Chapter 4

KAFFIR BOY BY MARK MATHABANE AND WAYS OF DYING BY ZAKES MDA

This chapter is devoted to the semiotic analysis of two novels, viz. Mark Mathabane’s *Kaffir Boy* (1986) and Zakes Mda’s *Ways of Dying* (1991/1995). These two novels are treated in one chapter because they are apartheid novels, i.e., they were published during the period when Apartheid was prevalent as a Government policy in South Africa.

4.1 KAFFIR BOY BY MARK MATHABANE

This novel which has the subtitle, ‘An Autobiography’ is “the true story of a black youth’s coming of age in Apartheid South Africa” consists of 350 pages. It is divided into three parts running into fifty four (54) chapters as follows:

- Part I : The Road to Alexandra (pp.1-119) (1-20)
- Part II : Passport to Knowledge (pp.121-211) (21-34)
- Part III : Passport to Freedom (pp.215-350) (35-54)

Part I consists of twenty chapters (1-20) while Part II has fourteen chapters (21-34), and Part III twenty chapters (35-54).

4.1.1 A SYNOPSIS OF KAFFIR BOY

*Kaffir Boy* is the autobiography of the author Mark Mathabane who was born and brought up in Alexandra, a slum area of Johannesburg, the capital city of South Africa. During the peak of Apartheid in South Africa he was born of illiterate parents in 1960. A few months before his birth there was a peaceful demonstration against the Pass Laws in Sharpeville on March 21, 1960. He was called “*Kaffir*” by the police and some Whites which meant a ‘nigger’ as an insulting and humiliating term used as an address to a poor black person in South Africa.

Leading the life of a poor black along with his younger sister and brother in a poor shanty, Mark Mathabane (Johannes in the text) passed through a number of disturbed nights filled with police atrocities, his father and mother living always under

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* The textual passages cited in the course of this chapter are from the latest editions of the two novels: *Kaffir Boy* (1986) and *Ways of Dying* (1995). Hence the page numbers refer to the texts of these two editions.
the threat of imprisonment for want of Pass Books and for unemployment and other meaningless charges.

They were almost starving for days. One night the police took his father away and his mother had no work to do. He happened to go to a white family along with his maternal grandmother where she had been working and from that family, he received books like *Treasure Island* and *David Copperfield*. Reading these books written by white authors, for the first time, he came to know about a different reality of life outside the only life of the black people, he had known in the ghetto of Alexandra in South Africa. At thirteen he got acquainted with the game of tennis, a sport of the whites. Slowly he became an expert in tennis with help of his white friends. He developed a deep hatred for the local Bantu education. Surviving through the nightmare of the Soweto protests in 1976, he received a tennis scholarship to study at an American college in 1978 with the help of the professional tennis player Stan Smith. This scholarship was his passport to freedom.

During his life at Alexandra, he had learnt so many things. In his own words:

*Kaffir Boy* is also about how, in order to escape from the clutches of apartheid, I had to reject the tribal traditions of my ancestors. It was a hard thing to do, for there were many good things in my African heritage, which, had it been left to me to choose freely, I would have preserved and venerated. I, too, had the burning need like human beings everywhere to know where I came from, in order to better understand who I was and where I was going in this world. But apartheid had long adulterated my heritage and traditions, twisted them into tools of oppression and indoctrination. I saw at a young age that apartheid was using tribalism to deny me equal rights, to separate me from my black brothers and sisters, to justify segregation and perpetuate white power and privilege, to render me subservient, docile and, therefore, exploitable. I instinctively understood that in order to forge my own identify, to achieve according my aspirations and dreams, to see myself the equal of any man, black or white, I had to reject the brand tribalism, and in the rejection, I ran the risk of losing my heritage. I took the plunge. (xi)
After going to America and from his exposure to the outside world, especially the democratic world in America, Mark Mathabane realized what it means to be regarded as a human being and what democracy is. He also understood how to use his pen to fight against injustice and racism in his native country and the result is his autobiographical novel, *Kaffir Boy*. Therefore, he concludes his “Preface” as follows:

My family is still in Alexandra, undergoing the same hardships I describe in this book. The youths of my generation have become more militant, the tools of repression have become more numerous and sophisticated and black schools and ghettos have become centers of social protest and bloody conflict with the police and soldiers. South Africa has entered its darkest hour, and all its sons and daughters have a responsibility, a duty, to see to it that truth and justice triumph. I hope to do my part. (xii)

4.1.2 A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF KAFFIR BOY

The word *Kaffir*, according to the author, which is of Arabic origin, means infidel and it is used disparagingly by most whites to refer to blacks and it is equivalent to the word *nigger*. This narrative is the autobiography of the author, Mark Mathabane, a black boy born and brought up in Alexandra, a ‘ghetto’ or slum area in the city Johannesburg. Below is a semiotic analysis of the narrative.

4.1.2.1 PART I: THE ROAD TO ALEXANDRA (pp.3-119) (20 CHAPTERS)

Chapter 1–7: Semic, Cultural, Hermeneutic and Narrative Codes

Part I named ‘The Road to Alexandra’ consists of twenty chapters. In this part (Chapters 1–7), the miserable life of the blacks in Alexandra is described. The narrator’s father Jackson, is from Venda, in the north west of Transvaal and mother, Magdalene from Gazankulu in the north east of Transvaal. They got married in Alexandra and live in a rented shack. Both do not have passes to live there and therefore their life is always under the threat of police torture and imprisonment. Mark Johannes a five-year old black boy has a younger sister, Florah and a young brother George. One day in 1965 there is a police raid on the shacks in Alexandra, early in the morning. His father has already left in the darkness before daybreak. His mother

* All the page references in this study belong to the edition of *Kaffir Boy* printed by Free Press (New York) in 1986.
suddenly wakes them up closing the door with a slam. Suddenly there is a commotion outside. In the words of author:

Suddenly, as I stood leaning against the table, from outside came a series of dreadful noises. Sirens blared, voices streamed and shouted, wood cracked and windows shattered, children bawled, dogs barked and footsteps pounded. I was bewildered; I had never heard such a racket before. I was instantly seized by a feeling of terror. (7)

His mother hides and responds to his anxious calls, in a faint voice. She tells them that Peri-urban (i.e. the Alexandra Police Squad) are here. The police raid outside becomes more and more dangerous. Finding out her black little book (Pass Book) with great difficulty, his mother escapes through the bedroom door. The younger children cry horribly. Johannes covers his small brother, who is weeping, with a blanket. Three black policemen enter and after search finding only the children, they leave. The young boy has fallen from the bed and broken his head. Their mother who hides in a ditch returns. In the evening, there is a rumour that the police will raid the area once again. It is the beginning of the annual ‘Operation Clean-up Month’ to comb Alexandra to catch people living there without passbooks. His father says that it is only a rumour but his wife is afraid. In the midnight there is again a police raid. Two black policemen break open the bolted door of Johannes’s shack. They beat the boy mercilessly and finally catch his father hiding in the bedroom. They verify his Pass Book and find several irregularities in it. Then they demand some bribe money, but he has no money. Therefore, he is hand-cuffed and taken away. The following passage holds mirror to what kind of horror and torture are perpetrated on the black slum-dwellers of Alexandra:

Curious to find out where they were taking my father, and what was going on outside, I followed them, forgetting all about my mother. I ordered my sister, who was crying, “Papa, Papa!” by the door, back into the house. I stepped outside in time to see the two policemen, flanking my father, go up a rocky slope leading out of the yard. I saw more black policemen leading black men and women out of shacks. Some of the prisoners were half-naked, others dressed as they went. Several children, two and three years old, stood in tears outside the
smashed doors, imploring their mothers and fathers to come back.

(23-24)

Afterwards, Johannes returns home and finds that his mother has been hiding in the small wardrobe. Now it is locked from outside. Finding the key and several farthings after a long and repeated search, he opens the door and his mother comes out. His father has been kept in prison for two months and released. He returns to his family. The police came unannounced and tortured the blacks in Alexandra slum. This became a way of life in Mathabane’s life as a boy. His mother would have premonitions of the police raid, but his father would dismiss her fears. Very often his mother’s borebodings became true. Those who had money paid bribes to the police and escaped imprisonment. Others would be sent to Modderbee, a maximum-security penitentiary, on the outskirts of Kempton Park. Women would say that Modderbee was a “hell which changed black men into brutes, no matter how tough and stubborn they are” (29). His mother used to pray to their ancestral spirits to save her husband. The black workers in white houses were paid their wages on Fridays and the blacks, in spite of the constant terror of Peri-urban, would enjoy their week-ends by feasting and drinking heavily. One night their dingy shack collapsed and they moved to another similar shack. His younger brother, George was weaned in the new shack. His mother had applied red pepper to her breasts and asked George to suckle and when he did so he started crying terribly and thus he became afraid of suckling. To mark George’s passage from infancy to childhood, they had a small celebration at home with a small white chicken. His father started teaching the tribal ways of life to George also, as he had done before to Mathabane. In the words of the author:

My father’s rule had as its fulcrum the constant performing of rituals spanning the range of day-to-day timing. They were rituals to protect the house from evildoers, to ward off starvation, to prevent us from becoming sick, to safeguard his job, to keep the police away, to bring us good luck, to make him earn more money and many others which my young mind could not understand. Somehow they did not make sense to me; they simply awed, confused and embarrassed me, and the only reason I participated in them night after night was because my father made certain that I did, by using, among other things, the whip, and the threat of the retributive powers of my ancestral spirits, whose
favour the rituals were designed to curry. Along with the rituals, there were also tribal laws governing manners. (32)

One example of tribal manners was that a child should not talk while eating food. For violating this rule Johannes Mathabane was whipped cruelly by his father with his rawhide belt. Johannes developed hatred towards his father and wanted to kill him, but his mother pacified him. In his father’s absence, when he told his mother that his father should stop doing rituals, his mother told him:

Well, it’s not as simple that your father grew up in the tribes, as you know. He didn’t come to the city until he was quite old. It's hard to stop doing things when you’re old. I, too, do rituals because I was raised in the tribes. Their meaning, child, will become clear when you grow up. Have patience. (33)

His father also would become angry whenever Johannes spoke Zulu instead of their own tribal language, Venda. In the end of 1966, his father lost his job as a labourer for a white firm at Germiston, a white city, south of Johannesburg. Then, one day, his father was arrested for being unemployed. His mother tried in vain to get him released from prison. After 16 years of age every black person had to possess a Pass Book and as his mother said, his father had been arrested because his Pass Book was not in order. The family continued to starve for days together and the landlord gave an ultimatum to pay house-rent. One day when their mother was away hunting for food and money, two powerful and armed Zulu men came and stole the furniture in the house. A few weeks later, George and Flora became ill. Their mother, as she had no money for treatment, used some herbal medicine given by their Granny. That year, there was Christmas celebration in their family, and with a long absence of her husband and lack of resources for survival, their mother became gradually irritable and started drinking heavily. Johannes also changed slowly. He started suspecting that his mother was eating some food secretly in the night while the children were starving because her stomach had been growing fat. In fact, she was pregnant. When asked, she told him, that she had already had ‘bloating stomach’ three times before. Thus his suspicions were cleared. Luckily at this time, their Granny (his mother’s mother) came to them on her return from Shangaan, Bantustan where she had gone to attend a ceremony to exorcise evil spirits from a raving mad relative. Learning about their miserable plight, Granny helped them by clearing the three-month’s rent, by buying
them bread, sugar and ‘mealie meal’ (i.e., corn meal) and gave his mother one hundred cents. Further for the treatment of George and Flora who had been suffering from advanced malnutrition and chicken pox, she gave another three hundred cents. When Johannes suggested to his mother that they go to Granny’s place and stay there till their father’s return, his mother said that Granny was already overburdened with looking after herself and her other children and that she could not afford to keep them with her. Further, it was against their tribal custom. Then their mother got a small job of cleaning a storekeeper’s house and washing his family’s clothes and against her service, he agreed to pay their house rent. Thus the problem of house rent was solved and for food they started going, along with other poor black neighbours, to Mlothi, a new garbage dump in Alexandra half a mile away, from their living place. Every morning they would go there to search for scraps of food in the garbage. From the Mlothi’s garbage, there were able to pick up, not only some thrown-away food items, but also many other items like clothes, knives, furniture, spoons, cribs, mugs, forks and plates thrown away after use by the families of whites. One day, they dug out a heavy box from the garbage dump and when opened, it turned out to contain the dead body of a black female baby. Many other neighbours also were present. They returned home with a shock. When asked by Johannes about the baby, his mother replied:

She told me that some maids and nannies who worked for white people, because of fears of losing their jobs in the event of an accidental pregnancy, would often smother the baby and dump the corpse in garbage bins so they could continue working. (49)

After this incident, they stopped going to Mlothi. Instead, they started going to a chicken factory at the other end of the veld, Sunnyside, to pickup uncracked eggs from the dumped loads of dead, diseased chickens and rejected eggs. Almost 99 percent of them were only dead embryos. Their father returned almost after one year in prison as a changed man physically as well as attitudinally. He became almost a brute. He told his wife about the horrid life in prison where thousands of black men were locked inside for their unpardonable crime was being unemployed. Somehow his father succeeded in getting his pass after running round the Superintendent’s office several days. But he couldn’t get any job because of his arrest record. One evening, when her mother was suckling his younger sister, three-month old Maria, Johannes
felt giddy and shouted that the house was spinning. He was seemed that the house is on fire. Consider this passage (of the Semic code):

Suddenly, the gyrating objects developed huge mouths and began laughing at me, a roaring, crazy laughter, which split my head into two. As the madding laughter continued, each whirling object suddenly contorted, enlarged, ballooned, stretched, shrank, into all sorts of grotesque, shifting monsters, all of them attempting to swallow me up. Each fiend had big, red, unblinking eyes and a wide red mouth without lips, from which protruded massive, shiny, razor-sharp teeth.

Suddenly all the monsters burst into flames. (51)

With great concern and care his mother tried to calm him down and at last put him to sleep singing folk songs and telling a story. This passage above is a wonderful example of the author’s descriptive and narrative skills, besides being an exquisite example of the Semic and Cultural codes which pervade the entire Part – I.

In the night Johannes Mathabane had a dream as described below:

I had dreamed of being marooned on a strange island, and as I wandered about the land, I came across a group of white men clad in loinskins who, upon seeing me, fell on their knees and worshipped me, as if I were a god. Then they led me to a huge hut filled with mangoes, papayas, curried rice and fish, oranges, chocolate candy, milk, bread smeared with peanut butter and jam, bananas and guavas, where they clad me in a rainbow coloured toga like a chieftain, set me upon a high boulder in the midst of all the food and beseeched me to eat everything, saying that here were many other huts similarly filled with food, which was still mine to eat. I began gobbling all the food until my stomach burst open, revealing my clogged intestines, which burst open too. However, I didn’t die. (52)

Look at the interpretation his mother gave to this dream:

My mother, in divining my dream, told me that the events in it meant that someday I would find myself in a faraway place, among strangers, who would take me in, clothe me and provide me with all the things I wanted. (Ibid)
Both the passages above illustrate the Cultural code in the sense that the first passage describes the dream of a growing black boy in Alexandra, starving and struggling to survive in abject poverty and fear and reflects his psychology and perhaps his imagination enkindled by ill-health and hunger, while the second passage illustrates how the mother divined his dream using her knowledge of tribal culture.

Johannes’s father luckily got his old job back. But now he was a changed man given to excessive drinking and gambling. One day he brought home *muhodu* and *mala* (chicken feet, intestines and head), a delicacy for them, a pack of candles, a small bag of ‘mealie meal’, salt packets and sugar and a packet of fish and chips. This made the entire family very happy and the children danced and sang happily. That was one of the rarely happy days in their life. This again is an instance of the Cultural code. Here after, a chapter-wise analysis has been for a better understanding of the role played by the different Semiotic codes. Another reason is that some of the ensuing chapters are lengthy enough to call for a more detailed analysis.

**Chapter 8: Narrative, Semic and Cultural Codes (pp.53-55)**

Having nothing to do Johannes Mathabane associated himself with a gang of five to seven year old boys and moved around in different places in and around Alexandra in search of food and adventure. Indian traders were offering their cheap garments at low prices by shouting, on First Avenue, gold and green buses were being washed at PUTCO bus terminal, black men were drinking Bantu beer at beer halls while black women were waiting outside to buy that beer carrying their small children on their backs, gun-toting black guards were patrolling near the entrance gate, *Tsotsis* (gangsters) were playing dice smoking *dagga* (marijuana). He used to watch all these things and to go to the King’s cinema on the First Avenue by buying the ticket along with his friends with the small money they manipulated by selling empty beer bottles and used bus tickets to Shebeen queens (black women who made and sold cheap liquor). He formed an unrealistic picture about the life of the white people that it was full of violence and murder, from his experience of watching these English films. His already existing phobia caused by the black police, had increased further by these films of violence and crime. He saw such a film for the first time when he was three or four years old. That film made his fear permanent. This part (ch.8) is another
example the Cultural code associated with the black culture of Alexandra. The Semic code throws light on the locality and on the characters.

Chapter 9: Cultural, Narrative and Symbolic Codes (pp.55-62)

One afternoon a group of black evangelists headed by a white man pitched a tent in an open place in the slum and invited people to attend. Somehow his father agreed to take them to this tent on the next Saturday evening. So they went to the tent which had already been jam-packed. A black evangelist was explaining the greatness of Christianity over the tribal religion. This angered some black men including his father and a likely fight was pacified. After coming home, his father condemned Christianity as the white man’s religion. When his father had gone out to work, Johannes had a discussion with his mother about Christianity as he had also seen some pictures of Christ and others in the houses of his neighbours. His mother explained to him how Christianity came to Africa. When he asked why Christ was a white and Devil a black, his mother replied:

Christianity is essentially the religion of white people, therefore it makes sense that the Christian god should be thought of as a white person. Just like we, in our religion, have our Black God. (61)

When his father overheard their conversation, he warned his wife not to teach their son Christianity. His mother had a favourable disposition towards Christianity because their Christian neighbours were prosperous and happy whereas they themselves, in spite of their loyalty to the tribal gods, continued to live in poverty, hunger and misery. However, Mathabane, under his father’s influence developed great dislike for Christianity.

This chapter also very vividly contributes to the unfolding of the Cultural code that enveloped some black people’s lives in Alexandra who did not believe in Christianity and who adhered to their tribal religion despite the attraction of Christianity. In addition the Symbolic code depicts the conflict between the Christian and the tribal religions in the minds of the blacks.

Chapter 10: Cultural and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.62-74)

In this chapter the prostitution escapade of the slum boys is described. Johannes and his family had been starving without food. At the beginning of 1967, the cost of living went high and the wages earned by his father were not adequate enough
to provide food for them. So his mother and the children would go out in search of other means of food like locusts, grasshoppers, leech-like worms called *songa’s*, and weeds called *murogo* which grew near lavatories. Their mother processed them and served these as food to the children. Sometimes they would also gather animal blood from the local abattoir on First Avenue. After sometime even such blood was not freely available and they stopped collecting it. Though Johannes felt repulsive to eat such food, hunger educated his mind and prepared his stomach to receive it (63). His mother told him how potatoes by feeding ‘night soil’ were grown to become big. Nonetheless hunger taught Johannes to develop a passion for games like soccer.

