

# Example of lacanian discourse analysis report

[Parts of the World](#), [Africa](#)



## **Abstract**

This report intends to present a deeper understanding of the core issues related to the analysis of one of the tales of Apartheid Archive Project. The methodology section is to explain basic concepts which are used in the analysis of the tale and to justify and contextualize the employed approach. The analysis part is intended to identify the key concepts that hold the narrative together, identify its role within the apartheid system and establish any overriding effect which it has on political and social level. The conclusion support the notion that the subjective account of one's experience can be placed in a wider sociological context. Such analysis will allow the narrative to be understood both in its temporal context and in terms of its abiding legacy.

## **Introduction**

This report is constructed with the intention to analyze a tale which has been selected from the Apartheid Archive Project. The Apartheid Archive project is known for bringing forward the first-hand accounts of early experiences of black Africans of apartheid which they experienced over a period of time. These tales are like short stories, emotive in nature and can have the magnificent effect on the listeners. Sometimes these stories may seem to be biased but they reflect the feelings and sufferings of black Africans. I have chosen to use Lacanian Discourse Analysis to look at one of the tale of Apartheid Achieve Project. Since this method of analysis deals with the way of a deconstructive interpretation and explanation of a communication, it has the ability to avoid surface perspicacity of text being the sole account of an

individual's early experience of apartheid. Another reason why I chose this method to analyze the tale is because of its quality that allows considering the text in a wider discursive context.

## **Methodology**

The concept proposed by Lacanian requires text application on four discourses. Lacanian Discourse Analysis is based on the principle of applying four discourses to the selected text. These four discourses, proposed by Jacques Lacan are known as the Discourse of the Master, Discourse of the University, Discourse of the Hysteric and Discourse of the Analyst. According to Lacan there are four structural positions within every discourse and they are namely agent, other, truth, and product. In any type of conversation the position of these four remain same. The communication followed in a manner that Agent is the origin point of conversation and other is the receiver point. Any text that originates from agent could be in any form verbal or written. According to Lacan no text can be completely transferred to the receiver, there are various factors that influence the transfer of text. The conversation between agent and other get influenced by facial expression, body language and ability of other to receive the information. As per Lacan no conversation gets completely transferred from agent to another hence there is always some part of information that is missing in communication. Lacan mentioned there is always some truth which reinforce and stimulate agent to proceed to discourse. Plotting these structural positions into a formula establishes the interrelations between these structural arrangements as:

## Agent other

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### Truth // product

The two bars between truth and product indicate that, these two can never be the same and there is always some information that is missing.

The agent, other, truth and product in conversation reflect as a location and remained same throughout the discourses. These locations get inhabited by four elements that are subject ( . ), the master signifier the master signifier (☞), the chain of signifiers (☞) and objet petit a (a ). Respective connotation of all the four elements will depend upon the location where they will be situated. These can be described largely in following manner;

The subject is narrator, but narrator is not individual. Narrator is alienated, split and incomplete. We are not directly link with ourselves, to access ourselves we are required to use language as medium of communication. To know something about ourselves we have to rely on other. In any conversation subject can never be a single clear identity. In a disclosure ' I ' with the help of language deliver the speech whereas ' me ' process the ideas. Both individually or in amalgamation can be considered as the subject's truth. Both are partial forms of identification. Stories are reflection of past hence the subject, who is created and depicted via discourse is the adult subject. The younger subject created and depicted during the narrative which already acted in history.

The master signifier organizes the text together and develops a meaning of the text. Any text without a proper sequence and organization does not make any sense and it is difficult to formulate any meaning out of that text.

The master signifier gives a concept to any discourse. While analyzing the text isolation of master signifier provide other rudiments of the discourse. Besides meaning of the discourse, other aspects refers to ' chain of signifier'. It is the wider knowledge in which we locate the discourse.

Object petit a is unstated and silence part of discourse. It is implied in discourse but not said during communication. It is missing part of communication and any discourse is incomplete without Object petit a. it is something that is related with discourse and carry a meaning in relation with discourse. Object petit a is indefinable remainder of discourse that coerce the discourse.

### **These four elements rotate in a proper succession and depicts four discourse in following manner;**

Discourse of the University

Discourse of the Master

Discourse of the Hysteric

Discourse of the Analyst

☞ a

A.

☞ // ☞

. // a

a // ☞

☞ // ☞

Each rotation reflect a new relation which help in analyzing the text and to gain a better insight on the text. The purpose of these rotations is to explore

all the elements described in the text and to develop a better understanding on the text.

