life patterns perpetrated by slavery. It can be argued that the institutionalized racism contributed to the disruption of the coloured race. As much as the black people suffered, the injustices meted on the coloureds is worse not being in a position to find their true identity. The autobiographer cries for the marginalized for their unidentified roots.

Intercalary chapter 14 presents South Africa as multiracial. Not only does it comprise of blacks but also coloureds and whites. The narrator's comic tone contrasts his identity sarcastically as the only white child in Soweto, the only mixed child in Eden Park and the only black child in Highlands North. Although he is coloured he tries to see himself as black. This is impossible as he can only fit in as a coloured child. He juxtaposes coloured and white neighbourhood to verify why making friendship was easier in Eden Park compared to Highlands North where he metaphorically describes it as "a fancy maximum prison" (151). The whites built six-foot walls safeguarded with an electric wire for fear of black crime, black uprisings and reprisals. It is quite ironical that although non-whites were allowed to occupy white neighbourhoods, white kids

were separated from the non-whites. Moreover, although the blacks took care of the white employers' children, they could not take care of their own if found pregnant. They risked being fired or forced to abandon their children with relatives in the homelands. The judgmental tone depicts isolation of individuals at the expense of race.

The judgemental tone in intercalary chapter 17 points out the oppressive nature of apartheid. This intercalary seeks to unravel how Alexandra came to be. Trevor Noah dates back how initially Alexandra had been acquired by a white man before selling it out to black tenants before the rise of apartheid. Alexandra was a place commonly known for hosting blacks looking for employment in Johannesburg. However, the greatest fall in Alexandra was the congestion right after South Africa attained independence. They would build shacks on top of one another where houses have been built on the backside of each other. As a result there is no room for expansion. It can be noted that this intercalary chapter functions to foreshadow the life expected in Alexandra and later revealed in the main narrative.

As pointed out in the intercalary chapter 5, a shared language brings people together but language barrier separates despite the skin colour. This intercalary chapter gives weight to the historical events during apartheid. It records how language becomes an avenue to stir hatred among the blacks. The white government ensured every black was taught in his or her tribal language making them think they are different from one another. However, it is ironical how the blacks grow up fighting and believing that they are different from one another because of being taught in different languages. If a person from a different race speaks one's language, he automatically trusts him or sees similarity. When Africans spoke their African languages one would feel connected to them. A person's acceptance is derived from speaking in an expected way or accent familiar to the listeners. This intercalary chapter 5 conveys the irony of life where

two opposites think they are same because they speak the same language. Trevor Noah's life writing is therefore not only meant to recall the history of apartheid in South Africa but also to confront the injustices of apartheid to individuals as a way of healing from traumatic experiences.

The intercalary chapter 15 reveals why South Africa has eleven official languages. He says after South Africa attained democracy, they had to make every person happy a reason the ethnic tribes in black South Africa are official languages. He makes use of biblical allusion in reference to the Tower of Babel where God separated the peoples' language to different languages leading to difficulty in speech. This can be seen in the confusion of the black who cannot understand one another because of the different languages the Black South Africans have. It is ironical that the need to recognize eleven languages as official led to disruption in communication. In a party one could miss out on conversations because of the inability to understand the other. It was lucky if the message was communicated several times since a person had to pick up from the conversation filling up from the content at hand. "You'll miss part of it, someone might translate on the fly to give you a gist" (161). Apartheid achieved to disrupt relationships among the blacks a reason they could not understand one another's language. It can be assumed that Trevor Noah draws his idea from *Grapes of Wrath*. Just like Steinbeck's use of the intercalary focusing on the bible as asserted by Sonia Hamilton in *The Legacy of Steinbeck's Interchapters: The Effect of Palimpsest on Group Consciousness and Universality*. Trevor Noah also alludes to the bible in this intercalary chapter to discuss the number of languages different blacks speak.

The narrator is critical of the education offered to the blacks. He says:

Intercalary 16,

In Germany, no child finishes high school without learning about the Holocaust. Not just facts of it but the how and why and the gravity of it...In South Africa, the atrocities of apartheid have never been taught that way...facts but not many and never the emotional or moral dimension (183).

