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Discourse(s) of Identity: Precarity and (In)visibility in Farida Karodia's *Daughters of the Twilight*

By Goutam Karmakar¹ and Rajendra Chetty²

Abstract

Apartheid South Africa witnessed the forming of cultural and sexual identities within political strategies that were designed to categorize and regulate “non-white” individuals. By dealing with interactions between white men and black women, South African literary works in the penultimate years of apartheid demonstrate apartheid’s structural viciousness and gendered hierarchy through certain innovative deviations. *Daughters of the Twilight* (1986) by Farida Karodia is one such text that not only sheds light on the masculine, racialized, and patriarchal apartheid structure of the male gaze, but also inherently disallows the female characters of Karodia’s narrative to inhabit neither day nor night, as implied by the term “twilight,” and relegates them to a territory somewhere between, due to their categorization as well as racial-sexual implications. Considering these dynamics of gaze and racial segregation along with Homi K. Bhabha’s notion of hybridity and Judith Butler’s concept of precarity and vulnerability, this article intends to show how statutory racial exclusion adversely affected the emotional well-being of the family in Karodia’s narrative. Thus, the article demonstrates how politics, culture, and gendered mechanisms work as matrices under which the women characters negotiate attributes of their agency. The purpose of this article is to interrogate sexual violence and to illustrate how the intersection of sexual and racial hegemony under apartheid silenced subaltern voices. The article then indicates how Karodia employs “South Africanness” to destabilize the socio-cultural and political discourses of women by rendering them visible in the hegemonic cartography of apartheid.

Keywords: Precarity, Hybridity, Violence, invisibility, Farida Karodia

Introduction

Apartheid in South Africa sought to distinguish racial groups and was relatively successful, but it also compelled a degree of classification between assigned non-white racial groups. Since the beginning of the 1990s, when apartheid started to collapse, South Africans had an increasingly difficult time negotiating the various categorizations of their identities and have felt the necessity to combat, in specific, endeavours to perceive them not entirely as a homogeneous entity (Dannewitz, 2003, p. 1). In a space characterized by homogeneity and exclusion, South African Indians (the family in Karodia’s text) are frequently referred to as “strangers,” term used by Sara Ahmed in *Strange Encounters* (2000). Ahmed contends that those who are identified “as being out of place”, a perception that signifies “both the

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demarcation and enforcement of the boundaries” (2000, pp. 21-22) of the place where they inhabit. It is a spatial dichotomy based on the formation of limitations, margins, and disciplines, and thus “bounded spaces” (Ahmed, 2000, p. 22). The notion of “Indianness” is increasingly being put to the test, and this becomes a point of contention in *Daughters of the Twilight* (1986) by the South African author with a mixed heritage. As with Arthur Maimane, who revisits “black peril” narratives, Farida Karodia and Lauretta Ngcobo are the first black women in South Africa to write about “the white peril,” a subject previously addressed by white women such as Olive Schreiner, Francis Bancroft, and Sarah Gertrude Millin. In highlighting the gendered nature of racialized violence under apartheid, Karodia and Ngcobo regurgitate “white peril” motifs rather than abjecting “miscegenation” as their white predecessors did (Graham, 2012, p. 101). On the issue of violence against black women in South Africa, Charlene Smith argues that the violations of human rights and disregard for “the humanity of others” that emerged during apartheid are still very much prevalent, and that black women have become the target of dehumanization during that time (2001, p. 283). In such a context, through their narratives of interracial rape, Karodia and Ngcobo emphasize the gendered nature of systemic racism and violence under apartheid by reiterating “white peril” tropes. Undoubtedly, this shift towards a greater emphasis on interracial rape is profoundly disruptive of apartheid ideologies.