Another important episode in this chapter is the description of how the young boys were used for homosexuality by grown up black men who were lodged inside fenced barracks. These were inside, lured the boys with food and money and after serving them with enough food they would use them for sodomy. Johannes fell into the company of these boys headed by a thirteen year old pimp, named Mpandhlani and went into the compound one day, having been compelled by hunger, but luckily he refused either to eat the food and take the money offered or to yield to the homosexual act. He escaped from the compound with great difficulty. His friends called him a fool. But the author concludes by saying:

> Throughout all the years that I live in South Africa, people were to call me a fool for refusing to live life the way they did and by doing the things they did. Little did they realize that in our world, the black world, one could only survive if one played the fool, and bided his time. (74)

In this chapter, the Cultural, Hermeneutic and Semic codes operate side by side to provide a realistic picture of the life of young boys in the slums of Alexandra which is but one of such slums around Johannesburg in South Africa. The moral strength of the protagonist, Johannes, is also confirmed by his fortitude in rejecting the prostitutional way of life despite horrible hunger and poverty. Thus the central character is clearly delineated by Semic code in this part.

**Chapter 11: Hermeneutic and Cultural Codes (pp.74-78)**

Though different in many respects, Johannes’ parents agreed on one respect, viz. the power of witchcraft and believed that their bad luck and difficulties in life
were due to the evil of some of their neighbours who practiced witchcraft against
them. One day when they were returning from their grandmother’s place, the police
stopped them and finding that his mother’s pass was not in order, took their mother
away in the van in spite of her being a pregnant woman and because she was not able
to gratify them with any bribe money. After their father returned, he borrowed some
money from the landlord and requested a neighbouring woman, Mrs. Munyama to go
to the police station and get his wife released. This woman’s pass was in order. After
being released Johannes’s mother lamented for not having a pass in order. One day
she happened to meet a group of Full Gospel Church and got all of them including her
baptized. Yet her tribal beliefs continued to be strong. Therefore the narrator says,
“Hers was a Christianity of expediency.” (77)

This chapter is an example of Hermeneutic and Cultural codes, Hermeneutic
because the author’s mother was attracted towards Christianity for material benefits
without exactly understanding Christianity but her belief in her tribal religion was as
strong and unchanged as ever. This chapter is also a manifestation of Cultural code
because it describes the expected impact of Christianity and its material benefits.

Chapter 12: Cultural Code (pp.78-80)

This chapter is one of the important chapters in Part-I. In this chapter the
author describes the tenacity of his mother in going round the Superintendent’s office
for obtaining a regular Pass, and her patience, knowledge and skill in telling tribal
folk stories to her children at the bed time. She was a great teller of tales. She would
tell her children that these stories had been transmitted from generation to generations
of black people and not only did they entertain the children but also taught them
morals and good behaviour. Her stories included those of various tribal traditions of
the past, of the chiefs, witch doctors, sages, warriors, sorcerers, magicians, and wild
monstrous beasts in the mythical African kingdoms ruled by black people where no
white man had ever set foot, of the generous deeds of famous powerful, immortal and
invincible African gods, of legends of noble tribal chiefs and warriors, of their liberal
treatment of the enemies they had vanquished, of animals who were smarter than
humans, of tribal songs, proverbs and riddles, dance songs, mimic songs, harvest
songs, ceremonies and rituals. As the author notes, these stories served them more
than nursery rhymes and story books of school education, by moulding their young
characters in the right way. These stories, songs, proverbs and riddles are given to them by her mother.

...served as a library, a golden fountain of knowledge where children learned about right and wrong, about good and evil. (79)

The author as a young boy learnt many things from the stories and tribal lore and history of his mother. He concludes the chapter thus:

I learned to prefer peace to war, cleverness to stupidity, love to hate, and sensitivity to stoicism, humility to pomposity and reconciliation to hostility, harmony to strife, patience to rashness, gregariousness to misanthropy, creation to annihilation. (80)

Chapter 13: Narrative, Hermeneutic and Cultural Codes (pp.80-82)

In this chapter, a new crisis faced by Johannes's family is narrated. When winter came, one night a fierce storm broke out. That night his mother told the children about the witch flying in the wind with a blazing torch in hand, against thunder, set the huts in the village on fire, in revenge as the villagers had burnt her child at the stake taking mother and child, and who had brought drought to the villages through voodoo (evil spirits). That night Johannes and the younger children could not sleep out of fear. His mother forgot to keep the brazier outside and the poisonous gas of the burning coal suffocated Johannes and he tossed and kicked Flora who started crying. His mother came out of the bedroom and saved them. She took him out into the open air where he was drenched in the pouring rain. His father, Jackson, also came out and his mother explained to him the reason why Johannes got suffocated. She kept the brazier outside the shack. Next morning the coal became ash.

In this chapter, the Narrative code continues the story, while the Cultural code throws light on tribal beliefs like Voodoo. Finally the Hermeneutic code resolves the fear of suffocation to the children revealing that the cause was the poisonous gas from the burning coal.

Chapter 14: Narrative, Semic and Cultural Codes (pp.82-86)

This chapter gives an account of how some boys including Johannes made fun of the shit-men who came in a truck to collect the ‘night soil’ in the huts. As his parents and other children were away, Johannes moved and joined a band of boys and
...Never again would I jeer at the shit-men, nor at anyone, for that matter. (85)

From the description of the activity of the shit-men, the reader learns about the dirty environment in which the black people lived in their shacks in Alexandra. This is revealed through the Semic code. This chapter also is an example of the Narrative code as it narrates how the protagonist’s immature behaviour taught him a lesson of life. Further it illustrates the manifestation of the Cultural code as it describes the poor and miserable life of the black people in the slum of Alexandra.

Chapter 15: Cultural, Narrative and Semic Codes (pp.86-91)

In this chapter, the narrator presents an account of his experience in his trip to the tribal reserve, in the company of his father. Jackson, his father, lost his job once again. Having been worried of his constant losing of job and the consequent problems in life; Jackson, decided to consult a witch doctor in his village in Venda and to obtain a talisman and voodoo-combating medicines from the witch doctor. Saving some money with great difficulty by starving for days, he set out his journey taking Johannes along with him. They travelled secretly in a PUTCO bus along with some other black men covered by a huge tarpaulin to protect themselves from the police. The truck also carried a lot of second-hand goods and furniture. The travelers hide themselves amidst this assortment under the tarpaulin. Johannes had wished very much to observe the white man’s world outside but he couldn’t do so due to the darkness of the night and the tarpaulin cover. Father and son finally reached the black world, the tribal reserve. Consider the following description of the place which is a fine example of Semic code:

The place was mountainous, rugged and bone-dry, like a wasteland. Stragglng, unpaved roads, which became treacherous quagmires with each infrequent rainfall, were the only means of getting from one village to another. The soil was baked reddish brown, like terra-cotta, with patches of dried-up stubble here and there. Intermittently, huge
clouds of dust swelled upward, lingered a few moments in the air, and then settled down to make everything and everybody reddish brown.

(86)

They went to the local village chief’s kraal where Jackson paid his overdue tribal taxes. The author says that, the villagers did not know anything about the world outside their villages. So they went on asking him questions about the city life. Nothing grew anywhere except at the lavatories. Even the handful cattle were scrawny, and children suffered from rampant malnutrition. The narrator’s words in this context are quotable:

The way they went about their daily life reminded me of my mother’s stories about primitive tribes, and I felt a slight revulsion at being connected, through my father, to what everyone in the city called a “backward” way of life. My father, on the other hand, seemed very much at home; I wondered why. (87)

His father told him, “This is the place where someday soon, all of our people will have to come to live”. (87) This surprised Johannes and he started suspecting that his father had brought him there to leave him there forever. At the end of the first week they visited the cave of the witch doctor located on the mountain top, led by an old wife of the witch doctor. The atmosphere in the cave scared Johannes greatly. Consider his description of the cave:

On the rugged walls of the cave hung bones and skins of various animals; bark, roots and leaves of various plants; bottles containing grey, cloudy brews, from which pungent vapors came; dead frogs, snakes and other reptiles. And in one far corner, alongside a font bubbling an eerie mist, was perched a human skull. (88)

The boy was terrified. His father told him that the skull was part of the witch doctor’s medicines. His father greeted the witch doctor and bowed several times. They sat cross-legged in front of the doctor who was dressed in animal bones; shells etc. and his body and face were painted with red clay. When the actual ceremony began, Johannes’s father submitted to the witch doctor his problems and requested the latter to give him medicine to safeguard his job and his family. The witch doctor collected some bones and shells and threw them on the mat and chanted a musical
formula, and divined the bones. He said that Johannes’s father’s problems were caused because he had completely lost contact with his ancestral spirits and made them angry. By way of diagnosis, he advised that Jackson had to sacrifice a white chicken twice a year to appease the angry ancestral spirits. He also gave Johannes’s father several small pouches containing roots, ointments and other stuff as medicine for all his problems. At the end, an ablution ceremony was held at the back of the cave and Jackson was made to drink fresh blood from the neck of a goat. While leaving the witch doctor’s kraal, his father seemed to be a new man with new energy and hope. On the way his father asked Johannes what he could do if he was left back in the village under the tutelage of the witch doctor. Johannes strongly expressed his disagreement. From a local boy of thirteen, Johannes came to know that all able-bodied men in the village had to go to the cities to work in the mines, leaving their families behind, because there was no work locally. These men sent money every six months and their wives visited them once a year.

This is an important chapter because the Cultural, Hermeneutic and Narrative codes pervade this chapter in juxtaposition.

Chapter 16: Cultural and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.91-96)

On the day when Johannes and his father returned from the tribal reserve, his mother gave birth to a baby girl who was named Merriam afterwards. The family became poorer with the addition of a new-born baby. The neighbouring women performed a ritual at night for the safety of mother and baby. Six months later, the authorities announced that all the shacks in Alexandra would be demolished. Only the black people with residential permits would be accommodated in a black township under construction outside the city. Those without permits would be deported back to the tribal reserves. Somehow their shack was not demolished because they wanted to do it by stages. His parents after a prolonged search could get a vacant shack on rent on Thirteenth Avenue. Thus they moved from Fifteenth Avenue to Thirteenth one. Here Johannes came to know that white people were the authors of apartheid. He also came to know from his mother that black people were not allowed to own or construct their own houses and only whites were legally allowed to do so and that the laws were made by white people. However, his mother could not answer all his questions. The entire area on Thirteenth Avenue was very dirty and unhygienic in spite of the warnings given to the bald-headed custodian of the yard by the health inspector. Boys
and girls of Johannes’s age used to play there several games like the games of “witch doctor”, digging mounds of dirt for “hidden treasure”. The shacks as well as the open space were stinking with stench. When their shack began giving away during winter, Johannes asked his mother why his father or the landlord wouldn’t fix the house. She said that it was not possible. This was another question for which Johannes found no answer. Consider the following passage that describes their life in the decaying shack:

> Often, during the night, particularly after it had rained and the floor was soggy wet, my brother, sisters and I after being gnawed by vicious red ants and scorpions burrowing through the porous cement floor, would wake up screaming from the floor where we slept. Rats never stopped eating our palms and feet, and we often were unable to walk or handle anything for days because both areas were like open wounds. Bed bugs and lice sucked us dry during the night. And just about every day my mother had to get new cardboard to make pallets because the rats were eating those too. (96)

Yet, the house, the yard, the neighbourhood and Alexandra were the only world that Johannes knew and the only reality.

This chapter holds mirror to the piteous life of the black people, in Alexandra by manifesting the Cultural and Hermeneutic codes. The Hermeneutic code introduces a problem without any solution!

**Chapter 17: Narrative, Semic and Cultural Codes (pp.96-100)**

Thirteenth Avenue was but a haven for refugees. Because many strangers were coming and going, Johannes’s mother warned him not to beg for food. As his father was again arrested, the family started starving again without food. But afflicted with acute hunger, Johannes resorted to begging for food. One day when he was lingering in front of a door tempted by smell of food, his mother caught him, dragged him home, latched the door and tried to beat him. He escaped and explained to her that he was begging because he was not getting enough food at home. Then his mother told him that those who often gave him food in the neighbourhood were witches who were testing their poisonous and voodooed food by giving it to unsuspecting victims like Johannes. Suddenly he felt attacked by a stomach ache as he had eaten some food given by two old women the day before. She warned him against eating such begged...
food. But she permitted him to eat at the homes of his friends, that too, along with them and not alone or separately. He had to bring home any food item given by strangers. One day he brought home a piece of meat pie given by a stranger and his mother left it in a corner. The next morning they found a dead rat which had eaten that food and died. This taught a lesson to Johannes and the remaining children that they should never beg strangers for food.

This chapter, besides narrating a succession of events through the passage of time, also describes the impulsive begging habit of Johannes and his mother’s success in stopping such a habit of his, permanently. Thus the three codes—Narrative, Semic and Cultural—operate in combination in this chapter.

Chapter 18: Cultural, Symbolic, Narrative and Semic Codes (pp.100-103)

This chapter recounts the inner development of the protagonist, Johannes, as a seven-year old boy. His father returned and there was temporary normalcy in the life of his family. But he was aware of the fact that, any moment, this normalcy would be broken. In his own words, at the opening of this chapter:

But my instincts told me that normalcy could be shattered at any moment – by another arrest. At this point of in my life I realised that, willy-nilly, black people had to map out their lives, their future, with the terror of the police in mind. And that terror led to the hunger, the loneliness, the violence, the helplessness, the hopelessness, the apathy and the suffering with which I was surrounded. (100)

Thus, Johannes had learnt that he had to plan and work for his own future but he didn’t know how to do so. He wondered whether there was any other kind of life than their black life in Alexandra. He very much lamented the condition of life in Alexandra where waves of migrant men from the tribal reserves migrated constantly in search of food and employment. All these people also believed in witchcraft and they attributed every untoward happening to witchcraft. Johannes also was slowly becoming superstitious like others by believing in the impact of witchcraft and by fearing that the strange people coming in vehicles might be the Mai-Mai, the notorious cannibals. An unhealing foot wound, the many strange noises heard, often, in the midnight, illness, bad luck and unemployment and the like were thought to be caused by witchcraft. His father would take some precautions like cordonning his
house with chicken blood twice a year as advised by the witch doctor, to ward off evil spirits and the wrath of his ancestral spirits. One superstition may be cited here:

Because my navel was an “innie” and not an “outie” and because I was left-handed and not right-handed, I was destined to become the sage in the family, and someday would do something great. (101)

There were many such other superstitions like migration of souls during sleep in the night, the effect of eating different parts of a sheep or a cow, his sisters had not to eat eggs after a certain age, his father’s belief that their ancestors would write the destiny of the members of his family on a big scroll of shining sheepskin. Before he was five, Johannes also believed in all these tribal superstitions, but finding that no miracle had ever happened in his life for the better, he developed sceptism and started thinking realistically. Thus by the time when he was seven years old he decided: “After all, my life was my own to do with as I pleased. “ (103)

In this chapter, the description of the misery of the residents of Alexandra, the new migrants, the black people’s superstitions constitute an expression of the Cultural code whereas the narrator’s opposition to his father and his tribal superstitions is a manifestation of the Symbolic code because Johannes never confronted his father regarding these matters. This chapter is also an example of the Semic code as it depicts the change of attitude in Johannes with the passage of time.

Chapter 19: Hermeneutic, Cultural and Narrative Codes (pp.103-108)

This chapter narrates the incidents of the arrest of his uncle Piet by the Peri-Urban (i.e., the police) and the efforts made by his grandmother and mother to get him released.

One day his mother woke him, his brother and sisters at midnight, prepared them for a short journey even without breakfast for the fear of the police. They reached his Granny’s place, a shack on Eighth Avenue. It was a neat shack and part of it was rented out for financial reasons. Granny lived with her two children Uncle Piet, thirteen and Aunt Bush, fifteen. Her first son Uncle Cheeks was serving a long sentence in a black penitentiary for having committed burglary in a white man’s house. Here is a portrayal of Granny as a person:

Granny, an indomitable matriarch, had single-handedly raised all her children after her husband had deserted her for another woman.
She had a statuesque figure – tall, little and ebony-coloured-like a Massai woman, complete with tribal garbs and multiple anklets, beads, earrings and bracelets. In that dazzling outfit, she could have easily been a chief’s daughter. Her genial brown eyes had the radiance of pristine pearls. She was, I think, the most beautiful black woman I had ever seen. Though somewhat grey-haired and wrinkled by the time I came to know her well, from the stories I heard of her youth she could have captured the heart of any man she wanted. (105)

She was a hard worker and worked for six days a week in spite of her old age, for white people. She was prepared to work hard until all her children settled well in life by which time they would take care of her. But that particular morning, Granny was greatly disturbed because Uncle Piet was arrested and taken by the Peri-Urban police. In fact he was thirteen years old, but the police mistook him for a grown up boy of sixteen as he was too tall for his age. Though he was in his school uniform and protested, they took him in their truck. Informed of this by a neighbouring woman, Mama Vilakazi, Granny went towards the truck but could not face the police as she didn’t have a pass being a woman abandoned by her husband and not qualified for a pass. Peri-Urban would also arrest her if she faced them. They didn’t have any money on hand to set Piet released by paying bribes to the police. After a week, by pawning Granny’s meagre belongings and thus collecting some money, they somehow got Piet released. The next day Granny went to the school where Piet was a student and obtained a written note from the principal that he was his student.

This chapter is a manifestation of Hermeneutic, Cultural and Narrative codes, respectively for the reasons, it first introduces suspense about the short journey of Johannes, his sister and his brother along with their mother, second, it describes the life style of Granny and third, it accounts for the progress of events in a narrative way.