The ironical tone presents contrast education of the blacks to that in Germany and Britain. While Germans were taught facts bearing in mind how and why the Holocaust came to be and its effects, the natives in South Africa were taught few facts not touching on the emotional or moral dimension of apartheid. It is ironical that the kind of education administered to the blacks was shallow yet most of the teachers in South Africa were whites. It is evident that the key issue he lays emphasis on is education looking at how it impacts on the learners either positively or negatively. He portrays the bias of education by giving a picture of the education between the countries mentioned. How history is taught in South Africa is different from that of the German and in the British schools. It can be argued that the black education was used to brainwash the blacks. In intercalary chapter 6, Trevor Noah uses Temperance to represent the black families whose education was biased. As opposed to being taught facts, they would sing “two times two is four la la la la la” (61) as grownups throughout their learning period which might be a reason most black families named their children and dogs after Hitler and Napoleon due to lack of detailed information about them. Not only are the blacks disadvantaged in their education but also trapped with two differing beliefs as pointed out next.

3.4.3 Use of Flashback in the intercalary chapters to Juxtapose Cultural Duality

Trevor Noah uses flashback to recount certain events in his childhood to juxtapose the differences in peoples' social beliefs. In most instances, individuals are caught up juggling between two differing opinions. They might end up taking part in both activities at hand. In

intercalary 4, the narrator juxtaposes religion and superstition on the blacks. The narrator presents different characters such as David Kibuuka and the defence attorney in a dialogue to portray the societal beliefs and stand. The dialogue put in place serves to give the reader a broader perspective on the blacks' beliefs and their clash to Christianity.

Christianity and witchcraft are juxtaposed with regards to the options the natives take. Even though the blacks are Christians, they hold firm to their cultural beliefs such as visiting the traditional healers as opposed to doctors. He says that "In South Africa faith in the holy trinity exists quite comfortably alongside belief in witchcraft, in casting spells and putting curses" (137). It is satirical that although the court of laws and witchcraft differ in how they handle matters, in South Africa, the court of law had no alternative rather than subscribe to the cultural beliefs. Cases presented to court over death are believed to have been caused by an enemy by use of lightning. Trevor Noah inscribes himself to the South African community through their historical events to portray black South Africa as a community that has a culture of their own that is much cherished.

Social and cultural beliefs in intercalary chapter 8 are juxtaposed to validate the black and whites' beliefs. Trevor Noah seeks to identify himself as part of the black society. He says "I grew up in a black family in a black neighbourhood in a black country" (93). For instance, he narrates an event where on one hand, a security guard of black race kills a cat on live television during a football match thinking the cat was a witch therefore kills it to protect the players portraying the blacks as superstitious. On the other hand, the whites see the man's act as a breach of conduct. They believe animals should be protected. This is ironical since the whites cared much of animals as opposed to the blacks being oppressed. Trevor Noes uses this event to reveal cultural differences between whites and blacks.

Trevor Noah expresses two differing opinions on religion in intercalary 19 when he steals a bowl of custard and Jelly from the fridge. His action causes him stomachache which hinders him from getting out of bed. He juxtaposes his religious ideologies and his mother's. Whereas his mother is tied to the doctrines on how praying to Jesus brings healing, his view of healing is reality-based by believing for one to be healed he or she has to take medicine. He believes taking medicine and then praying to Jesus to thank him for the doctors for their invention of medicine is right. Thereby portraying the different stances of religion.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at the nature of narration in the autobiography, relevance of chapter titles in *Born a Crime*, and the set perspective of intercalary chapters. There are various aspects that the author uses to relay his narrative. For instance, he relies on his experiences and memory as key elements to retell his childhood. The intercalary chapters set to present a perspective and also through humour to mock human follies. I have also demonstrated that some of the intercalary chapters present a generalized information which is fully realized by the events succeeding the main narrative. The intercalary chapters not only focus on the life of Trevor Noah but also gives a glimpse to the social and historical life of South Africa as a nation. It acts as a preparation for the readers to find out for themselves what is to happen in the proceeding events. Trevor Noah's use of these intercalary chapters unify the whole narrative to communicate his experiences as part of the history in South Africa. The narrator's use of these intercalary chapters not only conveys his experiences but also reminds the readers of the country's political heritage. Additionally, I have looked at the relevance of the chapter titles which are drawn from the main narrative to link both the intercalary chapters and the main narratives.