Daughters of the Twilight, narrated by Meena, the daughter of an Indian father, Abdul Mohammed, and Delia, a Coloured mother, exemplifies how Meena and her older sister Yasmin grow and mature in the authoritarian South African state of the 1950s and how the racial segregation ideology of the period destabilizes her family’s wellbeing, including the politics surrounding Meena’s identity and the interracial violence perpetrated against Yasmin. As a direct consequence, Meena and Yasmin are subjected to “precarity and vulnerability,” terms used by Judith Butler during her work in political feminist approaches as well as interventions within theoretical deliberations, where vulnerability and precarity are important components. As a notion in Butler’s writing, “vulnerability appears in close relation to the concepts precariousness and precarity; and it is also associated with violence, with the body, and with relationality” (Pulkkinen, 2020, p. 153). Karodia throws light on the manliness, racialized, and hegemonic apartheid framework of the male gaze that intrinsically restricts Meena and Yasmin to inhabit neither day nor night, as implied by the term “twilight,” and consigns them to a zone somewhere in-between, due to their categorization as well as racial-sexual implications. This zone of somewhere in-between makes references to the non-constitutive space of liminality, a condition of dialogic antagonism, ambiguity, and contestations, as suggested by the following words and implied terms: “in,” “unpredictability,” and “volatilize into indiscriminable presence” – all of which determine the condition of “in-betweenness”, and incorporate it in the framework of apartheid (Kalua, 2009, p. 24). Michel Foucault acknowledges this correlation between discourse, propensity, and authority, and highlights the fact that identity and individuality are of “subjection of and by discourse” (Foucault, 1988, p. 64). This article will explain how politics, society, and gendered dynamics serve as frameworks within which female characters negotiate their distinguishing characteristics and agency. Furthermore, the article describes how Cobus Steyn, the son of a wealthy white farmer, sexually abuses Yasmin. In addition, the article explains how the novel’s female characters undermine the normative ideologies of their society and become visible in apartheid’s hegemonic cartography.

In-betweenness and Precarious Hybridity

During apartheid, race determined numerous facets of life, including where people were legally allowed to live. The Indians’ racial identity was marked by a distinct ambivalence; for example, the family in Karodia’s novel were legally classified as a single

racial category, Indian, because of the race of the father; however, the mother is classified as “mixed race” or “coloured” and the two daughters as “Indian”. Due to its heterogeneity (Chetty, 2021, p. 74), Indian identity is forever incommensurable and difficult to comprehend. Claire Alexander (1996) examines how culture is unceasingly formed and devised through an ethnographic perspective. According to her, there is a cultural struggle for the ideological space to be coloured or Indian, in which “identities were both fluid and transiently essentialized” (Alexander, 1996, p. 194). This recognition of dual consciousness, coupled with this fluidity and precariousness, is referred to as hybridity. She remarks on the relationship between “race” and acculturation by stating that “race” becomes one in an intricate web of variables through which identities are constructed and contested; part of the complex interactions between different strands in a “process of hybridity” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211) through which culture and identity are constantly “reworked and re-created” (Alexander, 1996, p. 192). Faced with a foreign culture and language, the colonized and racialized others often develop a merged and dual individuality because of “hybridity” and “ambivalence,” two significant concepts developed by Homi K. Bhabha in postcolonial criticism. In his *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha asserts,

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the ‘pure’ and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination. (1994, p. 160)

In actuality, “hybridity” occurs when an individual is caught between two different things, typically two different cultures, which results in “double perception” or “double conscious experience” and ultimately an integrated or even disrupted identity. By transferring the emphasis to hybridity wherein liminality creates a “Third Space” where new selfhoods are constituted and communicated as alternative methods to monolithic conceptual frameworks of national identity (Hout, 2011, p. 334), we depict how Meena carries hybrid identity and finds herself in the “The Third Space” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). In reverberating Bhabha, we contend that hybridity, due to the implementation of cultural translation, both refuses to acknowledge essentialism and carries the traces of discursive practices. Regarding “The Third Space”, Bhabha asserts:

the act of cultural translation [...] denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture [...] hybridity is to me the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge [...] the importance of hybridity is that it bears the traces of those feelings and practices which inform it, just like a translation so that hybridity puts together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses. (1990, p. 211)

After the death of his first wife, Abdul remarried and moved to Sterkstroom. Both Delia and Nana “belonged to that nebulous group generally referred to as Coloured” (Karodia, 1986, p. 11). In accordance with the Group Areas Act of 1966 (as mandated by the Constitution of 1950), South Africans could be classified into the following categories: (a) a white group, (b) a Bantu group, and (c) a coloured group, which includes anyone who is neither a member of the white group nor the Bantu group. According to this act, hardly anything positive can encompass an identity of such otherness. Paradoxically, the Population Registration Act of

1950 codified this negative distinctiveness into seven subcategories: Indians, Chinese, and other Asians; Cape Coloureds, Cape Malays, Griquas, and other Coloureds (Woodward, 1993, p. 85).