**Chapter 20: Hermeneutic, Semic, Cultural and Narrative Codes (pp.108-119)**

In this chapter the efforts made by Johannes’s mother to get papers from the Superintendent’s office on First Avenue, papers like his certificate of birth etc. Johannes did not know why his mother was marching him to the office of the Superintendent.
Leaving the younger children at Granny’s place, Johannes and his mother reached the office. There was already a long queue of black men and women at the office. They waited for a long time. Being early morning, it was very cold. Johannes went to a place nearby where some men were warming themselves squatting around a fire. Johannes whose face became cold and feet got frozen went there to get some heat to his body with his mother’s permission. But those men did not allow him to join, calling him ‘vagabond’. He returned to his mother who took him there and requested the men to allow her son to squat near the fire. They allowed him. While sitting there for a short while in the company of those black unemployed men, Johannes realized that these men as thousands of their likes were, failed to get any work for want of passes. They were very poor and helpless. They were also very envious of the black men who were being taken in a convoy of trucks to work in the mines and therefore called the prospective miners “Vermin”, while Johannes found a similarity of attitude of hatred between these men and his own father. After seven hours of waiting, they were told to get this paper and that paper from different offices and finally ushered into the boss’s room by a black policeman. Again they had to stand and wait. They could not sit down because it was an offence. They waited for an hour but they were not called in because the boss had left for his lunch. They were told to go there again after one month. Accordingly, they paid a second visit to the Superintendent’s office one month later, on a Friday, only when the papers were issued. On the way they noticed the black miners returning in the trucks and singing because Friday was their pay day. Johannes asked his mother about his father not being happy on Friday when he too would receive his wages. She said that he had many worries. Johannes wondered whether his mother had no worries like his father. In the late afternoon that day, mother and son were called into the boss’s office room. Seeing the boss who was a white man, the same white man who had conducted a police raid earlier in Alexandra, Johannes was frightened and started crying such that his mother had to drag him far to the back of the office and they had to go back to the office after some time. This time, the boss refused to give a birth certificate because in their files there was no indication that he was born in Alexandra. Johannes’s mother’s entreaties fell on deaf ears. She was told to bring papers of proof that he was born in Alexandra, from the government hospital. The following Monday they went to the Alexandra Health Center and University Clinic for obtaining documental proof that Johannes was born in Alexandra. Even when they reached the clinic at five o’clock in the
morning, it appeared that they were late because there was already a long line of people waiting at different counters. The clinic looked a horrible place to young Johannes, filled with all kinds of sick, wounded and maimed patients. First they waited in a wrong line and afterwards, when they went to the right office, the blackman at the window told her that he could not give a birth certificate without the necessary papers from the Superintendent’s office. She tried to persuade him but there was no use. Then they sat on the porch, till lunch time when the office was closed.

The narrator describes the situation of the clinic as follows:

A handful of young student doctors from a white university ran around all day trying to treat the endless number of black patients. Their task seemed so impossible that, figuratively speaking, they were like people attempting to put out a huge fire with their saliva. (118)

While sitting outside the office door, his mother started humming a Tsonga song sorrowfully, a white woman wearing a white dress and black wimple came by to take something from the office. His mother accosted her as ‘sister’ and sought her help. The white woman was moved by listening to their story, went inside and chided the black man who had earlier driven them away. The same black clerk, after a few minutes gave them the birth certificate. Johannes’s mother became the happiest woman and told her son that all the whites were not bad and there were some good people among them like the white “sister”. She sang in praise of this ‘sister’. The narrator concludes this chapter thus:

I simply grumbled, little realizing that my entire future had actually depended on that one piece of paper she had fought so long and so doggedly to secure. I had, though I hardly knew it then, cleared the first and most difficult, hurdle toward eventually enrolling at school. Without a birth certificate I would have never been allowed to enroll at any of the tribal schools in Alexandra. (119)

This chapter is an exquisite example of how different semiotic codes, viz., Hermeneutic, Semic, Cultural and Narrative codes are juxtaposed in order to produce the intended effect of realism.
This chapter narrates the events that led to Johannes Mathabane’s admission to school. The chapter has, for its sub-heading, a sentence quoted from his mother’s short speech on the value of education. At seven-and-a half years of age, Johannes had developed great hatred against education and against going to school. He was influenced deeply by the wayward life of the black youth in the neighbourhood who wandered aimlessly and led a life of crime and violence. They had formed into gangs and their age ranged from ten to twelve years. Johannes developed a fascinated reverence that “their every word seemed that of an oracle” (123).

He describes their life as follows:

These boys had long left their homes and were now living in various neighbourhood junkyards, making it on their own. They slept in abandoned cars, smoked glue and benzene, ate pilchards and brown bread, sneaked into the white world to caddy, and if unsuccessful, came back to the township to steal beer and soda bottles from shebeens, or goods from the Indian traders on First Avenue. Their lifestyle was exciting, adventurous and full of surprise; and I was attracted to it. My mother told me that they were no-gooders, and that they would amount to nothing, that I should not associate with them, but I paid no heed. What does she know? I used to tell myself. One thing that she did not know was that the gang’s way of life had captivated me wholly, particularly their philosophy on school: They hated it and considered an education a waste of time.

They, like myself, had grown up in an environment where the first thing a child learned was not how to read and write and spell, but how to fight and steal and rebel; where the money to send children to school was grossly lacking, for survival was first priority. I kept my membership in the gang, knowing that for as long as I was under its influence, I would never go to school. (123)

This passage serves the function of the Semic code which vividly signifies the miserable life of adolescent children in the slum of Alexandra which is but a typical
representative of all the slums that existed on the periphery of the city of Johannesburg.

One early morning Mujaji (Johannes’s mother’s maiden name) woke him up, ordered him to have a bath, helped him clean his body with a scrap brush and a piece of lifebuoy soap purging the grime of many years. Granny, her mother, and Aunt Bushy arrived. When they knocked the door, his mother was scared that the police had come. So when she came to know that they were only Granny and Aunt Bush, she sighed with a great relief. All the three women managed to dress protesting Johannes with the long old shirt of his father and a pair of over-size pants. His mother folded the long shirt tucked in his pants which she also folded several times to make it fit. They tied him up with a rope and forced him to move with them to the tribal school on Sixteenth Avenue. On the road, there were other children who were protesting against going to school. On the way a strange woman carrying coal scuttle on her head stopped them and narrated the sad fate of her eldest son whom she could not send to school and who having been given to the bad way of life of the gang, ended up his life in a premature death. They reached the tribal school and the black principal gave him admission after taking his birth certificate and asking some questions about their language. Johannes’s mother’s language was Shangaan and his father’s language was Venda, while the languages spoken outside were Zulu and Sisotho. All these were tribal languages. Though the tribal school was meant for Shangaan speaking children, the principal making an exception, gave admission to Johannes by registering his name. The principal’s explanation on the importance of “the piece of paper” (i.e., the birth certificate of a child) for school admission is noteworthy in this context:

“The piece of paper you’re referring to Mrs. Mabaso (Granny’s maiden name)” the principal said to Granny, “is as important to our children as a pass is to us adults. We all hate passes; therefore, it is only natural we should hate the regulations our children are subjected to. But as we have to live with passes, so our children have to live with regulations, Mrs. Mabaso. I hope you understand, that is the law of the country. We would have admitted your grandson a long time ago, as you well know, had it not been for the papers. I hope you understand.” (128)
He advised them to bring the boy again to school after two weeks. On the way back home, Johannes thought of many ways of escaping school. That evening his mother and father quarreled about the issue of his admission in school. His father hated it while his mother was for it. His father drove away his mother and the other children out and locked the door. The neighbours took them to Granny’s place. Johannes reached home and peeping through the window hurled insults at his father who refused to open the door and ran to Granny’s place. His mother told him that his father had not liked Johannes going to school because he thought it was a waste of money and time. He had scant respect for the white man’s education. His mother assured his father that she would work and meet the school expenses. He had beaten her severely; Granny said that Jackson had the right to beat her for the bride price he paid at the time of marriage. That money could not be paid back because Granny’s husband when they were living together had spent it. This was the tribal culture. Until and unless the lobola (or bride price) was paid back Jackson had full control over his wife. Johannes’s mother vehemently opposed this kind of tribal culture though the other tribal women in the neighbourhood blamed her for this. She further explained to her son that his father had no education and therefore failed to understand its importance. Although she herself wanted education, it was denied to her because of the tribal culture. Her words in this context are noteworthy:

“Though our lot isn’t any better today, an education will get you a decent job. If you can read or write you’ll be better off than those of us who can’t. Take my situation: I can’t find a job because I don’t have papers, and I can’t get papers because white people mainly want to register people who can read and write. But I want things to be different for you, child. For you and your brother and sisters. I want you to go to school, because I believe that an education is the key you need to open up a new world and a new life for yourself, a world and life different from that of either your father’s or mine. It is the only key that can do that, and only those who seek it earnestly and perseveringly will get anywhere in the white man’s world. Education will open doors where none seem to exist. It’ll make people talk to you, listen to you and help you; people who otherwise wouldn’t bother. It will make you soar, like a bird lifting up into the endless blue sky, and leave poverty,
hunger and suffering behind. It’ll teach you to learn to embrace what’s
good and shun what’s bad and evil. Above all it’ll make you a
somebody in this world. It’ll make you grow up to be a good and proud
person. That’s why I want you to go to school, child, so that education
can do all that, and more, for you. (133-134).

With these enlightening words from his mother, Johannes decided that he would go to
school “forever”.

It may be noted that Johannes was very fortunate to have such a woman as his
mother. Her words were eye-openers not only to her son, but they are also a beacon
light for millions of illiterate mothers and their children world over. Thus this chapter
is a very crucial part in the narrative as it depicts a permanently positive change of
attitude in the central character, Johannes, under the collective influence of Narrative,
Semic and Cultural codes. In this sense, this chapter is a fitting beginning of Part II of
the novel called, “Passport to Knowledge”.

Chapter 22: Narrative, Semic and Cultural Codes (pp.135-139)

This chapter describes the experience of Johannes on his first day at school.

Johannes went to school at 6.00 A.M. accompanied by his mother and Granny,
they left him after advising him not to be afraid and to learn as much as he could. He
carried a slate tied to his neck, a pencil, and two thin slices of brown bread. The
morning assembly was held and the principal of Bovet Community School amidst the
din of crying and talking, gave a lengthy piece of advice and disciplinary instructions
to the children. Some children fainted due to the excessive stuffiness and suffocation.
Some other teachers also repeated the principal’s advice, and a hymn was sung and
prayer was said. All the new comers were taken into a big church hall. There were
nearly two hundred children. Johannes tried to occupy a place on a front bench for
which he had to fight and throw away other children physically. A young black
teacher of sixteen years tried to control them and to make them repeat the vowels
AEIOU, how to count the numbers from one to twenty in Tsonga and how to sit and
stand when ordered. At two-thirty, there was recess and all left the big room. On
return from school in the afternoon, Johannes’s mother told him that he had to keep
on going to school.
In this chapter, the Narrative code projects the sequence of events while the Semic code reveals the poor condition of the tribal Bovet Community School as well as of the position of the principal and the remaining staff of teachers. The poor physical accommodation is also described. The Cultural code manifests itself in exposing the method of teaching and how the children were badly treated.

Chapter 23: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.139-150)

This is rather a lengthy chapter in which Johannes’s progress and troubles at school are narrated. The boy developed a fear for school because he was almost regularly punished for his lack of uniform, having long nails, uncombed hair, lack of primers, failing dictation, failure to pay school fees on time. His name was included in the ‘noisemaker’s list’ of the class made by the perfect (i.e., the monitor) of the class. Every day he was late to school because he had to take his younger brother and sisters to Granny’s place as his mother left home early in her hunt for a job. Added to this there was mountains of homework. But four things made him stay in school, First, the sixteen-year-old class teacher was dismissed and in her place, an older, able and kind teacher came. Second, he began making friends with some rich boys in his class. Third, a nutrition programme called Hebelungu was started near the school where they gave low cost lunch to children, peanut-buttered brown bread and a mug of skimmed milk only for four cents. His mother tried her best to give him this money every day but when she could not do so, he would cling to his ‘affluent’ friends like a parasite; which the latter didn’t mind. Fourth, he was attracted to the new world opened up for him through education. Slowly he could speak some English and could understand some stock phrases in the English movies.

In December the school came to an end and Johannes completed his first year and on the closing day function, it was announced in the result that Johannes stood first in his class, i.e., Sub-standard A. He was given applause and also a white sealed envelope along with the toppers in other classes. The beginning of school Christmas vacation was marked by collective singing of Lord’s Prayer and good wishes by the principal and staff. Jackson, father of Johannes’s was so impressed by his son’s performance at school that he gave him sixty cents which made him and his mother very happy. Flora, his younger sister, now six year old also began school. Johannes came to Standard One, but the school life turned out to a torture for him as he failed to pay the school fee on time. Further, he had no books. He told his teachers that he
would pay the fee by the end of the month. Unable to bear the punishment, he told his mother that he would discontinue school. But his mother insisted that he stayed at school. Luckily she got a job of a house-maid at the Indian place on First Avenue. She told her children that she would sacrifice even her life for her children. Jackson stopped giving money for groceries as his wife started working now. One day, Johannes’s mother bought a box of ‘school books’ at a very cheap rate but those books were in different languages like Chinese, Arabic, Hindi, German and Afrikaans and therefore were not useful to Johannes or his sister because at the school they used books written in the Tsonga language. His mother got this confirmed with help of a neighbour, named Mr. Brown who had high-school education and who worked as a bus driver. However, Mr. Brown took all those books and promised he would buy a few primers for her children in turn.

This chapter is an example of how the four codes, namely Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic codes function. If the Narrative code projects the progression of events, the Cultural and Semic codes portray the school conditions and the Hermeneutic code unfolds a new angle in the character of Jackson, the narrator’s father, when he gives sixty cents to his son to buy school things.

**Chapter 24: Narrative, Cultural, Hermeneutic and Semic Codes (pp.150-155)**

In this chapter certain new dilemmas confronted by Johannes are narrated. Though his mother was working hard to support his education, Johannes was becoming more and more sceptic about the value of education. His scepticism became further strong with his father’s comments against the white man’s education which he compared to Christianity both of which ruined their native tribal culture and tribal education. His father also said that some black degree-holders were working under him. Consider the following excerpt that reveals Johannes’s scepticism:

But it came as no surprise, when hardly three years after I had begun school, the novelty of learning began to fade. Despite my continued success at school, I failed to find real meaning in what I was being taught; more important, I failed to find, among the black people I lived with, and with those accomplishments in life I was familiar, those particular individuals whom I could indentify as having benefited from an education, and whose accomplishments in life could act as
landmarks to orient me and help me set goals in life. Where were the lighthouses to guide my newly built ship of knowledge just setting sail on a perilous journey upon a vast, turbulent and unknown ocean of life? (151)

This part of the chapter combines Narrative, Cultural and Hermeneutic codes, the important archetypes being white man’s education, and Christianity, tribal culture and tribal education and Johannes’s dilemma and scepticism.

When Johannes was placed in this type of dilemma, one day he noticed that a group of black men waving copies of newspapers, moved as if in a procession, shouting “Ali! Ali” on the street. Johannes did not know anything about this. On enquiry he came to know that a black boxer in America, Muhammad Ali (alias Cassius Clay) defeated a white boxer, named Max Schmeling. They were jubilant about the great victory of a black man over a white man. Johannes also rejoiced over this news and developed a secret desire that he too should become a great fighter like Ali. With this dream he went the local boxing club along with a group of boys. There by accident he was forced to fight a large hairless boy who completely crushed Johannes in boxing. This humiliating defeat, in spite of the Jim owner’s encouragement, made Johannes never to go that club again.

As pointed out already, this chapter is a manifestation of how Narrative, Cultural, Hermeneutic and Semic codes combine to create the effect of realism. Particularly the boxing fight between Johannes and the big hairless boy is an excellent example of Semic code.

**Chapter 25: Cultural and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.156-158)**

This chapter describes how the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. influenced Johannes. One morning in 1968, while going to school, he found the black people in the neighbourhood with grief and rage in their eyes. Even at school teachers whispered to one another in uneasy and subdued tones. Johannes did not know who King was and why the black people were mourning his death. Several placards displayed this news item in red letters. After going home he asked his mother about King thinking that he was a king or chief. His mother, who also did not know much about this black American, told him that “he was a God-fearing man who died fighting to set his people free. To get them equal rights”(157). She also informed him
of the fight of black people in Sharperville (South Africa) for their rights. Sixty nine of these black fighters were shot dead by the police. This happened in the year when Johannes was born. This information made Johannes to decide that he too would fight for his rights. His mother was awe-struck.

This chapter again shows Johannes’s gradual transformation as a growing adolescent. He first heard the name of America and the fight of black people for their rights in America as well as in his own country, South Africa. Thus Cultural and Hermeneutic codes are combined in this chapter.

**Chapter 26: Narrative, Cultural and Semic Codes (pp.159-161)**

This chapter describes the change in Johannes who decides to quit school permanently and again his forceful attendance at school because of his mother’s surveillance. Having been vexed with repeated punishment at school for not having some books, Johannes made up his mind to discontinue school and also he was aware of the rule of the school that a pupil would not be expelled until he was absent from school for a month without any reason. So he would start at home as if he were going to school, but abscond and spend time till evening with a group of truant boys from other tribal schools. They used to go to King’s Bioscope and after seeing films, they would imitate the fighting scenes of the films about the Wild West and gladiators. The ghetto warehouses were the grounds where they practiced these mock fights. In the evening Johannes would go home late. He would tell his mother, he was late because of choir rehearsals. This continued for three weeks. In the beginning of the fourth week, his mother followed him secretly. She also enquired at school whether he was attending school. Coming to know what was happening, she reported it to the principal who sent a group of boys headed by a big boy, Mandleve, a well-known truant-hunter to fetch him to school, using force if necessary. Those boys came to the junkyard and bound his hands and feet with a thick rope and dragged him to school. His mother was also there in the principal’s office. He was beaten thoroughly by the teachers one after another. The following paragraph the last one in this chapter good example of Semic Code:

“Whip him good”, she impassively gave the order – which was not necessary – and there and then I knew it was the end. She left the office and stood outside. The teachers descended upon me like starved vultures out of the sky. The commenced the savage beating, taking turns whenever one teacher’s hand got tired. I fainted. They revived
me, only to whip me some more. I spent an entire week bedridden, unable to sit up or sleep. For the rest of my primary school years I seldom, if ever, cut school for any reason. Even when I was gravely ill, I would crawl to school, and the teachers would send me back home. (161)

**Chapter 27: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.162-166)**

This chapter narrates the ghastly incident of the murder of a black man by a group of *tsotsis* (notorious gangsters).

Johannes’s tenth birthday passed without any celebration as in the case of his previous birthdays. Though he was ten, the suffering he had passed through life made him much older. There was no change in the life of Alexandra. The suffering of the black residents in this ghetto worsened due to constant police raids, dying of children of malnutrition. The dirt of the place increased, families were deported to tribal reserves, hostels were built in the place of demolished shacks, waves of immigrants increased, people’s belief in witchcraft got enhanced, drinking and gambling were waxing. His parents continued quarrelling while his father would often beat up Johannes’s mother. In the words of the narrator:

In short, the suffering of the black people continued on the increase, and I continued getting the feeling that we, blacks of Alexandra, were like animals, quarantined inside a cage – by the white man – fomenting ignorance and death – and that there was nothing we could do about it but await, each, our violent end. (162)

One late Friday evening while returning home after playing soccer at the stadium on Twelfth Avenue, he saw people returning home from work places hurrying home or to drink at shebeens and when he took a turn to Thirteenth Avenue he notice six *tsotsis* chasing two men. Remembering his mother’s advice on what he should do on seeing *tsotsis*, he fled into a nearby yard and ran into the patch of tall dried grass in front of the gate, to hide for safety. The six gangsters were carrying deadly sharp knives, meat cleavers and tomahawks. The two black men were carrying heavy paper bags. One of them ran towards the tall grass, and the gangsters chased him while the other man escaped. The gangsters very cruelly wounded him not caring for his begging not to kill him and that he had ten children. With the fatal wounds, he
ran to the street, but the gangsters killed him ruthlessly and stole whatever he had including his clothes and money. Johannes clearly saw the suffering of the victim and the diabolic cruelty and enjoyment of the gangsters under the full moon light. Johannes was almost fainting with panic and somehow he ran home in a great frenzy and fainted. His mother tried to restore him to his senses, but he was completely unable to say anything intelligibly. He had high fever. With great difficulty, he was able to tell his mother about the grisly murder. His mother was worried and asked him why he was wasting his time in playing soccer without reading his school books or writing anything. He told her neither he, nor his friends in the neighbourhood had any books at all. He started suffering from nightmares and lost all interest and hope in life. He asked himself:

Why in the place of love and compassion, were there implacable hate and anger and jealousy? I could not see myself living the rest of my life under such conditions – to me life meant love, understanding, compassion. Yet, I asked myself, “What other world was there to run to?”(166)

There were no answers to his questions. He felt utterly alone.