CONCLUSION

This study, I set out to investigate the impact of apartheid and the self in apartheid by use of humour as medium in narrating childhood experiences in a multiracial South Africa based on Trevor Noah's autobiography, *Born a Crime*. The study was guided by theories namely theories of the autobiography, Incongruity theories and postcolonial theories. The theory of autobiography guided me in identifying the nature of the autobiography from the other forms of writing thereby validating its authenticity. By use of the incongruity theories, I examined the narrative techniques the narrator used and the set purpose. For instance to portray the magnitude of racism. Postcolonial theories demonstrated how the blacks had been perceived with regard to other races during apartheid thus examined the position of the blacks.

I explored the techniques of humour used in the narration of apartheid and the self in the autobiography and the significance of the intercalary chapters. I found out that humour is a deliberate technique used by the narrator to point out the uncomfortable truths in the society and trigger change. It therefore voices against otherness. In effect, the narrator's experiences narrated through humour reveal the harsh realities of apartheid. The use of humour in narrating his experiences in a multiracial society exposes the impact of racial segregation in both the apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa. The narrator's aim is therefore to instil a sense of togetherness among individuals for the betterment of a society and a nation.

The author's use of humorous techniques such as satire, irony, extended metaphor, vivid description and circumlocution is to elicit laughter, and ridicule the state of apartheid in South Africa with an aim of bettering the society at large. The nature of the narrative paves way for the narrator to clearly unveil himself. Memory which are both private and collective helps the narrator to present the magnitude of the prevalent issue of apartheid. In *Born a Crime*, Trevor

Noah uses both religious and racial events to remember. In effect, memory aids him to construct his sense of identity and also as a form of therapeutic healing for his traumatic experiences. The main chapter titles are metaphorically used to present a broader view of ideas and also link up the whole narrative.

The intercalary chapters not only intersect the self in the history of apartheid to show the injustices, marginalization and how blacks have been othered but also set a perspective in the understanding of the events that shaped the narrator's childhood. These intercalary chapters tend to present factual ideas without using emotions. They tend to shift from a child's perspective to an adult perception of the events. He thus shifts from a subjective to an objective view in presenting his narrative.

Humour is an effective tool to subvert racism. It therefore voice against otherness. Through language Trevor Noah creates humour in his autobiography. It can be concluded that his portrayal of apartheid demonstrates his imaginations of what it had been. He therefore centers his narration through different sections such as the limited education. He uses humour as a tool for socio-cultural criticism of apartheid in the autobiography. The techniques of humour exposes the underlying issues such as oppression, racism, and the challenges of identity.

Trevor Noah concentrates on socio-historical and cultural issues to portray the absurdities of life that entangles human beings by making fun of it. I suggest that future research on *Born a Crime* could adopt some of his stand-up comedies that touch on his childhood as reflected in the autobiography and examine how stand-up comedy can be an art of self-narration and how it can be initiated as a written genre to explore human life.

In conclusion, the study has demonstrated the significance of humour in dealing with complex issues such as racial discrimination, education, crime, and family conflicts. Both his negative and positive experiences are expressed in a witty manner. Humour thus takes a central place in harmonizing experiences in the autobiography. That is, the humour helps in painting a childhood characterized with institutionalized racism which has resulted in dehumanization of not only an entire race, families and individuals but also the interference of rhythms and routines of life among black people in South Africa.

Humour talks about serious issues in a light way. It not only attacks the government but also his family. Humour aids at laughing at human follies, and proves that human beings are full of errors and make mistakes. We are thus weak by nature and selfish. Additionally, it is a tool for practical wisdom to give thought to matters that might have been neglected.

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