Because of Abdul's identity, his daughters are classified as "Indian" according to the Population Registration Act of 1950. Meena must attend a segregated school for "Indians" for her higher education, but the only family they have in Johannesburg where she could continue her schooling lives near a "Coloured" school. However, Meena, like Yasmin, "has had enough of the stupid Sterkstroom Apostolic Primary School for Coloureds" (Karodia, 1986, p. 10). Meena was permitted to attend this school because it was the only one in the area and because hers was the only Indian family. Foreseeing further racial exploitation, her grandmother, Nana, logically suggests that Meena should be reclassified as "Coloured", perceiving that this could be the only solution for continuing her secondary education. Nana tells Meena that she only needs to tell a small white lie to the school administration when they inquire about her affiliation with Indians. This hybrid identity that allows Nana to transgress the perimeters that the law aims to establish, enabling Meena to be re-categorized from "Indian" to "Coloured", not only demonstrates the potential for evasion but also highlights the absurdity, irrationality, and partiality of apartheid legislation. Meena seems to be in an ambivalent space, where she has been pushed and pulled towards both socio-cultural and political lines, "between the claims of the past and the needs of the present" and prospective, as she teeters on both corporeal (geopolitical and educational) and metaphorical (affective) margins between Coloured and Indian (Bhabha, 1994, p. 219). While stereotyping and systematic abuse marked the lives of indentured Indians from the moment they reached South Africa (Chetty, 2017, pp. 16-17), it is worth noting that during the peak of apartheid, the mandates for marginalization and exclusion came from factors extraneous to the "Indian" community, and insubordination to the constrictive, discriminatory practices resulted in disciplinary action (Ginwala, 1977, p. 5). When attempting to justify the repression of Meena's Indian identity, Nana cites degrading and discriminatory practices against Indians. Her assertions are abhorrent and agonizingly poignant,

What you are is a South African, and since you can't be that in your own country the next best thing is to be something that will at least give you an advantage. We're not trying to deny your birthright. The Government has already done that. What we're trying to do now is to make the best out of a bad situation. (Karodia, 1986, p. 73)

Despite Abdul's opposition, Delia and Nana regard this reclassification as the only viable option for her future education. Meena with Delia attended the interview at the government office in Pretoria, where they were questioned about their linkage to Indians. When questioned, Delia responds, "we don't associate with Indians. [Meena] is Coloured. All our friends are Coloured" (Karodia, 1986, p. 77). This is the kind of vulnerable position that plagued this family for much of their historical record in South Africa, a precarious hybridity that can be effortlessly disparaged as inadequately Afrikaans or unacceptably conventional, depending on the context (Müller, 2022, p. 15). Owing to the intrinsic vulnerability that Butler asserts characterizes all social existence, she perceives all human life to be precarious in the notion that those "can be expunged at will or by accident; their persistence is in no sense guaranteed" (Butler, 2009a, p. 25). Meena's further education is dependent on the legislation and authority that will ascertain her identity and personal autonomy, proving Butler's assertion that life is always precarious and therefore dependent:

Precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one's life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. It implies exposure both to those we know and to

those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all. Reciprocally, it implies being impinged upon by the exposure and dependency of others, most of whom remain anonymous. (Butler, 2009a, p. 14)

On being asked about Abdul and his Indian identity, Delia replies that she does not stay with him as they are not together anymore and they want nothing to do with him or his people. Meena is even asked to speak Afrikaans and she stutters, stammers, and answers to the queries of the clerk who speaks flawless Afrikaans. Her application for this reclassification gets approved but Meena feels degraded by what happened in that office. Here Meena's precariousness does not simply allude to an existential and ontological crisis and instead, it becomes a social construction from which originates specific political requirements and standards. Meena's precarious and vulnerable situation in that office exemplifies how she has become subjected to the socio-cultural and legal infrastructures of Apartheid. This is what Butler explains while linking vulnerability to far more constructive concerns, such as infrastructures and economic lives:

Thus, the dependency of human and other creatures on infrastructural support exposes a specific vulnerability that we have when we are unsupported, when those infrastructural conditions characterizing our social, political and economic lives start to decompose, or when we find ourselves radically unsupported under conditions of precarity or under explicit conditions of threat. (Butler, 2016, p. 19)

Meena does her best to comprehend the questions in order to determine her efficiency and cultural ties with Coloured people. She also attempts to answer them in order to demonstrate her familiarity with the dialect. Her precarious hybridity echoes Butler's claims regarding "structure of address" and precarity:

The structure of address is important for understanding how moral authority is introduced and sustained if we accept not just that we address others when we speak, but that in some way we come to exist, as it were, in the moment of being addressed, and something about our existence proves precarious when that address fails. (Butler, 2004, p. 130)

In accordance with the Group Areas Act of 1950, South African cities and towns were separated into residential and commercial districts, resulting in the removal of thousands of Coloreds, Blacks, and Indians from areas designated for white occupation. When Meena's family receives written notification from the Group Areas board that they must leave Sterkstroom and seek a new city to live in, her precarious position continues to persist and exacerbates when Yasmin becomes subjected to sexual abuse.

Sexual Violence and Precarity

Sexual violence, particularly rape, in South Africa during the apartheid era exemplifies an ideology of abuse that has negatively impacted African cultural identities, thereby intensifying a male-dominated power structure. Unquestionably, rape is linked to the racial injustice of the apartheid regime, which has traditionally marginalized female characteristics such as integrity, love, kindness, and generosity of spirit (Cock, 1989, p. 52). In violent confrontations and racial discrimination, rape signifies the affirmation of male power over women that significantly increases in frequency and severity, and this has been the case in South Africa, where the regularity of rape and sexual violence has drastically increased (McKendrick & Hoffmann, 1990). In comparison to white women, poor black

women, who have endured the triple marginalization of race, class, and gender, are particularly affected by institutional, political, and ideological discrimination. They have been victimized by racial supremacy:

Right up to the moratorium on the death penalty, no white man had ever been executed for rape, whereas the majority of people who were hanged in this country were actually hanged for raping white women. If a rape victim was black it wasn't really seen as quite as serious as if she had been a white woman. (Armstrong, 1994, p. 35)

Apartheid in South Africa was a period of horrific violence and a subtext in which systemic racism and abuse were legally and morally supported and silenced by the apartheid regime. While violence and sexual politics are exempt from investigation and punishment, hegemonic masculinity in the apartheid-era has been used to rationalize sexual violence against women (Meyers, 2004). In a similar tone, Helen Moffet argues that “sexual violence in post-1994 South Africa is fuelled by justificatory narratives rooted in apartheid discourses. At the same time, discourses of race, including accusations of racism, have stifled open scrutiny of the function of rape as a source of patriarchal control” (2006, p. 132). By dealing with interactions between white men and black women, South African literary works in the penultimate years of apartheid demonstrate apartheid's structural viciousness and gendered hierarchy through certain innovative deviations where representations of rape appear with startling intensity. J. M. Coetzee has written about rape on multiple occasions, most notably in *Disgrace* (1999), Mark Behr concludes *The Smell of Apples* (1995) with a rape, and rape is central to Achmat Dangor's *Bitter Fruit* (2001). While South Africa witnesses one of the highest incidences of rape (Graham, 2002, p. 10), contemporary South African authors' preoccupation with rape carefully and pragmatically interpret the violent nuances of sexual violence, taking into consideration that sexual assault is a convenient and efficient analogy for colonialism and its corresponding apparatus of control, subservience, and violence (Reef, 2005, p. 245). Karodia, in a similar way, depicts the brutality and aftermath of rape in this narrative through the plight of Yasmin.