This chapter describes an event that had an everlasting impression on Johannes when he was ten years old. The entire scenic description of the ghastly murder is covered by the Semic code while the murder and the ensuing suffering are manifest in the Cultural code. The protagonists question’s and doubts reveal the Hermeneutic code that creates suspense as to his future.

Chapter 28: Semic, Cultural and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.167-170)

In this chapter, Johannes’s suicide attempt is described.

The ghastly murder, that Johannes witnessed closely when he was about ten years old; left an indelible impression of suffering and helplessness on his young mind. A few months after this incident, he developed a feeling of loneliness and misery that he found no meaning in life and its continuation. All the encouragement and moral and physical support given to him by his mother lost their impact. He was tired of hunger, of being beaten all the time and felt that the whole world was against him. All his fighting spirit and optimism abandoned him. To quote the protagonist:
I felt unloved, unwanted, abandoned and betrayed by a world that seemingly denied any opportunity to find my niche. A world that seemed to hold out nothing to me but hunger, pain violence and death. I didn’t feel that the world or anybody owed me anything, but I felt that the world and everybody had to at least give me an opportunity to prove my worth, to make something of myself, whatever that something might be. (167)

In this state of mind, he took a switchblade knife and stood twirling it between his trembling hands oblivious of the world outside. As to the way of dying, his familiarity with English movies influenced him to decide to die like a vanquished gladiator, “to die with honour”. As he stood absorbed in his thoughts on the stoop, his mother noticed him, came to him and enquired what he was doing with a knife… He said in utter confusion:

“Mama, what would happen if I were to die? Would anybody miss me? Would anybody care? Will it matter to anyone?” (168)

His mother seemed shocked, but after a while she regained her cool and pointed at his two younger sisters, Merriam and Dinah playing in the mud nearby, and said that his small sisters will miss him very much as he was their big brother who would help, protect them and help them to go to school when they grew up. She, herself, would also miss him and she would also die if he died. When Johannes started weeping, his mother stopped him saying that he was now a big boy and should not cry. She took the knife from him and made him promise that he would never attempt suicide anytime in future. Johannes learnt a lesson of life as follows:

For years afterward, I was to think of this suicide attempt in the following terms: whenever the troubles of the world seem too much, it helps to have someone loving and understanding to share those troubles with; and life takes its true meaning in proportion to one’s battles against suffering. (169-170)

In this chapter the Semic code depicts the psychological deterioration and pessimism of the protagonist. The chapter also manifests the role of the Cultural code at a personal level how love and concern of a dear person (here Johannes’s mother) can save a desperate person from suicidal feelings. The Hermeneutic code, in this chapter, introduces the dilemmas of the protagonist and resolves them finally.
Chapter 29: Semic, Cultural and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.170-181)

This chapter narrates the circumstances that led Jackson’s family to launch a new (business) activity, called ‘stockvel’ which was an indirect way of selling beer.

The first incident described in this chapter is related to Johannes’s good luck to get access to English comic books, English school books and toys, brought by his Granny from an English family (of Smiths) where she worked as a gardener and his humiliating experience at school and the subsequent regaining of his self-confidence and self-respect. The second incident is related to his father’s entry into beer-selling business under the guise of stockvel. Thus, the Semic, Cultural and Hermeneutic codes operate in this chapter.

Johannes’s Granny suddenly lost her job but luckily when she was struggling to meet her family expenses and the school fee etc., for her children Uncle Piet and Aunt Bush, she found another gardening job in Rosebank, a posh locality of whites, with the help of a friend. Returning home after gardening work at Smiths she used to bring stacks of comic books for Johannes which he started reading them tirelessly over and over again. These comic books included such as Batman and Robin, Richie Rich, Dennis the Menace, Tarzan of the Apes, Superman, Sherlock Holmes Mysteries, Spiderman and others. The neighbouring children became his friends and even he charged a rent of a penny to lend them each book. One year passed in this way. One day Granny told him that the Smiths are very kind-hearted whites and Mrs. Smith gave these books for Granny’s grandson, Johannes, who was a smart school student. Johannes was surprised because in his world there were no good whites, all whites were selfish, cruel and inhuman. But Granny told him that the Smiths were different as they were nice white people though there were not many like them. Gradually she also brought other strange books like Pinocchio, Aesop’s Fables and Grimm brothers’ fairy tales for Johannes. She also brought a box of toys which Johannes learnt to play with his brother George and sisters. This was totally a new experience that transported him into a world of new reality. He started telling his brother, sisters and other children the stories from these books; like his mother who used to tell them African folk tales. His skill at telling stories became popular in school also such that one day his class teacher told him to recite a story before the class. He narrated the story of Hansel and Goetel. The teacher inquired where he had learnt these stories. Then Johannes said that he learnt them from the books brought by his grandmother from the house of nice white people. The teacher and the entire class laughed at this because in
their view all white people were evilsome and wicked. He had to tell them that it was true and his grandma worked as a gardener, while announcing this he felt ashamed and started crying. Three students laughed. Then the teacher became angry and gave them punishment. He said that his own grandmother also had worked as a gardener in white people’s gardens and educated him. The teacher congratulated Johannes. This made Johannes regain his self-confidence and self-respect and since then he had never felt ashamed to tell others that his grandmother was a gardener in a white people’s house.

In the slum of Alexandra there were about a dozen shebeens i.e., drinking parlours. In spite of the threat of sudden raids by the Peri-urban Police because shebeens were illegal, these drinking places thrived as the only pleasure places for the black workers. These shebeens were centers of bootlegging and sold brandy, whisky and cartoons (a fermented sorghum beer). One Friday evening Johannes’s father, at dinner, proposed to his mother that they would start a little beer business as both of them had been working and could invest some money in business. Joining a stockvel was not illegal for which they needed a license. In the narrator’s words:

Stockvel was in vogue throughout the township carried out under the guise of a party, it worked in the following way: a group of households would get together and form a sort of club; under the terms of the club, each weekend a different member would host a party, which all other members are obligated by prior agreement to “support”. (174)

In this way, a fee called “stockvel money” was paid to the host who, in turn, provided the members with free liquor, dishes of chicken, rice and vegetables.

Stockvels had such a spirit of community to them, that they were always well attended. It was not uncommon for a stockvel host to double, even triple his investment. (175)

Those who ran stockvels became rich and bought items like bathtubs, wardrobes, new furniture, food, gramophones and even cars. Johannes’s mother did not agree to her husband’s proposal and insisted that her income was exclusively for their children’s education. There was a prolonged debate between wife and husband on this issue. Jackson promised that he would stop gambling, drinking at shebeens and bring her / his full paycheck every Friday night. Still she didn’t agree. Her husband became angry and said that he was bewitched so much by her that he was
Johannes’s mother’s reply in this context is worth-quoting:

Laughing, my mother said, “There is no witchcraft or madness about it. I don’t think I’m being less of a wife by insisting on the best for our children. What future will they have without an education, tell me? Just look around you and you’ll see what kind of jobs those who never went to school have. Garbage collectors, miners, maids, night soil collectors. Do you want our children to do the same? I don’t. And when these children are through with school, and working and bringing in good money, and we’re no longer living in this leaking shack, eating crumbs and leftovers, would you still be saying, ‘I don’t believe in schools?’ Not if I know you well. And after thirteen years of being your slave, I know you, Jackson. You’ll be boasting to the whole world that had it not been for you, the children wouldn’t have become what they are.” (178)

This was true because his father often boasted about his being father of Johannes when people praised his son’s good performance at school. Then Jackson pledged that part of the liquor profits from running a stockvel would be used for the children’s schooling. Saying this he pulled out a small envelope containing his wages for the week. Johannes counted the money – all of it was there to the tune of ten rands and forty cents. Johannes also requested his mother to agree to his father’s proposal. Finally, she agreed to start stockvel business. With their entry into beer-selling (i.e., stockvel) business, the family flourished. With his skills at arithmetic, Johannes maintained the accounts in a notebook. Their customers trusted him fully as he never overcharged or cheated them. He also helped illiterate migrant workers who frequented the stockvel, by reading and writing letters to their families who were in tribal reserves. Sometimes he also felt sorry for the fate of their families. The workers, in turn, paid him some money which he used to buy his school things. The condition of these workers’ families in the tribal reserves was very much piteous. One day, while reading a letter from home for a migrant worker named Phineas, Johannes started crying. Phineas also was sorrowful, but he was hopeful of a better future. The narrator’s words in this context deserve mention:
Phineas was one of the thousands of black migrant workers in Alexandra forced to live hundreds of miles from their families because of Influx Control laws, which discouraged black family life in what the government called “White South Africa”. In the township, no other group lived as unnaturally as the migrant workers. Housed mostly in sterile single-sex barracks, they were prey to prostitution, *Matanyula*, alcoholism, robbery and senseless violence; they existed under such stress and absorbed so much emotional pain that tears, grief, fear, hope and sadness had become alien to most of them. They were the walking dead. (181)

These workers suffered a death far worse than physical death which was the death of the mind and soul, caused by night and day toil living miles away from their loved ones.

As mentioned above, the Semic code takes care of the living physical conditions of Johannes’s family while the Cultural code reveals human relationships, particularly that between a black wife and her husband, and the Hermeneutic code resolves the puzzle of starting the beer-business in the guise of ‘stockvel’ by Johannes’s family.

**Chapter 30: Semic, Cultural and Symbolic Codes (pp.182-193)**

This chapter narrates Johannes’s visit to the place of Smith’s along with his grandmother. Johannes’s Granny shifted her residence from Fifteenth Avenue to a smaller shack on Eighth Avenue, for economical reasons. He often spent evenings with her and being proud of his school work she also helped him buy some school books whenever his mother could not help him. He used to read the school books of Uncle Piet and Aunt Bush which were of a higher standard. As school education was becoming more expensive, Granny thought that Aunt Bushy would have to discontinue school and only Uncle Piet would continue his education. One day Granny returned home very excited. She told Mujaji (i.e., Johannes’s mother) that Mr. Smith had agreed to her request to take Johannes to their place, on Mrs. Smith’s recommendation. So, the following Tuesday she wanted to take him to Smith’s. He was not ready because he had school on Tuesday. He lied that he had exams on that day. But the real reason was that he was afraid of meeting any white people. Somehow on continued persuasion by Granny and his mother, Johannes finally agreed
to go along with Granny to Smiths’ place. His mother also informed him that the only son of Smith’s was about his age and he may get lots of magabulela (hand-me-downs) from that white boy. So she said that now he had a good opportunity which he should not miss. On Monday evening his mother met the principal of Johannes’s school and obtained permission for his absence from school on Tuesday. She had given him a thorough bath and cleaned him. On Tuesday Granny and Johannes took the seven o’clock bus for blacks to Johannesburg which was jam-packed. On the way he noticed several skyscrapers and was excited to know that in some of the big and nice houses only one family lived in each. There were many cars in the compounds of these houses which had large lawns and gardens. They were the houses of the whites in the city. The bus suddenly stopped to facilitate school children’s crossing the road safely. Johannes watched the white school children and was greatly astonished at their clean and shining school uniforms, stockings and shoes. They were also carrying their school bags on their backs and all of them had wrist-watches. All the black families at Alexandra did not have even a clock. The school of the white children was a red-brick building with nice lawns, playgrounds, tennis courts etc. He was immensely surprised to note the contrast between this school and his own Bantu School at Alexandra. He felt as if he were in a dream world. After some time, Granny and Johannes got off the bus and reached the place of the Smiths in a side street. They went to the back of the yard and rang the door bell. Mrs. Smith opened the door and stopped, their barking dog, Buster. Mrs. Smith was “a short, slender white woman with silver hair and slightly drooping shoulders” (187-188). She expressed happiness on seeing Johannes. Her warm and kind reception reminded Johannes’s of the Catholic sisters at the clinic. She called him “a smart pickaninny”. Granny informed her that he was one year junior to their son, Master Clyde. Mrs. Smith expressed her regret over Clyde’s becoming spoiled being their only child. She wondered at the large size of Johannes’s family, one brother and three sisters. Using his pidgin English, Johannes told her his name, surname, his grade in school and about his principal and teachers. She appreciated his cleverness. She was preparing to go for tennis and before leaving, she told what garden work Granny had to attend to. After a good breakfast, Johannes and Granny went to the garden with tools. He helped her in her work. The neighbouring white children watched them curiously as if they saw a black boy for the first time in their lives. Even at midday Granny worked hard. Johannes assured her that one day he will build a beautiful house with a large garden like the Smith’s house. Mrs. Smith
returned in the afternoon. Johannes helped her by carrying her several shopping bags. Carrying her tennis rackets, she remarked that tennis is a tiresome game and on being questioned by Johannes, she told him that tennis was a gentleman’s sport unlike soccer which he played and advised him to try tennis instead of soccer because soccer was a dangerous and rough sport. He said that there were four unused tennis courts near the stadium where he played soccer at Alexandra. She promised him to give him an old racket. Then came their son Clyde who reached home by a school bus. Mrs. Smith introduced Johannes to Clyde but the latter was unfriendly and called him a Kaffir. His mother checked him and told him to learn good manners and to ignore what was taught to him at school by Boers from Pretoria. Then Granny said:

“All children, black and white, are God’s children, Madam. The preacher at my church tells us the Bible says so. ‘Suffer little children come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven’, the Bible says. Is that not so, madam? Do you believe in the words of the Bible, madam?’” (190)

Mrs. Smith readily agreed and told Clyde to take Johannes and show around. They went to Clyde’s room where he had a large number of toys, bicycles, go-carts, pinball machines and many other things. His playroom was as big as their house at Alexandra. There were several photographs of Clyde himself and posters and pictures of white soccer and cricket teams. Clyde asked him whether he could read and gave a book (a Shakespearean work) and told him to read, but Johannes could not. Then Clyde started talking derisively about black people and their low level of intelligence. At this juncture, Mrs. Smith entered and again checked her son. She told Clyde to show easy books to Johannes. He showed such books as The Three Musketeers, Treasure Island, David Copperfield and several others. While leaving, Mrs. Smith expressed her concern over her son’s bad behaviour and gave Johannes a box containing a couple of shirts, pants and jerseys and also a copy of Treasure Island underneath the clothes.

This chapter marks a very important turning point in the protagonist’s life. Its Semic code accounts for his Granny’s shift of residence, her attempt to take Johannes to the place of the Smiths, his mother’s persuasion etc. followed by the description of the houses of white people in Johannesburg. The Cultural code takes care of the kind of luxurious life that the whites enjoy in the city in contrast to the wretched life of the
blacks at the slum, Alexandra, while the Symbolic code exposes how the white children like Master Clyde were indoctrinated against the blacks.

Chapter 31: Cultural and Symbolic Codes (pp.193-197)

In this chapter, Johannes’s attempts at improving his English are described followed by the circumstances that prompted him to keep himself away from the gangs of Alexandra known as Tomahawks.

Johannes decided to improve his efficiency in the English language having been inspired by such books as *Treasure Island*, which Granny brought from the Smiths. He did not like the kind of Bantu Education introduced in South African schools by Prime Minister, Dr. Verwoprd, which did not encourage Western or English education. To improve his vocabulary in English, he constantly borrowed Mr. Brown’s pocket size dictionary and also tried to improve his pronunciation which was appalling. Gradually, he realized the richness of the English language and began imitating white peoples’ talk. The more he failed the stronger did his determination grow. Of late, a relative from his father’s side, uncle Pietrus moved into their locality. A bachelor with some education, he would read the *World* and the black edition of *the Star* every day. In the evening Johannes would go to his shack to borrow the two papers. They would discuss a number of news items in these two papers and on Mondays and Fridays; they would fill cross-word puzzles for winning cash prizes, though they never succeeded in this respect. At school there was little opportunity for him to use English except in the English period, as the medium of instruction was Tsonga. He occupied himself busily with reading and improving his English. Johannes completely severed his association with the Thirteenth Avenue Tomahawks. A sixteen -year-old delinquent, notorious for stabbing a rival to death, approached Johannes and questioned him why he was not participating in their wars against rival gangs. Johannes told him that he was busy with studies and would join the next fight on Saturday. Their weapons included tomohawks, machets, bottles, rocks, daggers, slingshots and crowbars. In the war on the ensuring Saturday between the Tomohawks and the Mongols, a thirteen-year-old boy was seriously wounded in his right eye. Blood spurted out from his eye and no help whatever was coming forth. This incident made the narrator-protagonist to decide never to participate in gang wars for life. His mother and father also warned him and supported decision. His father even went to the extent of shifting him to a village school back in the home lands.
In this chapter the Cultural and Symbolic codes operate. The Cultural code depicts the uncivilized and violent ways of life of the young boys in the shanty town while the protagonist stands out in contrast with his ambition and efforts to improve his English. This contrast naturally leads to the Symbolic code indicating the rivalry between the local gangsters and Johannes as well as a difference of opinion between his parents about the future of his education.

Chapter 32: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic Code (pp.197-204)

In this chapter, the success of Johannes at school, his humiliating experience in Pretoria, his Granny’s warning, and his experience at the Johannesburg Zoo which was triumphant, is narrated.

Johannes with his hard-work was promoted to Standard Four with the highest marks in the class. His teachers forecast bright future for him as a teacher or doctor. Nonetheless, the tribal indoctrination, the main focus of the curriculum bored him while he enjoyed the Tsonga translations of Greek and Roman mythologies because they resembled African folklore and appealed to his imagination.