## **Analysis/ Discussion**

The narrative I have selected is a description of my personal past experience when I came to know about apartheid. Apartheid was a system meant for racial segregation in South Africa. This system was introduced by national party and in place for period from 1948 to 1994. Under this system black people faced major challenges as all their rights were truncated. The story is begins when I was five year old, Me along with my family and domestic worker named Doris left Botswana for our home in Johannesburg, South Africa. This is first time when I came to know about the racism. On my way to Johannesburg I faced various instances where a clear racism was depicted. While going to home we decided to take a little break for few days and planned to see coastal areas. I and Doris never had seen any beach before. The first instance when I saw racism was occurred when we stayed in a hotel in Durban (line 12). Doris was not allowed to stay with us in the room as she was a black. At that time I was too young and never seen any racism before, in Botswana the society is free from such nuisance and I was colour-blind. I just ignored that instance but while visiting the beaches and other location I realized that people were strangely looking at us. Out of curiosity I asked my mother about the reason but she escaped from giving the answer and I also moved on. On a hot day when me and my sister were insisting for ice-cream, we decided to go to a restaurant and that was first time when I actually feel that all people in this world are not equal (line 19). The manager of the restaurant refused to serve us and putted a condition across that we can be

served only if Doris will sit outside, they do not serve ' her kind (line 25). They very clearly mentioned that they do not serve black people. I remember the helplessness of my parents to fight for Doris (line 47). They were silence on the whole way back to the hotel. In hotel he explained to us the intricacies of Apartheid system. He mentioned that ' in South Africa people did not like the black people and thought that they were different to us' (line 36). He also said that we will remain same as we were, we will treat everyone equally irrespective of the colour. After that instance I felt many changes in myself. Now when I am matured I recall that instance and ponder that why Doris so easily accepted that behavior. I also think about my identity as I was white (line 45). Was it embarrassing for Doris and did that change her perception (line 44) about her identity. Doris stayed with us for one month then left for Botswana as things were much better for her there. The narrative mentioned that incident took place in restaurant in Milky Lane was turning point in the story. The trip from Botswana to Johannesburg was an unforgettable experience where behavior of others impacted my life.

### 👉 **(Apartheid system) a (White supremacy)**

☹️ (Racial discrimination) // 🧒 (Young girl ' I' gaining knowledge on colour discrimination)

The result of this analysis is learning and knowledge gained by me on the racial discrimination (line 41) and Apartheid system. I was not aware about the discrimination and inequality before this incident occurred. The knowledge gained by me was supported and explained to me by my father (line 36). He explained the Apartheid system and its functioning to me.

## ☞ (Racial discrimination) ☞ (South Africans)

. (Young girl knowledge on colour discrimination) // a (White supremacy)

I acknowledge that the South Africa's system was against black people. My parent and Doris accepted that and left the restaurant without fighting against that. On the way back Doris told my sister that we have to accept it (line 32). The South African society was not equal for all people and black people had to live in that. They were forced to tolerate with all type of bad behavior and discrimination. The analysis findings made higher commendation on racial discrimination, which presented very clearly in the narration. The silence of Doris and my family on manager statement implied that the fact of racial discrimination was accepted by people in the society. The silence of parents was not an indicator that they were also in agreement on racial discrimination. They were not having the same thinking as South Africans were having towards black people (line 42). The silence maintained by the parents was just to escape from that situation as they found themselves helpless in that situation. To make our analysis stronger we will rotate the elements and see discourse of hysteric. The young is now is an agent and racial discrimination is the master of signifier.

## . (Young Girl) ☞ (Racial discrimination)

a (White Supremacy) // ☞ (Apartheid system)

As stated in narration (line 36) people in South Africa did not consider black as part of their own society. Their Apartheid system does not provide all rights and freedom to black people. The preference is given to white people. My father mentioned that we will not discriminate black people and treat them equally. He further supported his dialogue by adding that you will be



going to private school where black people are allowed.

I am now a mature girl who is having various questions in my mind about the incident that occurred long time back and brought lot of changes in me (line 41). I keep on asking various questions about the racial inequality which raised a question mark on my identity. Are white people are bad. We will take discourse of analyst to develop more sharpened understanding; a (Understanding of the world ). (Mature Girl)

### **(Experience and learning) // **(Guilt feeling)****

As stated in narration (line 46) that incident make me feel bad and raise a question on my identity as a white person. Is white people are bad since they are making things difficult for black people. That episode develops a strong feeling in mind against Apartheid. The organizing concept of the narration is discrimination due to Apartheid system that holds the text provided for racial discrimination.

The text presented in narration is based out of my personal experience with social inequality, racial discrimination, South Africa and Apartheid system.

My present life and knowledge on racism is result of the truth which I faced during my childhood in South Africa.

## **Conclusion**

The basic character of Lacanian discourse analysis is that it analyze the major and minor meanings of the text. It explores all the possibilities attached with text which perhaps could lead to a different meaning of the text. I end my account with the finding that this analysis of narration provided me a better understanding on the racial discrimination. The finding

of the analysis provides the truth depicted in text about the racism and inequality. The abovementioned tale gives an evident account of white supremacy during apartheid however this analysis goes beyond the concept of white supremacy and makes an effort to consider other contributing factors and acknowledges one of these factors to be people's awareness of their surroundings. After using Lacanian discourse analysis, the story seems to speak about all the aspects itself along with the different aspects. For me the text indicate the impact of experience and knowledge of childhood. The experience made me more mature and understanding when I grown up. I never faces the racism but it a hard reality for those who not only felt it but also lived with it. It is a hard truth that is accepted by me and I hope that South Africa should have the same sentiment as me.

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