Daughters of the Twilight begins with a description of Cobus Steyn, the son of Hermanus Steyn, a rich and prominent white farmer, throwing a stone through the storeroom window of Abdul's home in Sterkstroom. The sound of the shattered glass symbolizes the destructive male gaze to which the family is confined throughout the narrative. This is followed by Cobus stealing Meena's doll, and when Yasmin asks him to give it back, he shoves her and says, “I'm your boss [boss] and I can have anything I want” (Karodia, 1986, p. 5). This statement of supremacy and the disintegration of Meena's doll by Cobus foreshadow Yasmin's rape by him later in the narrative. When Yasmin's family strives to overcome the trauma of their forcible relocation from Sterkstroom to a faraway place at McBain due to the Group Areas Act, Yasmin is brutally raped there, and her rape reflects “the most poignant of apartheid's intimate dehumanizations” (Graham, 2012, p. 114). On a night of a full moon, Yasmin is observed weeping by a grove of eucalyptus trees, and when Meena inquires as to the cause, she responds, “Raped” (Karodia, 1986, p. 121). Meena's account of Yasmin's plight is heart-wrenching: “She was a mess, her face dirt-streaked and swollen on one side. She had been crying; there were tracks down the inside of her cheeks” (Karodia, 1986, p. 121).

Yasmin not only fights as tirelessly as she can, but also pulls fistfuls of his hair and scratches his face before giving up when Cobus starts hitting her. The authority of multilateral imperialism in South Africa has left behind a hierarchical social order that is extensively encoded with a binary framework of “male/female, superior/inferior,

dominant/subordinate” (Thompson & Gunne, 2010, p. 6). Edward Said persuasively asserts, “imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control” (1993, p. 271). Imperial ideology is based on the notion that those who are deemed inferior must be governed. This concept has developed a complex correlation between the colonized and the colonizer, as authoritarian rule strips the colonized of agency and individuality during apartheid. Yasmin’s bodily fight and subsequent surrender highlight both imperial and anti-imperial rhetoric (Kennedy, 2000, pp. 37–40), and her body becomes a site over which imperial power is exerted, making it essential to both imperial and xenophobic ideologies. Anne McClintock argues in this context:

Controlling women’s sexuality, exalting maternity and breeding a virile race of empire-builders were widely perceived as the paramount means for controlling the health and wealth of the male imperial body politic, so that [...] sexual purity emerged as the controlling metaphor for racial, economic and political power. (1995, p. 47)

While Yasmin relieves those precarious moments of subjugation, helplessness and subsequent rape, Meena wants to put her hands over her ears as she cannot bear to hear those details. Yasmin keeps narrating her precarious condition: “[Cobus] caught hold of me, crushed me, pinning my arms so that I could only wriggle helplessly. He dragged me into the trees over there. I struggled and screamed for help. He clamped his hand over my mouth, threatening to kill me if I opened my mouth again” (Karodia, 1986, p. 123). While Yasmin’s tone fluctuates drearily, Meena, who feels cold and lifeless on the inside, struggles to follow what she is saying. This violent act has an adverse effect on Yasmin’s consciousness, and during the night, Meena would get up to pacify her as she thrashes and screams in the basement because of her worst nightmare of that violent incident. Regarding the future of Yasmin, Meena says: “Would anything ever be same again? Could she ever put the shattered pieces of her life together?” (Karodia, 1986, p. 124). When Yasmin reveals the cause of her depression and deplorable health condition, her mother writhes in agonizing pain with her eyes fixed and a horrifying expression on her face. In this instance, Yasmin’s precarious condition entails a life governed by uncertainty, providing a culturally-specific understanding of how gender is conceptualized during apartheid. Sexual violence was overwhelmingly sidelined and not considered a major problem, and phenomenal efforts were made to obfuscate and downplay sexual violence against women. South Africa continues to be plagued by increasing percentages of sexual violence against women, which is sustained by the country’s apartheid past and normalized by its existing social, governmental, legal, and judicial institutions. This is precisely what Deborah Posel asserts in her study on the marginalization of sexual violence under apartheid:

The prism of race also had a powerful effect on the apartheid state’s limited sightings of sexual violence. With visions of black sexuality steeped in familiar colonial stereotypes of the rapacious lust of black men and essential lasciviousness of black women, state institutions were particularly disinterested in the problem of worsening sexual violence within black communities, and police were all the more disinclined to act on reports of such violence when the complainants were black. Recognition that sexual violence was widespread became exactly the basis on which the issue was ignored. (2005, pp. 241-242)