On Saturday his Granny took him to her gardening work in Pretoria, the capital of Apartheid. In the afternoon they returned to the bus stop and waited for the bus to Alexandra. Telling him to wait on the pavement, Granny went to the other side of the street to get some change because the black drivers would not allow them to travel unless they gave the proper change. Johannes, who started reading a book for some time, suddenly observed that a bus approached and stopped. Not knowing that it was a “white” bus (i.e., meant only for white people), he stepped on to the footboard which caused great fury not only to the bus driver but also to the passengers inside. The driver abused him in the filthiest language. In the meanwhile his Granny ran to his rescue and begged the driver and other passengers to excuse them. After the bus had left, Granny scolded him for committing such an offence which would have sent them to jail. Her words in this context are noteworthy:

“There’s something you ought to know about how things are in this country, something your Mama I see has not told you yet. Black and white people live apart—very much apart—that, you already know. What you may not know is that they’ve always been apart, and will always be apart. That’s what apartheid means. White people wanted that way and they’ve created all sorts of laws and have the guns to keep it that way.” (200-201)
She further explained:

“We live in our world… and white people live in their world. We’re their servants, they’re our masters. Our people fought hard to change things, but each time the white man always won. He has all the guns. May be another generation of black people will come which will defeat the white man, despite his many guns. But for now, he says how things should be, and we have to obey.” (201)

She also showed him how public telephone boxes were separate for blacks and whites. Thus Johannes, at a very young age became aware of the cruel nature of apartheid. He tells the reader as follows:

Because the guards of segregation were everywhere in the white world, and I saw black people who unwittingly disobeyed them cursed, beaten or thrown in jail, I became increasingly self-conscious with each step I took. (202)

When the narrator came to Standard Six, their headmaster took the students on a trip to the Johannesburg Zoo. Johannes could afford the expenses for the trip with the money which he earned and saved by selling newspapers after school. It was Tuesday when the Zoo was open for the students but with two different entrances, one for Whites only and another Non-whites only. But once inside, the whites and the blacks walked along the same path to see the same animals. When they were watching a baboon-cage a white boy made fun of the black students and the other white children joined him calling the black boys by names. One white boy called Johannes and cursed Johannes calling him “Bloody Kaffir” and Johannes kicked him in the shin and abused him in Tsonga. The white boy felt helpless. At that juncture, the headmaster came and took away his black students for lunch. Johannes felt triumphant.

In this chapter, four Semiotic codes viz., Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic codes operate in conjunction. The Narrative code takes care of the progression of the story while the Cultural code depicts how atrocious apartheid was whereas the Semic code throws light on the characters of the protagonist, his Granny, the white bus driver and the white passengers. Finally the Symbolic code covers the confrontation between the black boys and white boys at the Johannesburg Zoo.
In this chapter, three important events are described: First Johannes’s family’s financial deterioration, his mother’s delivery of a girl-child, his father’s attempt to borrow money from Johannes and finally the protagonist’s realization of how tribalism has ruined his father’s life and those of his generation.

There were repeated police raids on the beer business run by his father and his mother in the guise of stockvel, and consequently they had to close it. His father fell back into his past life of drinking and gambling and squandered his wages. This increased the burden of running the family on Johannes’s mother. Johannes helped her mother by spending his meager wages on his siblings’ school costs. Aunt Bushy left school, started working in a garment factory and became pregnant. Uncle Piet who was only sixteen also left school and started working in order to help Granny. His mother and Granny bribed black policemen with their hard-earned savings and obtained passes for both Aunt Bushy and Uncle Piet. Johannes’s mother became pregnant again and gave birth to a girl-child later named as Linah. She had to beg for money to buy diapers, baby food and medicines.

On a Monday, early in the morning Jackson, his father, woke him up and asked him to lend thirty cents for bus fare to go to his workplace. Johannes refused to do so, stating that it was his own money which he would spend on baby food and books. His father, who felt disobeyed and insulted by his son, became furious and ordered the latter to leave his house. Johannes went to his Granny’s house, stayed there for one week and returned. He understood the situation of his father but did not compromise with his father’s values of tribalism. The narrator’s observations in this connection are noteworthy. He says about his father and his tribalism as follows:

The thick veil of tribalism which so covered his eyes and mind and heart was absolutely of no use to me, for I believed beyond a shadow of doubt that black life would never revert to the past, that the clock would never turn back to a time centuries ago when black people had lived in peace and contentment before the coming of the white man.

(207)

He further states:

Tribal ways and ignorance so ruled supreme over my father’s life, and over many of his generation, that for as long as I was to know him, he
was like some spectre wallowing in a bottomless hole of unreality, groping in it, trying with great futility, to surface from it —to materialize into reality. (208)

In this chapter, the Narrative code depicts the progression of events while the Cultural code shows how the poor black families were suffering in the shanty towns of Johannesburg as illustrated by the protagonist’s family. The Semic code throws further light on his and his mother’s characters. Finally the Symbolic code describes the conflict between modernism and tribalism, the former illustrated by the lives of Johannes and his mother, while the latter by the life of Jackson, his father, and the men of his generation.

Chapter 34: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.208-211)

This is the last chapter of Part Two of the novel, called “Passport to Knowledge”. In this chapter a very important turning-point in Johannes’s life is narrated. It is his new interest in the game of tennis in the place of soccer. The second important event is his mother’s exhortation that he had to continue his education and become an “educated person” in the real sense of the term. The third event is his new information about the achievements in tennis by Arthur Ashe, a black-American tennis star. The last important event in this chapter is that Scaramouche, a “coloured” man accepts to become his tennis coach.

Mrs. Smith once gave Johannes an old wood tennis racket as a gift for his splendid job of cleaning her silver and brassware and for polishing her shoes. She also wished that he would become “as our next Arthur Ashe” (208). This inspired him and he wanted to practice the game of tennis. He was fourteen years old. He left his job at the butchery and did extra work in the houses and gardens of Smiths’ neighbours to help his mother. In these days he also read an old copy of Alan Paton’s Cry, the Beloved country. One day having been moved by the burden of his mother’s work and her wearing out, he told her that he would stop his education after finishing Standard Six. But his mother vehemently opposed his decision saying that she wouldn’t mind even working harder to educate him till he became a teacher or a doctor. She convinced him with her argument and he dropped the idea of stopping with Standard Six. In the mean time, his interest in tennis also became so stronger that he started practicing tennis at the stadium, alone hitting the ball against the wall. Then a big “coloured man” (a man of mixed black and white blood) took interest in him. His
name was Scaramouche and he was an expert tennis player in his circles. He expressed his willingness to be Johannes’s coach and teach him the game.

This chapter is a ground for the play of Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic codes, from a semiotic point of view. As usual, the Narrative code accounts for the progression of the events of the story whereas the Cultural code illuminates the condition of the protagonists’ family, particularly the hard work of his mother and his temporary decision to discontinue his education after Standard Six. The Semic code throws light on the characters of Mrs. Smith, Johannes, his mother and Scaramouche. A new dimension of the Cultural code in this chapter is its information on the coloured people in Johannesburg. As the narrator says:

The man’s name was Scaramouche. He resented being called “Coloured”, but according to apartheid, that was his official designation as one of over two million people of mixed race that were more than a blemish to the white man’s theory of racial purity. According to the government, Coloureds were neither black nor white, even though some of them were as black as the blackest black man, or as white as the whitest white man. Coloureds were allowed to live with blacks, though special areas had been set aside for them under the Group Areas Act. (211)

4.1.2.3 PART III: PASSPORT TO FREEDOM (pp.213-350) (20 CHAPTERS)

This is the last part of the novel, consisting of twenty chapters and running into about one hundred thirty six pages. This part describes how Johannes, the protagonist attains success both in studies and in the game of tennis and finally obtains admission in a college in South Carolina USA for higher education. Thus the *Kaffir Boy*’s story ends on an optimistic note.

**Chapter 35: Narrative, Cultural, Symbolic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.215-216)**

This chapter is the shortest one in the entire novel running into one -and-a-half pages. It describes the state of tennis in South Africa. Scaramouche became not only the tennis coach for Johannes but also his close friend and surrogate father. As a coach he was both encouraging and strict. From him Johannes learnt the situation of tennis in South Africa. There were two organizations of tennis in the country, one for the whites called South African Lawn Tennis Union (S.A.L.T.U) and another for the
blacks called South African National Lawn Tennis Union (S.A.N.L.T.U). The former had all facilities and funds while the latter suffered from lack of facilities and struggled for funds. As Scaramouche said, if the black tennis organization had adequate facilities and funds, they would have produced several Arthur Ashes, Althea Gibsons and Evonne Goolagongs who were black American tennis stars. Johannes also gathered a lot of information about the game of tennis and famous tennis players from his regular reading of tennis instruction manuals and magazines. But his mother warned him not to neglect his studies by devoting more time to tennis whereas his father made fun of the game as ‘Lady’s game’. He assured his mother that he would not neglect his studies and did not take his father’s ridicules seriously.

In this chapter, the Narrative code takes care of the progression of the story while the Cultural code provides information about South African tennis. The Symbolic code depicts the contrasting positions of the white and the black tennis associations in the country whereas the Hermeneutic code creates a sort of suspense about the success of Johannes in tennis, in future.

Chapter 36: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic Codes (pp.216-222)

Johannes admits that his mother’s influence on him was very strong and he joined her in confronting his father’s tyranny and felt grateful for her hard work and whole-hearted encouragement to his education. However, he did not like her opinions about or association with the religion, especially Christianity, the white man’s religion thrust upon the blacks in South Africa. Not only this, further there were several black preachers and churches with ridiculous denomination like “The Donkey Church”, “The Seven Wives Church”, and “The Hundred Rand Net Worth Church”! His opinion on Christian religion was founded on facts and reality. Consider his observations given below.

I frowned upon organized religion for the simple reason that about me I saw it being misused: by the government in claiming that God had given whites the divine right to rule over blacks, that our subservience was the most natural and heavenly condition to be in, by some black churches to strip ignorant black peasants of their last possessions in the name of payment for the salvation of their souls, and by the same churches to turn able-bodied men and women into flocks of sheep, making them relinquish responsibility for their lives in the
hope that faith in Christ would miraculously make everything turn right.

Worst of all, I found among members of some churches a readiness to accept their lot as God’s will, a willingness to disparage their own blackness and heritage as inferior to the white man’s Christianity, a readiness to give up fighting to make things just in this world, in the hope that God’s justice would prevail in the hereafter, that the hungry and the oppressed and the enslaved of this world feast on cornucopias while singing freedom songs and hosannas in a heaven without prejudice. In short, organized religion made blacks blind to, or avoid or seek to escape from reality. (216-217)

Therefore, he says: “I instinctively knew that organized religion would hinder rather than help me, would torpedo my best-laid plans”(217). Nonetheless, he was aware how his mother was able to see reality through organized religion and to cultivate virtues like patience, resiliency, fortitude, hope and optimism. His mother tried to convince him about the positive blessings of the Christian God in achieving his goals in life. Johannes used to read passages from the Bible for his mother every day after his studies, because she could not read. He did this not only to show her his gratitude but also for the beauty and richness of its language, its earthly wisdom in many of its passages. But he was not an atheist because he believed in a cosmic force or luck that is more powerful than man in the universe.

There was a neighbour called Limela among the migrant workers for whom Johannes read and wrote letters. He hated Christianity and continued to tell people to denounce Christianity which made blacks slaves to the white man. His crusade against Christianity reminded people of the popular African expression:

“When white people came, we had the land and the Bible, now we have the Bible and they have our land” (218)

His family was in a village in the tribal reserve and their cattle and land was confiscated by the local authorities against dues of rent. His family was subjected to great suffering and poverty. One day, when Johannes was reading a letter from his village describing his family’s helplessness, two evangelists, a black man and black woman, entered Limela’s shack ignoring his protest, sat on a brick bench and tried to
give him some pamphlets. Limela very much resented their presence and talk. A
debate about the colour of God ensued in their arguments. Limela argued that there
was no difference between Christianity and witchcraft. Johannes enjoyed the situation
and he also supported Limela’s point of view and criticized them strongly. Finally the
two evangelists left, but they had left the pamphlets in Limela’s shack. Both Limela
and Johannes came out and made a fire outside in the cold night and burnt the
pamphlets in the fire.

In this chapter Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic codes operate
together. If the Narrative code accounts for the progression of events, the Cultural
code clearly displays how Christianity made blacks sapless and cowardly to accept
their submission to the white men as God’s decree. Next the Semic code throws light
on the characters of the narrator, his parents and Limela, a neighbour. Finally the
Symbolic code displays how wise and rationalistic black people hated Christianity.
However, one observation should be made here, Johannes’s contempt for Christianity
as well as his tribal gods and the so-called protective ancestral spirits and evil spirits
is contradicted later and he is left in confusion as some episodes prove in the coming
chapters (See Chapter 37 and Chapter 40).

Chapter 37: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.222-228)

This chapter narrates Johannes’s father’s futile attempts at his circumcision,
Johannes’s accomplishment in studies, by standing first in the final examinations of
the primary school, his winning of a government scholarship, his joining the
Alexandra Secondary School, his mother’s happiness, his further improvement of
tennis at the tennis ranch, his acquaintance with a German, Wilfred, through another
black boy Tom who played tennis at the ranch etc.

One winter evening Johannes’s father came home with two pitch-black men
who were to take Johannes to a mountain school for his circumcision. In the author’s
words:

Under Venda tribal law, every boy, before being admitted into male
hood, had to attend a “mountain school”, usually situated in wooded,
mountainous areas remote from the villages. During attendance at the
school, the proselytes are put through various rituals by a group of
circumcised men, including the main ceremony where the boys’
penises are cut by razors without anesthesia. (222)
Johannes refused to go and resisted their attempt to take him by force, threatening them to kill. This so-called exam of circumcision would last for three months which meant his absence at school for three months. Johannes said he preferred to go to a clinic if it was unavoidable. His mother also supported him. The two men left saying that they would come again, telling Johannes’s father to talk to his son in the mean time. His father also left with them. Johannes packed his things, went to his Granny’s place where he stayed for two weeks before he returned home. He felt ill and suspected his father was trying to poison him. He was not able to go to a clinic for want of money. Both father and son stopped talking to each other. This also created mental stress for Johannes. In spite of all these disadvantages, and with the great inspiration and hope given by his mother, he appeared for the final exams of Standard Six and came out with flying colours by passing the exam with a First class. The results appeared in the newspaper, the World. His class teacher, at the instance of the principal, congratulated him and announced:

“Johannes, I’m proud of you to inform you that you’ve been awarded, based on your academic record, a government scholarship to pay for your schooling for each of the three years of secondary school.” (224)

His mother who according to him, “was the eternal optimist”(223), became very happy, thanked God and told him that this was strong proof that God exists. She hoped that her son would continue further higher studies and would become the first doctor in their family. He joined Alexandra Secondary School which was better for him not only because the medium of instruction was English, but also English was a subject for study unlike in the other schools in the tribal reserves. Though this school in Alexandra was overcrowded, it had a few other facilities and most importantly, it had a tennis team. The general dropout in the primary school was 98%, but this secondary school was much better in that respect. As his scholarship was sufficient only for books and fees, he had to earn money for his uniform and other expenses by doing a part-time job for the Smiths. His Aunt Bushy and Uncle Piet also would help him often. Uncle Piet appreciated him very much. Aunt Bushy used to give him regularly his lunch money and money for school trips while his Granny was overjoyed with his accomplishment. She also joked that he was her young husband and lover. Johannes also practiced yoga and strict celibacy as he had read somewhere that sex drained one’s energy and concentration of mind. In 1972, he passed Form
One standing first in the class. Once, he also defeated Scaramouche, his coach, in the game of tennis! Scaramouche helped him many ways by getting his name entered for black tennis tournaments and by giving him a few old tennis rackets for practice. In June, he met a Zulu boy who played tennis at the tennis ranch in Halfway House, called Barretts after the construction company that sponsored the ranch. A German, Wilfred Horn by name, organized the tennis ranch on behalf of his company. Wilfred came from Germany where he had seen the bitterness and cruelty of Hitler and the Nazis during World War II. According to Tom, Wilfred, his South-African wife, Norma and their four-year old son, like many whites treated the blacks as their equals, including their servants. Tom played tennis only with white male society which produced all South African leaders and it was called Broedersbond. As Tom informed Johannes, most German and English people in South Africa were liberals who hated apartheid. Tom introduced Johannes to Wilfred. Johannes told him that his name was Mark (and not Johannes) and details of his childhood and ghetto life which had shocked Wilfred. This German, liked Mark and became his friend. This is also an important turning point in Johannes’s life.

In this chapter, the Narrative code takes care of the progression of events while the Cultural code reveals such tribal rituals as male circumcision in a “mountain school” and the Tsonga medium education in the rural secondary schools and the liberal attitude of the most Germans and English men South Africa. The Semic code throws light on the characters of Johannes, his father and mother, the Granny, Uncle Piet and Aunt Bush as well as zulu and Wilfred whereas the Hermeneutic code introduces suspense about Johannes’s luck in tennis.