A number of factors contribute to the underreporting of rape during the apartheid era, including the conventional lack of trust that women, particularly black women, had in the law enforcement agencies, that often appeared uncaring and unresponsive; the low rape rates of incarceration; and the trauma associated with the rape case and trial for the victim (Andrews, 1999, p. 447). Yasmin's precarity results from the imposition of vulnerability by racial segregation as a result of political decisions and cultural structures that safeguard some individuals but not others. Butler views this vulnerability as both perceptual and material, and precarious people's trajectories are oriented against social exclusion, revealing and countering it. Butler further asserts: "Precarity also characterizes that politically induced condition of maximized vulnerability and exposure for populations exposed to arbitrary state violence and to other forms of aggression that are not enacted by states and against which states do not offer adequate protection" (2009b, p. ii). When Yasmin becomes pregnant and decides to have an abortion, it is too late because the foetus is already fourteen weeks old, Butler's assertion that precarity also characterizes state's failure in providing a sufficient level of protection, becomes evident in the narrative. Yasmin's family does not even report this violent act as a crime out of "fear for a system of justice which punishes the victim and not the offender" (Karodia, 1986, p. 134). In addition, black women working for white families or living close to white communities frequently become subjected to sexual abuse with limited access to "contraceptives and safe abortion" (Graham, 2012, p. 113). As a direct consequence, Yasmin gives birth to a baby girl, Fatima. Yasmin's story symbolizes that there is no private space in Abdul's family that is relatively untouched by the violent encroachments of racial prejudice, and Meena expresses this position precisely when she asserts: "I tried to force myself out of this miserable environment into the tranquil world of my childhood, but it seemed impossible to make the transition" (Karodia, 1986, p. 147). Transition and transgression become challenging for Abdul's entire family, and the small space where they have taken refuge no longer existed.

(In)visibility and Agency

Jerome Schneewind attributes the first epistemological use of the term "agency" to Samuel Clarke's notion of the "Power of Agency", which Clarke used synonymously with "free choice." Agency here in this context "reflects the conditions of freedom, autonomy, and liberation that are shaped by and in late modernity and postmodernity" (Kim, 2007, p. 83). The initiative of ordinary people is crucial for facilitating constructive, democratic reform in violent cultural settings. In a frame of reference in which occurrences of power and violence are multidimensional, diversified, pervasive, and intrinsically linked to one another, we must comprehend how subjects exercise agency in the face of injustice for their static nature and lived encounter of identity and viability (McGee, 2017, pp. 170-171). The agency of Abdul's family in Sterkstroom/McBain is impacted by the racial exercise of "visible" and "hidden" control and influence by state authorities and the white community at large. The intricate web of apartheid "power praxis" (McGee, 2017, p. 171) performs not only as visible power (legislation of apartheid society) and hidden power (attempting to set the cultural as well as ideological agenda through violence), but also, insidiously and perniciously, as invisible power (fear of living in an apartheid society), distorting the social standards, value systems, ideologies, and behavioral patterns of Abdul's family in various forms. Meena, Nana, and Yasmin's stances of individual agency seek to subvert the conspicuous structure of power and explicitly "disconfirm structure" (Haugaard, 2002, p. 308) by exercising visible resistance in different ways.

Nana refuses to accept unequivocally, from the outset, the presumption that any of her family members are helpless victims of society's (in)visible and authoritative structure of power. She contends that apartheid makes life difficult, but the actions taken by her family