Chapter 38: Narrative, Cultural, Semic, Symbolic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.228-241)

This is rather a lengthy chapter that depicts such important events as Arthur Ashe’s visit to South Africa in 1973; Johannes’s friendship with another Zulu tennis player, David, the liberation movement carried out secretly by ANC (African National Congress), its history, Ashe’s winning the match against Sherwood Stevert, a white American player at Ellis Park Stadium, establishment of Black Tennis Foundation (BTF) in South Africa and Johannes’s first written application for a tennis scholarship to BTF and a few other minor events.
Towards the end of 1973, the South African government gave permission to Arthur Ashe to come to their country. Earlier, it was not willing for his visit to South Africa because he had condemned several times the policy of apartheid, particularly as a black man, his remark at a press conference in London that he would drop the H-bomb on Johannesburg to make the government to realize that its racial segregation policy of apartheid was inhuman, infuriated the South African Government. However, Johannes and his friend, David did not think that Ashe was serious in his remarks. David, also a Zulu, became Johannes’s friend as a tennis player. He was a soft-spoken, brilliant student and also as proficient in English as Johannes. Though he was also a good tennis player, he was a womanizer unlike Johannes. Both of them used to discuss the national affairs, particularly the plight of innocent blacks suffering under apartheid and also those blacks who were shot dead in the jails and whose deaths were publicized by the police as “suicides”. David’s political awareness influenced Johannes also who came to know about the underground liberation movement of the African National Congress (ANC) and its history. As the protagonist observes:

It was founded in 1912 by a group of black intellectuals, many of whom had studied in England and America. It began as a non-violent movement, inspired by the work of Mahatma Gandhi, who lived in South Africa from 1894 to 1914, and it sought to peacefully bring about a South Africa free of racial prejudice. (230)

But the leaders were disappointed as each year, apartheid became worse and worse with new laws meant to suppress the black people with increasing cruelty. They continued to agitate and were arrested and sent to prison on Robben Island with life sentences. Such leaders included those like Nelson Mandela, Goun Mbeki, Walter Sisulu and Robert Sobukwe. Their goal was “to establish a free and democratic South Africa, where all people live in brotherhood and sisterhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities”. (Ibid) Young blacks emulated leaders like Mandela and others like Johannes were looking for a role model like Arthur Ashe. The day when Ashe arrived, Johannes was very excited. Wilfred made very appreciative observations about Ashe as a great tennis player and also a very simple gentleman. At about the same time, there was also a boxing match between a black American and a white challenger, but Johannes was not as much interested in the boxing match as he was in Ashe’s tennis matches. Another reason for his lack of interest in boxing was the behaviour and
statements of a black American boxing star, Bob Foster, made the blacks in South Africa angry. But Ashe was different. The first day of the tennis was at Ellis Park and Johannes went there by the black bus. Not finding place among the white spectators, he joined a black section. Arthur Ashe won the match with 6-1, 7-6 and 6-4 against his white opponent. There was clapping and great jubilation, especially from the blacks. Johannes greatly wondered at how a black man (i.e. Ashe) could vanquish a white player. It was a miracle for him. He remembered then, a number of distinguished blacks in America about whom he had read in newspapers. They included singers, educators, politicians, mayors, inventors, scientists, actors, actresses, judges, army generals, pilots, writers and so on and so forth. In South Africa, the blacks had not been slaves, like the forefathers of the distinguished black Americans. But it seemed a mystery to him why the South African blacks failed to make any great achievements. However, he realised that the reason was apartheid. Skipping school he watched Ashe playing tennis at the stadium in Ellis Park and his mannerisms. One afternoon, Ashe made an appearance to meet people. There was a big crowd in the centre of which Ashe looked like a star. Johannes could not go near and hear Ashe clearly but observed that his accent of English was heavy. Towards the first week of his stay, Ashe announced that he would conduct a tennis clinic in Soweto with the help of Ray Moore and other white South African players. Ray Moore was a liberal and criticized his government policies of apartheid. He had led an all White South African team to its first Davis Cup which was won by default because the other finalist, the Indian team, had boycotted in protest of apartheid in South Africa. Johannes travelled to Soweto by train with the money given by Wilfred. The train journey was a living nightmare as the train was overcrowded and people dangled from windows and on the top of the train. Two blacks died having been electrocuted on the top of the train. In contrast, the trains meant for the whites were spacious with unoccupied cushion seats. He arrived at the destination escaping a gang of tsotsis who were killing and robbing black passengers. The crowd of spectators at the stadium considered Ashe as sipho which meant a “gift” in Zulu. As Johannes observes, Ashe

… had become the black messiah sent from strange shores to come to liberate us. By attacking apartheid in a way no other black American entertainer or athlete had done, Arthur Ashe did appear to be a sort of messiah. (238)
It is true that for Johannes, Ashe became not only a messiah, but also a role model to emulate in life. Although Johannes was not able to go very close to Ashe and hear him, he imagined that Ashe’s speech must have been very inspiring. Ashe lost in finals to Jimmy Conors, but he won the doubles with Tom Okker, a Dutch player. In his final days of stay, Ashe met high ranking government officials and appealed to them to abolish apartheid in sports lest the rest of the world players should boycott South African teams. Before leaving, Ashe also established the Black Tennis Foundation (BTF) an enduring monument in South Africa, with the help and support of a white liberal, Owen Williams. Johannes, encouraged by Scaramouche, applied in writing for a tennis scholarship in America through BTF. The gangsters in Alexandra called Johannes an Uncle Tom (i.e. a black traitor) and he had to be careful though he intensified his tennis practice.

In this chapter, the Narrative, Cultural, Semic, Symbolic and Hermeneutic codes operate enriching one another. While the Narrative code depicts the progression of the events in the story, the Cultural code displays how Arthur Ashe’s visit to South Africa inspired not only black young tennis players like Johannes, but also the general black public, and Ashe’s establishment of BTF. The Symbolic code reveals how African National Congress struggled for freedom. The Semic code throws light on the characters of Ashe, Wilfred, Tom, David, and other liberal whites. Finally the Hermeneutic code sustains the major suspense of the novel whether Johannes (i.e. Mark) would ever realize his dream of going to America for higher studies on a tennis scholarship.

**Chapter 39: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.241-245)**

In this chapter two important events, viz. Johannes’s winning of his first tennis championship in the Alexandra Open, in 1974, and his mother’s affiliation with the Twelve Apostle Church of God and her becoming a staunch believer as witnessed by Johannes himself.

In 1974, Johannes won his first championship as the Alexandra Open defeating David. This trophy became the most precious for him. His teachers praised him as “a student who mixed sports and studies well”(241). His trophy was displayed at the bar of the Barretts tennis ranch. The white members treated him as their equal while a short German, Wolfgang, by name, also predicted that Johannes would win Wimbledon in future. But the moment Johannes left the ranch he was subjected to the
laws humiliating the blacks. He, thus, developed a dual personality like Jekyll and Hyde of R.L. Stevenson’s novel: a man equal to the whites at the ranch and a man inferior to the whites outside the ranch. He struggled hard to keep it up. One afternoon when he returned from the school, his mother who was out all day returned announcing that she had been saved and had truly met the church of God and His messengers. In spite of his dislike, she told him that this new church i.e, Twelve Apostle Church of God was a true Church where no money was collected and the priests had the gift of prophesy like the original twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. Johannes did not believe this. But there was a great transformation in his mother’s behaviour under the influence of the new Church. Two miraculous events happened: one, her mother was given a work permit with the help of her employer at Randburg. All these years she had been struggling to get this work permit, but she got it now without any effort on her part; second she found two other washing jobs in the same week. She earnestly believed that God had a hand in all this. Now she started attending the Church service on Sunday morning and evening, but also attended choir practice on every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoon, her day off. She also started meeting the sick in the township to make them the members of the new Church. Her house became almost a pulpit where she would teach about her God whoever happened to visit her. To quote the narrator in this context:

Her new God turned her into a believer that every problem was solvable, every obstacle surmountable; she never got angry or wished anyone ill or hated her enemies, for she believed that her all loving God would not approve of such emotions. Even her criticism of my father lessened, she tolerated every abuse he hurled at her, she even gave him money. She loved to share the little she had and would often bring home complete strangers off the streets – tramps, prostitutes, lunatics and even tsotsis – and would share with them whatever little food was there, and occasionally she would let them sleep over for a night or two (243)

One day she brought a crazy and filthy woman, prepared food for her and both of them ate out of the same bowl. This sort of behaviour on the part of his mother made Johannes so angry that he thought that she had turned mad. People also called her openly a lunatic. Therefore, he decided to go the church and observe what was
happening there that had so much changed his mother. At the Church which was a zinc sheets structure with wooden pews, the congregation consisted of almost all ethnic groups like Zulus, Sothos, Tsongas, Xhosas and even coloureds. They greeted one another as “brother” and “sister”. There was one male priest who interpreted dreams and was helped by eleven other male deacons. When the priest started his long prayer, Johannes’s mother from the front pew, jumped and made a sudden half-scream. The priest stopped his prayer and extended his right hand in her direction. Then she started speaking “in tongues” (i.e., unintelligible language) with a gurgling sound like an epileptic. She, thus, spoke or prophesied for five minutes and stopped as if completely exhausted. The priest interpreted her prophesy but Johannes missed it as he was worried about her health and well-being. Then two other women also behaved in the same way uttering some “gibberish”. The priest interpreted their “tongues” also but Johannes failed to understand the meaning. He left the Church in confusion without understanding his mother’s behaviour, but he was certain that she was not insane. He was too young to understand it.

In this chapter, one can notice clearly how the Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic codes interact with one another to bring about a realistic and aesthetic effect. The Narrative code reveals the progression of events while the Cultural code mainly touches upon the element of Magic Realism involved in the transformation of Johannes’s mother’s behaviour under the influence of the Twelve Apostle Church of God in which she had been proselytised. In conjunction, the Semic code throws further light on the characters of Johannes and his mother whereas the Hermeneutic code leaves Johannes as well as the reader in suspense about the priest’s interpretation of dreams and “the tongues” of the Church members attending his prayer and the element of prophesy in their unintelligible “tongues”. This suspense is left unresolved.

Chapter 40: Narrative, Cultural (Magic Realism), Semic, Symbolic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.245-252)

Three major events constitute the theme of this chapter. They are as follows: Johannes represents Southern Transvaal black junior tennis team in the National Tournament in Pretoria in 1975; he develops a problem with his eye-sight and when he was in the condition of going blind, a witch doctor cures him subject to a conditional warning; and finally Johannes helps a migrant miner living a neighbouring hostel, who violated the Influx Control law by leaving the hostel and
living separately in a shack in the settlement with his wife and three children whom he has brought from a tribal reserve in the Bantustan without the government’s permission.

In June 1975, Johannes was selected to represent the Southern Transvaal black junior tennis squad in the National Tournament in Pretoria. Though he did not do well in the individual competitions he helped the Southern Transvaal team to win the team trophy. His stay in Pretoria for two weeks enabled him to understand the poor condition of black tennis in his country owing to lack of facilities and encouragement as well as due to apartheid. In comparison with other young black tennis players, he was fortunate enough to have training and friends at the tennis ranch. After his return from Pretoria, he had some problem with his eyes. He thought it was due to fatigue, but it was not so. He became unable to read or expose his eyes to light. His mother and others suspected witchcraft. As his mother explained to him, being a Christian did not prevent voodoo (i.e., witchcraft). But Johannes did not agree with her. So, she gave him money to go to the clinic for treatment. Unfortunately, he could not meet the doctor because of the long queue and other emergency cases. He returned home disappointed and without any treatment. He went to another place, called Tembisa Hospital by bus. The situation was not better than that at the earlier clinic. Finally, his mother took him to a witch doctor at Hammanskraal, a three hour journey by bus, to a rural ghetto outside Pretoria. This was the greatest diviner or witch doctor in the country. “She was a short fat woman with long strands of hair braided with red clay; a blown goat’s bladder was tied to the end of one strand of hair ; beads and bones circled her neck, and copper and silver bangles her arms, her face was caked with yellow mud; she was draped in goatskin”. (246)

After proper introduction ceremonies, they sat in a hut in opposite directions: the diviner in one direction and Johannes and his mother in the opposite direction. Without any prior information given by his mother, the diviner staking bones and shells in her hands and muttering incantations, narrated each and every incident in the life of Johannes with complete accuracy. Some of these incidents were even forgotten by Johannes himself. He was surprised very much. In her diagnosis, the diviner gave the cause for his blindness as the jealousy of some of his distant relatives at his success in school and therefore they applied voodoo to make him blind as they could not kill him because of the protecting power of his ancestors. Not believing her words
he wanted to test her. He asked her how they bewitched him. She predicted his question and answered that they were able to do so through the letters he had been writing for some of his neighbours to their people in the rural areas. She warned him neither to read nor write letters for other Africans in Alexandra if he wanted to regain his vision and be safe. Reading and writing at school was an exemption, as she said. She gave him medicine. They returned home and used the medicine but Johannes still had doubts about witchcraft so he went to the Tembisa Hospital where the doctor examined his eyes and told him that there was nothing wrong with his eyes except they were too strained and gave him medicine. He used both medicines and gradually his ailment was cured. Still Johannes had a dilemma about which medicine cured his eye-sight, the diviner’s or the eye-specialists?

Following the advice of the witch doctor, Johannes stopped reading and writing letters for migrant workers, but he could not refuse to help one migrant worker, named Ndlamini who violated the Influx Control Law by leaving the migrant workers’ hostel, bringing his wife and three children from his distant village in Bantustan as they had been starving and suffering for years. He took a shack in the ghetto and started living there. This was a legal crime and for this he received summons from the superintendent, a government official in charge of such affairs. Ndlamini was afraid that he would be put in jail. So he sought Johannes’s help because the latter could speak English and Afrikaans like native speakers and therefore would be able to explain his difficulties in Afrikaans to the Superintendent whose native language was Afrikaans. He was an Afrikaans fanatic and hated English. The next day they went to the superintendent’s office by bus. The superintendent, the lord of Alexandra, gave them interview. He examined the papers and confirmed that Ndlamini committed the crime and had to be imprisoned for his crime. Ndlamini could not answer the volley of questions from the superintendent and remained silent and defenseless. Then Johannes intervened speaking impeccable Afrikaans which impressed the officer. He further enquired whether Johannes and his schoolmates liked Afrikaans or English more. To please him Johannes said that Afrikaans is much better than English. The superintendent was very happy, praised Johannes as a ‘smart young chap’, excused Ndlamini’s offence and gave him written permission to live separately with his wife and three children until conditions improve in Bantustan. Ndlamini, on their way home, praised Johannes as a “miracle worker”. (252).
In this chapter, almost all the semiotic codes operate, each with an equal effect. The Narrative code takes care of the progression of the three major episodes mentioned in the introductory paragraph above. The Cultural code in this chapter is more detailed and effective with its element of Magic Realism, viz. the witch doctor’s rituals and ability to cure Johannes’s blindness. The Semic code delineates the major characters in further detail in addition to providing a picturesque description of the witch doctors appearance, residence, surroundings etc. The Symbolic code displays the conflict in the protagonist’s mind between Christian’s faith and rationalism on the one side and that between modern medicine and witchcraft medicine. These conflicts naturally lead to a suspense or dilemma in the protagonist’s system of beliefs which is embodied in the Hermeneutic code but the suspense is not resolved because it represents the dilemma of humanity everywhere in every culture. Nonetheless, it adds to the narrative effect.

Chapter 41: Narrative, Cultural and Semic Codes (pp.252-259)

This chapter continues the story of Johannes also called Mark, describing his extraordinary love for reading English books; the frequent debates held in Form Three which he is studying now and his success therein and his principal’s appreciation; his reading of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* and listening to the broadcast of the play by Springbok radio, his presentation of Portia’s speech on the “quality of mercy” from the play; his interest in German classical music as well as American pop music; his obtaining a three-year scholarship after the midyear exams, etc.

Now Johannes reached Form Three in the curriculum of which there were frequent debates and presentations by individual students along with other items of syllabus on Bantu Education, Culture and social issues. He succeeded in reading almost all books in his school library, especially the English books. When his principal joked about his passion for reading, he replied that tennis was his other passion. At that time he was reading *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne and the principal asked him whether Johannes was interested in visiting foreign countries in a “time machine”. Johannes replied that he wanted to do so through the game of tennis. In the conversation that ensued between both of them, Johannes revealed his desire for freedom with respect for the individual rather than for earning money. The principal shared his feelings and pointed out that the present young generation of Johannes were the hope of the nation and cautioned him to not to move
too close with whites lest his own black people should misunderstand him. Later, his English teacher gave an assignment from the Shakespearean play, *The Merchant of Venice*. The teacher was a Ph.D. degree holder in English literature from a black university. The students felt that Shakespearean English was tough. But Johannes persevered and understood some parts of the play with the help of a dictionary. During his days of preparation for the presentation of a passage from the play in the class, he luckily listened to a broadcast of the play from a small transistor given to him by Uncle Piet as a gift. The relay was from Springbok radio station. With this experience, Johannes struggled hard to imitate correct pronunciation of several archaic terms in the play. After his presentation of the passage, ‘quality of mercy’ from Portia’s speech in the play, in the class, his English teacher who used to called him Shiver My Timbers, a character in *Treasure Island*, appreciated him very much. From then onwards for Johannes Springbok radio station became his favourite. At the same time he also learned to appreciate German classical music. Wilfred also encouraged him to improve his taste for German music because one needn’t know the language to appreciate music which had a universal appeal. Nevertheless, Johannes did not lose his taste for American pop music and African tribal vibes. But his father made fun of this new interest in his son. He made the following comment:

“First it was books”, he said. “Then tennis, then poetry, now it’s this rubbish that white people listen to all the time. You really must be going mad. How many black people listen to that rubbish?” (257).

In the midyear exams, Johannes scored the highest marks along with another student, Steve, from another class and both of them were awarded one scholarship each, sponsored by Simba Quix, the largest potato-chip and rusks making company in South Africa. The scholarship was for three years paying for books, school uniform and fee till they complete matriculation. This company run by the English people had a purpose in granting the scholarships. In the words of Mr. Wilde, the company manager, the brilliant students who were awarded their scholarships would also be given employment in their company, after the completion of their education. As part of the function of awarding scholarships, there were some programmes like performance of skits etc. Johannes read a dozen verses from Tennyson’s *In Memorium*. Finally there was a barbecue.
In this chapter, it may be noticed, that the Narrative, Cultural and Semic codes operate. The Narrative code accounts for the progression of events in the story while the Cultural code provides information about the nature of Bantu Education and the part played by debates in the school curriculum form Form Three (i.e. Standard Eight) onwards and the encouragement given by some private organizations to brilliant students, mostly to fulfill their future needs of employment in their organizations. The reader is reminded, the this context, of the major thrust in Lord Mc Caulay’s 1835 Minute that recommended English education in British India, which focused on training Indian youth in English to serve the machine of British administration in the Indian subcontinent. Finally, the Semic code throws light on the different circumstances that influenced Johannes, and his character as well as on the characters of the principal, the English class teacher, Johannes’s father, Wilfred, Johannes’s German friend, and lastly on that of Mr. Wilde the English manager of the potato-chip- and rusks making company.

Chapter 42: Narrative, Symbolic, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.259-268)

In this chapter is described the students’ revolt against the government’s introduction of Afrikaans medium education at the school level instead of English medium instruction. This rebellion that started first in Soweto on June 16, 1976, spread to other areas and also to Alexandra causing a lot of bloodshed and death of innocent school children in the sudden police fire. Some whites, not many, start leaving the country and ironically, the white government assures them of all safety measures, ignoring the deaths of hundreds of black students. It became world news. Later the movement gets disorganised and leads to violence, the students and youth using petrol bombs. Several shops are looted and food-stuff and other materials are robbed from these shops by the blacks, especially the ghetto dwellers. A friend of Johannes, a twelve-years-old girl is shot dead. Her funeral is held. The protagonist is greatly disturbed and realizes that Gandhi’s non-violence alone will not save people as, fight for freedom calls for violence also.

The Department of Bantu Education declared all of the sudden that in all black schools, Afrikaans had to be taught in the place of English. This declaration acted like an igniting spark for the black students who had already been simmering with hate, bitterness, frustration and anger. On June 16, 1976 there was a revolt against this decision of the government at Soweto in which about 10,000 students participated and
marched on the streets of the city protesting the Afrikaans decree. They raised slogans in favour of independence. Suddenly the police opened fire without any warning and hundreds of innocent children died. The global newspapers published photographs of this atrocity. The black people all over South Africa became sorrowful. David and Johannes discussed this cold-blooded murder of innocent students. The next day the atmosphere at school was also serious. They also demonstrated carrying placards. Black men and women cheered them. Again, when the police appeared they maintained peace. The police warned them declaring through a megaphone that they had to disperse and return home. A few students turned back, but a majority of them marched defiantly singing the anthem of Afrikaans National Congress, entitled *Nkosi Sikaleli Afrika* (“God Bless Africa”). Then the police charged and fired several rounds. Students ran in all directions. When David and Johannes approached Alexandra, they found the entire place was cordoned by several armoured cars and roads were blocked. They however, managed to walk home. The author describes the scene at Alexandra as follows:

> From time to time, people glanced nervously over their shoulders, afraid of being shot in the back. When David and I entered Alexandra, we saw several burning government buildings, beer halls, schools, stores belonging to Indians and Chinamen. A bus had been overturned and set afire. People were looking all around, making off with drums of paraffin, bags of mealie meal, carcasses of beef still dripping blood, Primes stoves, boxes of canned goods, loaves of bread and so on. There were power and energy in men, women and children that I had never seen before. (263)

The author adds: “*The rebellion had begun in Alexandra*” (*Ibid*). This situation spread to the black ghettos of other parts of the country. All black schools were closed and this continued for a few more days. But working blacks, particularly the black migrant workers who were threatened with dismissal from service were gradually forced to return home and report back. This happened in Alexandra also. Blacks fought against blacks. The white government assured the whites in the country of safety and security giving them a call not to leave the country. The number of black’s deaths increased day by day. Black informers carried secret information to the police against their own black brothers. Thus, gradually the movement got disorganized.
while the students started using petrol bombs. Shops belonging to Indians and Chinese were looted or set on fire. A Chinese shop and a house were looted. Then the army trucks came making the mob flee for fear of life. David and Johannes also left when an Indian shop raided and looted by girls and women who carried the loot to their shacks. Johannes was reminded of the French Revolution about which he had read in the novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. Then the army came and opened fire. To escape tear gas, Johannes ran into a shack nearby. The head of the shack whom Johannes called Ntate (Father) expressed his lack of hope that freedom would never be achieved at this rate. Noticing further firing, Johannes escaped through a small opening in the fence near the lavatory and saw that a twelve-year-old girl, Mashudu, who was his girl friend and schoolmate, had been shot dead. She was buried that Sunday and a funeral was held under a continual drizzle. The preacher addressed the gathering thus:

“In her, as in hundreds of other black children who have died since this nightmare began, had been embodied the hope for a better Africa. Give us strength and courage, O Lord, to triumph over enemies, our oppressors. Let this child's death, and all the others be not in vain. Let there come out of all this spilled innocent blood a new South Africa, where we can live in dignity and freedom. As you receive her soul into your bosom, O mighty God, send us the weapons to carry on the struggle against injustice, to carry on till all Africans are liberated. Out of dust we came, back to dust we return…..” (267)

Johannes wept because the deceased was a close friend of his. After going home, lying on bed he questioned his own belief in the efficacy of the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and what Martin Luther King Jr. had done for blacks in America. He came to the conclusion, that the black people can attain freedom from apartheid not through non-violence but only through the barrel of a gun and violence.

In this chapter, the Narrative code covers the progression of events while the Cultural code describes the student revolt against Afrikaans education in the place of English medium education. Simultaneously the Symbolic code displays the hatred of the blacks against apartheid and the white rule along with the cruelty of the government with which it has suppressed the black student rebellion. It also describes how mob behaves in times of violence, under the Semic code. Finally the
Hermeneutic code resolves Johannes’s dilemma whether Gandhiji’s non-violence can bring freedom to South Africa. He decides differently.

Chapter 43: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic Codes (pp.268-271)

This chapter narrates how the rebellion gets intensified and how it is suppressed in the month of October by the government police.

As days passed, more and more black students joined the movement and more of them were also killed. The government gave it a political colour stating that it was supported by African National Congress a banned party and also that Communists also joined the movement secretly. Many agitators were caught, tried and dragged. The violence was attributed to the anti-establishment political groups. The Prime Minister, Vorster left for Germany where he met Henry Kissiger, the American secretary of state. He propagated there this lie by telling them their unrest was instigated by some political parties working against the South African Government. Johannes wondered why the liberal whites did not condemn the government’s atrocity and genocide. The government also spread a rumour that the ANC was secretly planning for a peasant revolution. Johannes had a friend from Rhodesia (the present Zimbabwe), Ngwenya, who was familiar with the guerilla war waged by the black leaders in his country, like Robert Mugabe and Joshva Nkomo to overthrow the minority white rule of Ian Smith. This friend also had relatives fighting for freedom of Rhodesia from the Patriotic Front. One evening Johannes met him and wanted to know more about fighting the guerilla way and to become a freedom fighter in his own country. Ngwenya discouraged him by saying that Johannes, with his unusual love for tennis and books could not carry a gun and kill others in the freedom fight. He asked Johannes whether he could sacrifice his love for tennis, studies and friendship with whites. Though Johannes replied in the affirmative, Ngwenya was not convinced. As they were talking like this, there was firing of tear gas shells by the police outside. At once Ngwenya’s wife covered the young baby with a rug soaked in water while the father and Johannes woke up and protected the other sleeping children in the same way. In this context, Ngwenya gave practical advice to Johannes as follows:

“There’s room for people with your brains in the struggle. Your kind fight on a different front. Teachers and doctors and lawyers are needed to care for the wounded, defend political prisoners and teach the
masses about freedom. Writers are also needed to tell the rest of the world what the struggle is all about. So, you see, you don’t need only a gun to fight against apartheid. There are many roads that lead to Rome. Think about using your talents in the struggle”. (270).

By October, the rebellion which started in June was completely suppressed by the government and the unofficial death toll was about eight hundred in the four months of violence. The government relaxed by making the law of learning in Afrikaans optional and still said that it was desirable. The puppet black leaders ratified the compromise. Schools were re-opened. Johannes attended his school again after six months. Some of the teachers were suspected to have become police informers. Johannes was greatly disillusioned with the result of the student movement.

In this chapter, the reader can notice that the Narrative code takes the responsibility of the progression of events and the Cultural code presents the political situations of unrest and the deceptive maneuvers of the government to misrepresent the facts locally as well as globally. The Semic code provides a realist picture of the main events as also it throws light on the characters of Johannes and Ngwenya whereas the Symbolic code depicts the hatred between the rulers and the ruled.

**Chapter 44: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic Codes (pp.271-286)**

This chapter narrates how Wilfred encourages Johannes to describe the life of the black people in the ghetto of Alexandra to the white audience at the bar in the tennis ranch. Johannes makes friends with another German by name Helmut whom he requests to help him to go to America. Again, there is unrest, the stadium is looted and the library therein is set on fire. Taking great risk, Johannes saves some books which he carries home afterwards.

This is also lengthy chapter in which some important events are narrated. As the schools reopened and the government relaxed the restrictions on blacks’ movement in white areas, Johannes was able to go to the Barrett tennis ranch first time in two months. He met Wilfred in the company of a female friend. Wilfred expressed his pleasant surprise on seeing Johannes whom he was not able to recognize first and whom he thought might have died in the recent police firing in the settlements. While bidding farewell to his female friend, Wilfred requested Mark to
collect the tennis balls on the tennis courts and take them to the clubhouse. Later when they met after Johannes ate some scones and drank two glasses of ginger beer, Johannes explained to him in detail what had happened for about four months in the ghettos, particularly in Alexandra. Wilfred was shocked and surprised at the cruelty of the police. He observed:

“You know, we whites have never heard about the atrocities you’ve just described. What I can’t understand why the bloody government would go on the air each night and say everything was under control, that the few Communists responsible for starting the riots were being efficiently rounded up and black life was returning to normal. When in fact the police and army were shooting down innocent people”. (272)

The government censored the news and gave a false and painted picture to the world through its Afrikaans newspapers throwing the blame on the blacks, the ANC and the Communists. But some liberal English newspapers published facts. Then Wilfred suggested that Mark present all this in front of the white audience in the bar of the ranch. Johannes, first, hesitated but later agreed to do so. Encouraged and supported by Wilfred, that evening, Mark was able to present the details and facts of the real situation to all the white members of the club. Many of them were shocked and surprised while some white females also shed tears. Mark was the only black person there. His presentation was followed by questions. To a question about the cause of the riots, by an English liberal, St. Croix, Mark gave the following reply:

“What we black students did on June he was not riot”, I said. “We spontaneously rebelled against an education system designed to make us slaves. And black education is not the only thing that’s wrong in this country. Afrikaans was merely the spark that set off a time bomb that’s been ticking all these years that we blacks have been living as fourth-class citizens. We black youths feel the same bitterness and anger and hatred that our parents feel. But unlike them we are not prepared to perpetually turn the other cheek, to smile and say ‘Yes baas’, ‘Yes madam’, while our humanity is being trampled to fragments. We have realized that our freedom will not come from a white man’s change of heart. We have to fight for our rights.” (274)
Mark further, clarified to other questions from other whites about the pleasant picture of blacks’ lives given by the government and their black supporters. He said that these were black middle class families who formed a small minority while the majority of the blacks were poor peasants and workers who live in shacks and mud houses in the ghettos. Another member, an Afrikaans and supporter of apartheid tried to corner Mark, but the latter gave balanced and factual answers by establishing clearly what the blacks want was democracy, and not apartheid. To the Afrikaan’s question whether the blacks now want to make the whites their slaves, Mark provided a clear-cut answer as follows:

“No”, I said, “We blacks are not in the least interested in making slaves out of you. We simply want a country where race and colour don’t determine your place in the sun. We want a South Africa where everyone – black, Coloured, white and Indian – is equal before the law. We want to live in peace with everyone as a nation united”. (275)

The Afrikaans member was getting angry and claimed that the white people came to South Africa to civilize the blacks and teach them culture through Christianity. Mark gave a cool reply to him by saying:

“South Africa is as much as our country as it is yours. We can and must learn to live together. We need each other, not as master and servant, but as equals. There’s room for everyone in this beloved country.” (276)

There were a few more questions which Mark answered to the satisfaction of his white audience. St. Croix gave him a lift to First Avenue in Alexandra on return.

Again the police started raiding black schools and every student was suspect. There was no safety at school also. Therefore, Johannes went to the Barretts Tennis Ranch and started living there, practicing tennis and reading English books. There, he made friends with another German, Helmut by name, who wanted to improve his tennis by playing with Mark. In the beginning, Mark suspected him to be an agent of the secret government agency BOSS (Bureau of State Security), but soon discovered that Helmut was a kind-hearted and liberal German. They became friends. Helmut even promised Mark to help him to go to America. He also took him to his flat at Hillbrow where they discussed many things including the genocide in Germany.
during the Nazi rule of Hitler. Helmut also took Mark to almost all the tennis courts in the city where they played together. But they were careful and changed the courts from the time to time. Almost every day Helmut drove Mark home though he had no permit to enter the ghetto of Alexandra. One day, Helmut left him on the outskirts of Alexandra because he had to go to the airport to receive his girlfriend. As Johannes was walking home through the shortest route which was dark, some gangsters headed by Jarvas attacked him abusing him as Uncle Tom. Being helpless, Johannes prayed to God and luckily a street truck was coming and seeing the truck, all the gangsters jumped to the sides of the street. Johannes started running and one fellow hit him with a brickbat. He lost his front tooth and somehow reached home. His mother who was shocked to know what had happened gave him first aid. After a few weeks, there were riots again. In the confusion of revolt and police firing, the blacks of the ghetto again looted food stuffs, from a government ration shop located in the stadium. They stole a bus and by driving the bus inside, they had broken the stadium walls and looted food stuff. There was also a good library on one side of the stadium. A girl run over by the bus died on the spot. Johannes was worried about the books in the library and ran to the spot. He noticed what was happening. He went into the library where many books had already caught fire and were burning. Luckily he found that underneath the third or fourth shelf, the flame had not touched, some books were intact. He collected them and tried to return. Suddenly two army trucks appeared. He threw the books in a dark ditch nearby and faced the soldiers who left him luckily unharmed thinking that he was a lunatic. After the trucks left, in the afternoon Johannes went to the library back and brought the books home with the help of his brother.

In this chapter, the Narrative code recounts the major events while the Cultural code reveals how Mark, at the instance of Wilfred addresses the white gathering at the bar in the Barretts Tennis Ranch and gives them a factual picture of what has been happening during the so-called riots. He answers all their questions ably and evokes their support and sympathy. He also gets a new German friend, Helmut, who promises to help him in going to America. The Symbolic code operates to depict the looting of the stadium while the Semic code throws light on the characters of the protagonist, Wilfred, Helmut and other whites at the ranch.
Chapter 45: Narrative, Cultural, Semic, Hermeneutic and Symbolic Codes (pp.287-289)

This chapter describes the disappointment of Mark at the scrapping of July championship of the Annual National Junior Tennis Championships announced to be held near Pretoria in May, Scaramouch’s attempt to console Mark in this respect; his being introduced to Andre Zietsman a white African Tennis Player friend and his hopes to go to America with the help of this new friend; Arthur Ashe’s winning the Wimbledon in England and the general jubilation of the blacks in South Africa; some students who left schools joining the guerilla training camps secretly; his decision to stop going to school afraid of the police raids, and finally his faith in God and in church-going.

Sporadic unrest continued in the ghettos. In May, the black Southern Transvaal Lawn Tennis Association announced the Annual National Junior Tennis Championship in Attredgeville, Pretoria, but later cancelled it. Johannes, who made a team for this, was greatly disappointed, but Scaramouch, his coach, consoled him and promised him to introduce him to Andre Zietsman a white African player recently returned from America. Mark hoped that this new friend would help him to go to America on a tennis scholarship. After some time, the government gave permission for the tournament to be held. In Attredgeville, the facilities for tennis were slightly better, but accommodation in the few hotels was crowded. Southern Transvaal won the team competitions. About the same time, Wimbledon was taking place in England. This time Arthur Ashe won and became the Wimbledon Champion. All blacks in South Africa became jubilant and newspapers were full of this happy news. One paper said, “Ashe Paints Wimbledon Black” (288). Marks ambition was intensified. Schools reopened in August and Johannes went back to school as his scholarship was still valid. But many of his school friends disappeared. He came to know that they had joined the underground guerilla training conducted in the neighbouring states by a secret organization called Umkhonto We sizere.

An urban guerilla war began soon. The government used more repressive laws and stern suppressive measures. Some blacks turned into police informers. Mark became paranoid and wanted to stop school. For safety he often went to church. This made him gradually theistic, as it appeared. Consider his change in his own words:

Why did God fail to protect innocent students from the police? Nevertheless, I began to go to church on Sundays, not so much to pray
but because I felt somewhat safe there. A change gradually came over me; I began to read the Bible more for renewal of strength and courage. I wandered from church to church, listened to the sermons with new ears, and heard pastors begin to preach liberation. Youngsters whose blood was shed in the battle against apartheid were called martyrs. Those who fled and became freedom fighters the government called terrorists; in the churches they were praised as heroes. (289)

Some Churches further sang freedom songs as part of their liturgy, defying the authorities. Coffins were draped in ANC colours and black young men and women started wearing ANC T-shirts and raised freedom slogans. The police dispersed them with tear gas, police dogs, rubber bullets etc.

In this chapter, all the Semiotic codes operate in a mutually intertwining manner. While the Narrative code takes care of the progression of events, the Cultural code describes the junior tennis tournament as part of the protagonists’ interest. Next the Semic code throws further light on the development in the character of the protagonist as he starts going to Church regularly on Sundays and observes the nature of Church activities which include praise for freedom fighters and pro-liberation speeches by the pastors. The Hermeneutic code reveals the dilemmas of the central character regarding his faith in the Christian God and his ambition of going to America through tennis. Finally the Symbolic code portrays how the police suppress the patriotic blacks.

Chapter 46: Narrative, Cultural, Semic, Hermeneutic and Symbolic Codes (pp.289-292)

This chapter narrates Mark’s friendship with Andre Zietman, a distinguished South African white tennis player, who was educated in America, his playing tennis with Mark and giving him lessons of tennis, Andre’s experiences in America and his change of attitude to the blacks in his own country and Mark’s wonder at the free and dignified life of blacks in America.

As promised and introduced by Wilfred, Johannes finally met Andre Zietmen, a white South African who had won dozens of prestigious tournaments, at twenty four and who had also participated in Wimbledon and the U.S. Open. He was ready to teach Johannes the finer points of the game of tennis. So, on Saturday mornings, they
used to play secretly at Ellis Park or other suburban courts because it was risky for a black man and a white man to play together in a white neighbourhood. Andre would tell Mark about his first experience in America. In Africa he was born into a well-to-do white family, enjoyed all the benefits of a rich white boy born in South Africa – the best type of education in white-only schools, the obedient services of black nannies and black servants who called him *baas*, lessons in tennis, music, swimming, cricket, rugby, dance and all other things which were part of the white people’s culture in South Africa. He had believed like the other South African whites, that they were destined by God to lord over the blacks who were created by God to serve the whites. But his four year stay in America for education, completely changed this view. In his own words:

“All this was my world, my reality. Then suddenly there I was, at eighteen, thrust into a world where all those illusions were shattered. In America blacks attended the same schools with me, sat in the same classes and heard the same teachers, some of whom were blacks. I slept with blacks in the same dormitory, ate meals with them in the same cafeterias. I was shocked and horrified. No one was calling me *baas* and master any longer.” (291)

Earlier, Andre had also told Mark as follows:

“It was very frightening at first”, he said, “to see black people and white people living together side by side in New York, Washington, cities as big as Johannesburg and Cape Town. In America there are no laws which keep blacks and whites apart. Blacks vote and get elected to the American parliament, where together with whites they make laws for the benefit of everyone in the country.

And laws say that all people are created equal by God, and therefore should be judged not by their colour but only on merit.”(290)

One day, they went out in Andre’s car and when the car was parked, Mark hurriedly changed into the backseat because it was an offence for a black to sit beside a white in the front seat. Thus Mark was careful when both of them moved in the city in Andre’s car. Andre also told Mark to imagine the American situation in the South African places like Johannesburg, Soweto and Alexandra, without any laws of
segregation like Group Areas Act. Andre’s words immensely incited Mark’s imagination and his dream to see this Promised Land, i.e., America, was further intensified. After listening to Andre’s accounts of American society, Mark thought as follows:

My mind was feverishly trying to compare American society, the way Andre depicted it, with that of South Africa. There was no comparison whatsoever. The two societies appeared light years apart. America seemed a society moving rapidly toward a greater accommodation of its diverse population, South Africa on the other hand was moving with equal speed if not more, toward a separation of all races. (292)

In this chapter, one can see that apart from the Narrative code, Cultural and Semic codes operate in a complementary manner. If the Narrative code describes the chronological chain of events, the Cultural code holds mirror to the contrast between the American Society enlightened by democracy and the South African Society afflicted with racial discrimination and apartheid. The Semic code enlightens the reader regarding the changed character of Andre Zietman, a white South African and that of Mark Mathabane, an optimistic black youth living in impoverished conditions.

**Chapter 47: Narrative, Cultural, Semic, Hermeneutic Codes (pp.292-296)**

In this chapter, the main events narrated are: further development of friendship between Andre and Mark, Mark’s family facing hard times, Mark’s futile attempts at getting part time jobs, Andre’s help of offering a job at his sports shop but Mark’s decline, Andre’s help by giving Mark fifty rands which sustains Mark’s family, Mark’s winning of Alexandra Open tennis championship for a second time, the renewal of Simba Quix’s scholarship to Mark, all the members of Mark’s family persuading him to accept the job at Simba Quix, including Uncle Piet, Granny, Aunt Bushy, Uncle Cheese and his father, and his decision not to take up the job offered to him.