members are more important, and this agency can assist them in facing impending threats. Once, Abdul assisted Mrs. Du Plessis in her dire need, but she and the rest of the poor white community returned to their own characteristic nature when racial injustice became more evident. Thus, when Mrs. Du Plessis attempted to become acquainted with Nana, she says, “Familiarity bred contempt [...] and it was best to keep one’s distance from *these people*” (Karodia, 1986, p. 14). Nana not only seeks to assist her family by providing helpful advice, but also acts in accordance with the family’s income. Nana, aware of how difficult it is to make money in a white-monopolized market, yells at Abdul when he buys bicycles for their daughters, “I can’t stand any more of this doting. For people who don’t have much money, you’re certainly throwing it around. First the house, now the bicycles” (Karodia, 1986, p. 48). Nana rises up as a patrilineal stand-in, prompting a question about women’s capacity to efficiently combat patriarchy. She undermines the traditional concept of “homely happiness” and “the family values of subordination to the patriarch coupled with displaying tender bonds of emotion” (Fischer-Lichte, 2021, p. 159) towards Abdul because she recognizes that money, in such an adversarial and racial environment, can be one of the best means for Meena and Yasmin’s future. When Abdul becomes concerned about the money needed for Meena’s secondary education, Nana reassures him by asserting that she will use her pension to cover the cost of Meena’s room and board in Johannesburg, and that she will also contribute to the construction of the McBain home. Even when recalling how the Group Areas Board relocated her from her convenient old home on the banks of the Orange River in Aliwal North to Hilltown, a flat, uninhabitable, endless stretch of wasteland with no hills, she articulates her indignation: “If I ever get my hands on a gun, I’ll shoot the buggers when they come to evict us” (Karodia, 1986, p. 66). This statement is unquestionably a critique of the laws, actions, and regulatory frameworks of Apartheid. Nana here resonates with a certain argument of Gayatri Spivak’s essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”: “A theory of representation points, on the one hand, to the domain of ideology, meaning, and subjectivity, and, on the other hand/to the domain of politics, the state, and the law” (Spivak, 1988, p. 271). This refers to how the “moral economy” of subaltern rhetoric can also exist independently of or apart from the working mechanism of modern state power and capitalist economic developments that adversely affect subaltern “lifeworlds” (Guha & Spivak, 1988). This argument, from the perspective of the Apartheid regime, elucidates how Nana’s agency is framed in opposition to socio-political strategies that are designed to portray “non-white” individuals as easily grouped and governed subjects. Nana’s agency is appropriately highlighted by her resolute remark to Meena regarding identity and racial segregation in the context of South Africa:

I told you you’re a South African. That’s the only thing that matters. The government’s little tricks to keep us locked into our own corners won’t make a damn difference when the time comes. What’ll count then is who we are. Being black, green or blue will be an insignificant factor. (Karodia, 1986, p. 74)

The subject of agency grows increasingly within, or in the near vicinity of, the social structures that yield it. Outside of the material and metaphorical cauldron of community interaction, there is no agency. As Simone de Beauvoir asserts,

The body of a woman is one of the essential elements in her situation in the world. But that body is not enough to define her as woman; there is no true living reality except as manifested by the conscious individual through activities and in the bosom of society. (1973, p. 41)

In the context of the agency of Meena and Yasmin, the social structure of Apartheid works in tandem with the politics of power. While Lila Abu-Lughod perceives agency as a “diagnostic of power,” that is “in the rich and sometimes contradictory details of resistance the complex workings of social power can be traced” (1990, 42), Timothy Mitchell illustrates how the dichotomy of power and agency, in terms of resistance, restricts one from understanding how “domination works through actually constructing a seemingly dualistic world” (1990, p. 547). While Meena is controlled by the racial and political power structure of Apartheid and is almost compelled to conceal her identity as an Indian and obligated to present herself as a Coloured person, her agency becomes apparent. When Solly Karim, an Indian friend of Meena, tells her that the time has finally come to fight violence with violence because passivity will get them nowhere with other racial groups, Meena responds: “No, I don’t agree. If we do that, eventually the Cuban, Russian and Chinese presence will turn this continent into an area of superpower conflict. We’ll become pawn in their struggle. The fight will no longer be ours but theirs” (Karodia, 1986, p. 83). Meena comprehends this geopolitical game of power and politics; therefore, she believes that their agency and visibility can be consolidated if they stand united and speak out. This realization has led to the widespread perception that power and resistance are now “intertwined” rather than inherently countered. In the framework of agency, this post-structuralist move reaffirms the Foucauldian notion that “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault, 1978, pp. 95–96). When power renders the family vulnerable and an identity crisis continues to haunt them, Meena boldly asserts that she desires an education, but not at the expense of her Indian identity, stating, “Ma, I don’t want to change my classification. I’m Indian and I’m proud of it” (Karodia, 1986, p. 73). Her visibility and agency led to a more developed understanding of the interplay between race, class, and power. Despite feeling demeaned by the clerk in the office where she was interviewed, a mature Meena begins to visualize her life in a positive light:

What a fool I had been to let myself be upset by that Afrikaner. My eyes and mind were once again in harmony. I smiled cautiously. Disappointment, I had discovered early in life, was always on the heels of happiness. Things had to be taken slowly, one had to allow these feelings to envelop one, to give direction. (Karodia, 1986, p.78)

While Yasmin is exposed to multiple orders of dominance, her resistance is a distinct form of “subjectivity in opposition” (Smith, 1988, p. xxxv) endowed with a particular mode of agency. In the case of Yasmin, the agency is not the direct consequence of an individual’s free choice, but rather of the evolving and intricate structures of power. Yasmin’s agency is infused with her physical resistance, and it begins when she tells Meena that she will stay alive, survive, and endure this violent intrusion. In an effort to purify her sexually violated body, she also scrubs herself with a brush for hours and bathes frequently. As soon as she becomes pregnant, she wants an abortion, as the unborn child represents the violent masculinity and white supremacy perpetuated on her vulnerable body. When Butler asserts that “the body implies mortality, vulnerability, [and] agency” (2004, p. 26), she notes how the body that unites the personal and the political, transferring the political into almost everything, enables an emancipatory teleology. According to Butler, agency by being bodily is inherently risky: it may broaden the space of bodily vulnerability; it may result in the alteration of a structured life, but at the cost of (probable) exclusion, hardship, and death. The issue of agency is always coupled with the underlying philosophical statement of how one should live together (Zaharijević, 2021, p. 28). Yasmin’s resistance is evident when she deliberately neglects her health in the hope that the foetus will die in her womb, even though

apartheid laws prohibit her from having an abortion. In her intention of killing the baby, Yasmin fights against her contractions during labor and continues to refuse to put in any effort for the baby's safe delivery. Although Yasmin fails to circumvent the call of the legal system, her resistance allows for "something we might still call agency," as Butler argues, "the repetition of an originary subordination for another purpose, one whose future is partially open" (Butler, 1997, p. 38). When Yasmin is reminded of not being ashamed, she talks about this 'partially open future':

Well, maybe ...But I have done something and I know that I have to do something with my life. I have to make a decision. You know it's not my nature to dwell on the past, but if I had a chance to live my life over again, there are a few things that I'd do differently. (Karodia, 1986, p. 141)

Yasmin's eagerness to do something new and different signifies a new beginning, which becomes evident when she abandons her new-born child because she is unable to love her due to her hatred for the child's father, Cobus Steyn. Yasmin abandons her infant and the rest of her family after realizing that she has nothing to offer them. She does so because she cannot bear to aggravate any of them additional suffering. Yasmin's departure for a new life with a new identity signifies her conceptual death as a fixed subject and her rebirth as a constructed subject defined by subversive possibility and agency, affirming Butler's assertion that "construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency" (Butler, 1999, p. 147). Yasmin's trajectory, as expressed by Butler, highlights that "the deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; rather, it establishes as political the very terms through which identity is articulated" (Butler, 1999, p. 148). Yasmin's resistance necessitates narratives of construction and deconstruction, which are symbolized by her agency.

Conclusion

Karodia establishes a point of interaction between the precarity and (in)visibility of women of mixed-race background in apartheid South Africa, highlighting how their journey helps regulate hostile life experiences of estrangement, violence, stereotyping, and racial segregation. Her writing becomes a form of resistance in order to accomplish particular objectives, such as restoring a collective history alongside a larger societal historical past in re-establishing an identity and rewriting a history distorted by white apartheid historiography. This alternative mode of resistance illustrates how the ongoing struggle allows women to create their own self-definitions, agency, and distinctiveness. *Daughters of the Twilight* faithfully emphasizes her later therapeutic writing, exemplifying that her need for purification is of utmost importance. As one of the lines from the prologue of her very next novel, *A Shattering of Silence* (1993), states: "The writing had been a form of therapy which helped immensely with the recovery of my memory" (Karodia, 1993, p. 1).

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