The friendship between Andre and Mark grew closer and closer and they continued to practice tennis surreptitiously. Andre respected the sentiments of Mark’s though he differed with him sometimes. Taking Andre’s example as a changed and enlightened South African white, Mark hoped that the rest of the whites in South Africa would also change if they wanted to. To quote Mark:
… if four years of living in America had taught him that apartheid was wrong, wrong, wrong, then I had hope that someday the rest of his race could similarly awaken-if they wanted to. (292)

Johannes’s family started facing a tough time. His mother had to leave her job due to child delivery, this time of a pretty dimpled girl named Linah. By now they were two sons and five sisters. His father also had lost his job. There was starvation in the family. Johannes tried for part time jobs, but he failed either because he had too much education or he had no work permit and no pass. Andre, once, offered him a job in his sports shop, Johannes declined the offer for the fear of losing time for their tennis practice. Then Andre gave him fifty (50) rands which sustained the family during that hard period. With that money, Mark was able to buy the family groceries, infant diapers, medicine and food till his mother resumed her job as a “washing girl”. Andre also gave him a bag full of tennis clothes and tennis rackets. The clothes were used by Mark and his siblings. Further Mark’s game of tennis improved so greatly by his practice with Andre and Helmut, that he won the Alexandra Open Tennis Championship for a second time. He passed Form Four in the top one percent of the class and the Simba Quix Company renewed their scholarship for him. Thus when he completed his seventeenth birthday, Johannes entered the final year of matriculation and started working hard. The Simba Quix Company’s manager, Mr. Wilde, offered him a job in his company where they paid equal salaries to whites and blacks in their attempt to remove apartheid, at least, in their company. Uncle Piet and others persuaded him to accept the offer so that Johannes could join the minority number of well-to-do black middle class families living mostly in an area called Dube. But they were conservative and pro-government by supporting apartheid and denouncing democracy. The government showed their well-built houses with two-door garages, swimming pools, tennis courts, electricity and gardens, to foreigners, particularly to Americans, Japanese and Europeans, as a show piece to prove the benefits of apartheid. All this was false as Johannes knew it. But these blacks living at Dube were very happy and always were in the good books of the government. For this reason, all the well-wishers of Johannes including Uncle Piet, Aunt Bushy, his Granny, Uncle Cheese of the penitentiary and also his father pressurized him to accept the job offer made by Mr. Wilde of Simba Quix company. But what Johannes primarily wanted was not money, comfort and physical safety, but he wanted freedom to live like a free
citizen in his own country. Therefore, he did not accept the offer of employment. He would not be happy as long as there was apartheid in South Africa. Hence, the protagonist says:

Something inside me told me I would never be happy. I had to leave South Africa somehow, somehow I had to get to America, the Promised Land, where I hoped to find the freedom to use whatever talents I had. (296)

But how to do so was a big question for him.

In this chapter, it is noticed that the Narrative code keeps the progression events in tact while the Cultural code proves that there were large-hearted and broad-minded white men like Andre Zietmen who loves and helps Mark in a time of need and Mr. Wilde, the Simba Quix manager offers him a good job on a par with his white employees. Further, the Cultural code also describes what would happen to a black family in Alexandra when both the parents were out of job, and how difficult it was to get a part time job for an educated black youth like Johannes for want of a pass book and a work permit. It is ironical that Mark’s education became a disqualification for him in this regard. The Semic code throws further light on different characters in the narrative including Andre, members of Mark’s family, the well-to-do middle class black families at Dube who serve as show-piece for the government to support apartheid in the eyes of foreign dignitaries and tourists, and finally on the character of Mark himself who was not tempted by the Simba Quix company’s job offer because his principal goal in life was the removal of apartheid and freedom for all blacks in South Africa. The Hermeneutic code concludes this chapter with a suspense or dilemma whether Mark would ever be able to reach America, his Promised Land.

Chapter 48: Narrative, Symbolic, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.298-304)

This chapter narrates the events in South Africa, particularly in Johannesburg triggered off by the death of Steven Biko’s death in police custody.

Steven Biko, a thirty-three-year black robust and charismatic leader of the Black Conscious Movement, an organization that had been fighting peacefully to end apartheid, was arrested on 16th August under Terrorism Act and he died after sixteen days of detention. The government gave false news that he died of brain hemorrhage on the way when they were taking him from Durban jail to Johannesburg for
interrogation. It was obvious that he was killed either at Durban itself or on the way to Johannesburg. Many newspapers, opposition leaders in Parliament, the UNO and others demanded a full inquiry denouncing the Draconian apartheid laws of South Africa. The Black Consciousness Movement declared its decision to continue their struggle. Several other pro-black organizations like the Black Consciousness Movement, the Black Parents’ Association, the Black Peoples Convention, the Black Communities Programmes, the South African Students’ Organisations (SASO), the Christian Institute were banned as Communist fronts. The largest black newspaper, the *World* was closed and its editor and journalists were detained. Even white leaders like Beyers Naiude and Donald Woods, a friend of Biko were also arrested. Alexandra was surrounded by army vehicles in constant vigilance. Blacks betrayed blacks. To quote the narrator:

> Mass paranoia so gripped the ghettos, reminding me of the Reign of Terror during the French Revolution, that I could not even trust my own mother. (297)

Seething with anger and helplessness, Johannes wanted to do something to avenge the deaths of hundreds of innocent black children. But he was unable to do anything due to his constant loyalty to books and tennis. He felt guilty, fighting against his own conscience. Finally he made a decision as follows:

> As I grappled with my conscience, in me became born a fanatical determination that if I ever left South Africa alive, I would devote every minute of my time, every ounce of my strength, to fighting for the liberation of my countrymen. What my weapons would be I didn’t know. (298)

In this brief chapter, along with the Narrative code, the Symbolic, the Semic and the Hermeneutic codes also operate. The death of an active African leader in police custody, its aftermath in the form of a series of arrests of leaders and closure of newspapers and banning of several prominent black organizations and the protagonist’s reaction to these events have been narrated with a remarkable accuracy that enriches the realistic nature of the novel. The Semic code reveals the multi-pronged efforts of black leaders, parliamentarians, journalists, editors and the reaction of the global community on the one side and the increased wicked measures adopted by the government. Thus the Semic code operates in conjunction with the Symbolic
code. Finally the Hermeneutic code portrays the dilemma in the protagonist’s mind about what to do with a final decision to fight but without any clear-cut solution or programme.

Chapter 49: Narrative, Cultural and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.298-304)

This chapter describes Johannes’s entry into the SAB Open after a series of encouraging and discouraging circumstances.

The SAB (South African Breweries) Open Tennis Tournament was announced one month in advance. It was the same tournament in which Andre Ashe participated in 1973. Oven Williams, distinguished as an innovative and astute director of SAB, with a global reputation, wanted to make South African tennis integrated in a gradual manner. That is, he wanted to enlist some black tennis players in the tournament such that this would begin to remove apartheid at least in the sports world of South Africa. Johannes felt that black players were not yet qualified or experienced enough to participate in this tournament. He opined as follows:

But the best of us weren’t good enough to even win a match in the qualifying round: a sort of mini-tournament where scores of amateurs and professionals (a majority of them white South Africans) who didn’t have enough points to qualify played each other a handful of slots in the main draw. (298)

Another hurdle was that many blacks thought that it was a trick adopted by the white tennis officials to show the world that South African tennis was not racial. There was a debate on this issue between black and white tennis officials. Johannes did not want to be another sacrificial lamb in this white tennis politics. A third discouraging point was that in many international competitions, South African players were banned due to apartheid. Therefore, SALTU was facing a threat of expulsion from International Tennis Federation (ITF) unless it opened its doors to blacks. It is against this backdrop that SALTU was frantically searching for black token players to wipe out its stigma of apartheid in its effort to become a respected member in the community of international sports associations. Peter Murphy who was aware of Johannes’s association with the Barretts Tennis Ranch requested Helmut to persuade Johannes to enter the SAB Open. When Helmut brought this matter to him, Johannes refused to do so. But Helmut convinced him by saying that this was “a once-in-a lifetime
opportunity” (300) for Johannes to meet at lot of distinguished American tennis players who might help him to get a tennis scholarship to go to America and study there. Mark practiced frantically to the point of exhaustion such that his mother told him to give up his effort. But Andre gave him practice, Scaramouche encouraged him, as did Wilfred and Owen Williams. Therefore, he agreed finally to enter the tournament. His first match was with Abe Segal a senior and experienced player and a former Wimbledon Doubles Champion, who would easily trounce Mark. Thus Mark had second thoughts. Therefore he requested Owen Williams to give him one day to think about it.

In this chapter, the Narrative code takes care of the chronological progression of events while the Cultural code explains the internal and international status of South African tennis and the politics involved in this matter. The Hermeneutic code leaves the protagonist in indecision which creates suspense in the narrative.

Chapter 50: Narrative, Cultural and Semic Codes (pp.304-313)

This chapter is a very crucial one because, the ambition of the protagonist, Johannes (or Mark) to go to America through tennis, takes a material shape in the form Mark’s friendship with the most distinguished white American Wimbledon champion, Stanley Smith and his wife Marjory.

On the following Saturday morning was the day of Mark’s most important tennis match. Having been encouraged by Wilfred who couldn’t accompany him but who gave him taxi fare and good advice, Mark reached Ellis Park Tennis Stadium at nine 0’ clock in the forenoon. He avoided many blacks who hated him and reached the Stadium where his match was scheduled to be with Abe Segal. Among the players there were several other celebrities like Stan Smith, Roscoe Tanner and others.

Mark, with an empty stomach started the game slowly. But Abe Segal, a very experienced player was indeed an overmatch for Mark. So he made many mistakes and Segal defeated him in the first two sets with the scores of 6-2 and 6-3. Mark felt desperate and went back to the locker room where there were many other white South African players preparing for their own turns of matches. They smiled at him and said encouraging words. In contrast, the black players laughed at him. He met several American players who gave him advice and their addresses to write to them to their former schools mentioning that he knew them. He returned home feeling totally
humiliated. Afterwards, one day he found a news item that he was banned from black tennis for life. Owen Williams advised him to wait and see the end of the tournament. On Tuesday, not feeling like going to Ellis Park, Mark kept wandering about the tennis courts nearby where in one court; Stan Smith and Bob Lutz were practicing. Smith attracted him much with his ease and grace in his movements in the game. Both of them were great players and to watch them playing was a great exciting experience for Mark. After the practice, Stan smiled at him and asked whether Mark would like to play with him. In fact Smith who was a Wimbledon champion was Mark’s hero and role-model. They started playing and Smith taught him several things about the game in an encouraging and friendly manner. Mark’s game seemed to have improved. After a few hits were over, Smith’s wife, Marjory Gengler joined them. She was a beautiful woman. They invited him to the Players’ Lounge. On the way, because it was cold Smith gave his sweater to Mark to wear. Mark wanted to keep it as a great memento in his life. On the way, on their request, Mark also told them about his own story and the miserable conditions in which he was brought up and how he practiced tennis. At the Lounge they treated him as their equal unlike South African whites. Over snacks, Mark told them further the horrible conditions, constant threat to life and useless Bantu education at schools and about the atrocities of apartheid. He would have told them further about how blacks suffered in ghettos and how the police and the soldiers harassed the blacks in the ghettos but, he didn’t do so because he thought they would not believe him or they would have been upset. So gentle was their behaviour and talk. Smith wanted to introduce Mark to his hosts, a Christian couple, Agnes and Premer. As of Agne’s name sounded like Afrikaans, Mark was doubtful about them, but Stan told her story of suffering at Nairobi in Kenya during the Mau Mau uprising and how her parents were killed by the Mau Mau revolutionaries, in spite of their sympathy for the movement. Mark was moved by her story. Mark kept meeting Stan and Marjory till the last day of their return to America. He requested Stan Smith and Marjory to help him to get a tennis scholarship so that he would be able to travel to America for higher studies. They promised to help him, but said that it would take quite some time. Stan said that Marjory and he would write to Mark. Mark also told them that he had been banned from black tennis and therefore his future plans of tennis in South Africa were very bleak. But there was a chance for him to partake in the SAB open going to be started by Sugar Circuit. Then Stan talked to Owen Williams and recommended Mark to enable him to participate in the
tournaments to be held at Port Elizabeth and Cape Town for which he would bear all expenses of Mark’s. It would amount to six hundred (600) rands (or 500 dollars) a fabulous amount as per Mark’s estimate. Stan also arranged for three Maxply rockets and a dozen shorts and shirts from Abe Segal. Stan and his wife, despite their wish, could not visit Mark’s house in Alexandra for want of permit as well as time. Though Mark wanted to keep his prospective participation in tennis tournaments at Port Elizabeth and Cape Town, as a secret, he could not do so when his mother questioned him about the tennis clothes and tennis rackets. She felt very happy and both of them prayed to God and thanked Him.

In this chapter the Narrative code carries out the function of narration of the story, whereas the Cultural code depicts the politicization of black tennis in South Africa as a result of which Mark is permanently banned from South African black tennis. The Semic code describes the series of dilemmas faced by Mark before he finally decides to enroll himself for the SAB Open, his participation and defeat by Abe Segal, a former Wimbledon Champion, but the encouragement he receives from the other white players. Especially his friendship with Stan Smith and his wife is a turning point in his fortunes as Stan promises him to help him get admission into some American University on the basis of his achievements both in studies and tennis. Thus this chapter ends on a very optimistic note for Johannes alias Mark, the central character and narrator of the story.

**Chapter 51: Narrative, Cultural, Semic, Symbolic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.313-323)**

This chapter continues the story of Mark in terms of some important events like his trip to Port Elizabeth and Cape Town to participate in the tennis tournaments, sponsored by Sugar Circuit with Stan Smith’s help, his experiences at the posh hotel where he is given accommodation equal to that of white players’; the white players mistaking him for a black American; his failure in the match at Port Elizabeth; his trip to Cape Town, but his failure there also due to an accidental sprain of his ankle; his successful conduct of tennis clinics at Guguletu and Nyanga, the ghettos of Cape Town, the condition of apartheid in Pretoria being worse than that in Johannesburg; his return home and futile attempts to get membership in Wanderers Club, a white tennis club; and his dilemma whether to join a tribal university or wait for an American tennis scholarship.
That Stan Smith sponsored Mark to play in the Sugar Circuit tournaments at Port Elizabeth and at Cape Town made a lot of blacks envious of him and they hated him. Mr. Montesisi, of the Cue Promotions Office planned for his trip. Mark would leave from Jans Smuts Airport of Johannesburg, stay at a hotel near the tennis courts in Port Elizabeth and then at Cape Town he would stay at the home of a Trankeian diplomat, about half a mile from the tennis courts.

Mark did not like the fake independence given to Transkei, the homeland of Xhosas. Its independence is only name’s sake and no other country in the world recognised it except Pretoria. Technically, there was no apartheid in this tiny country, but in fact it was worse than in Johannesburg. Mark’s thought in this connection are noteworthy:

Apartheid was purely and simply a scheme to perpetuate white dominance, greed and privilege. Surely, there is no justification under the sun for regarding a Chinese as a nonwhite and a Japanese as white, a black living in Soweto or Alexandra as a native and a black from America as an “honorary white”, and from Zambia or Zimbabwe as a “foreign native”. (314)

On the plane which was his first experience in life, he watched the beautiful landscape of South Africa. He was seated beside a middle aged white woman who smiled at him. Suddenly, he wanted to go to the bathroom and with great difficulty, and with the help of a stewardess he was able to find it and ease himself up. The white woman asked him whether he was a tennis player and he said ‘yes’. They began talking about tennis, because she was also a tennis lover and saw Wimbledon several times. She wished him the best. After reaching Port Elizabeth, he was lodged along with some other white players in a high-class hotel which charged 150 rands per week. He was treated like a dignitary. Elderly waiters and waitresses called him ‘Sir’ and ‘Master’ in spite of his objection. He met many South African whites in the dining hall and elsewhere in the hotel and all of them treated him as their equal. He also played and practiced tennis with several white American players and befriended them. But at the tournament he lost both in the singles and the doubles. He left for Cape Town two days before the weekend. At Cape Town he was received by the Trankeian diplomat and his wife. Their home was located in a beautiful place. Mark’s description of Cape Town is interesting:
Cape Town was known as the home of the Coloureds and one of the few places in South Africa where blacks were in a minority. Given its long miscegenation history – began when Jan Van Riebeeck and his men, the first whites to settle South Africa, arrived in 1652 without wives – the city was purported to be a most liberal place. But the liberalism, I soon found out, was skin-deep applying only between Coloureds and whites: blacks were still throttled by the full apartheid machinery. (318)

Mark wanted to play better in Cape Town but unfortunately when he was jogging late in the evening, he stepped into a pothole and severely sprained his ankle. Consequently, he lost his singles in the tournament and dropped out from the doubles. He was very much disappointed and depressed. In order to compensate for his failure he arranged for some tennis clinics in two ghettos of Cape Town, viz, Guguletu and Nyango. The response and results were wonderful and the training camps (or clinics) were a full success. The diplomat, his host, was a staunch opponent of apartheid and took him to the Crossroads Squatters Camp which was much worse than Alexandra. Consider the following words of the diplomat:

“Every single day “, the diplomat said, “these people have to wake up at dawn, dismantle their shacks and hide them in the bush because the authorities raid the place every morning with tear gas launchers, bulldozers and crowbars. The authorities have decreed that Crossroads should go”. (319)

Explaining how, in Transkei, the blacks were unable to eke out a living, flocked to cities, the narrator further adds:

The Pretoria government paid no attention to such facts in its homeland nightmare. So black families were forcibly torn apart, with men remaining in single-sex barracks to work in the cities, and women and children deported to starve and suffer in homelands ruled by Pretoria-anointed dictators whose brutality against their own kind often surpassed that of the South African government.

The motive of apartheid was clear : divide and rule ; pit brother against brother, sister against sister. (320)
After his return from Cape Town, Mark tried to join as a member in the Wanderers Club, a white tennis club, but it was not possible. The Club’s President, Mr. Fergerson, in spite of his personal willingness, could not give Mark membership as it was against the Club Committee’s decision not to take blacks as members since it would cost more money to equip them with separate showers, locker rooms, restaurants and bathrooms as per the rules of apartheid. Mark could participate in their tournaments, if he was willing to use the servants’ bathrooms and eat where they eat. So, he couldn’t become a member in spite of the recommendations of Mr. Owen Williams, the Director of SAB.

This helpless situation placed Mark in a dilemma, whether to pursue higher education in a tribal university against his own wish or to wait for some good news from America.

In this chapter, all the five Semiotic codes operate in a complementary way. If the Narrative code takes care of the progression of events, the Cultural code describes Mark’s first plane journey, the conditions in Port Elizabeth and Cape Town and his final failure in the two tournaments along with the life conditions of the blacks in Cape Town and as also his failure to obtain membership in the whites’ Wanderers (Tennis) Club. The Semic code throws light on different characters including that of the protagonist and the places he visits. The Symbolic code further reveals the atrocity of apartheid in Cape Town while the Hermeneutic code finally depicts the protagonist’s dilemma of what to do in future.

**Chapter 52: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic Codes (pp.323-328)**

This chapter relates the subsequent events in the life of Mark, the narrator. The events include his failure in the matriculation exam as he failed in Tsonga, his own mother tongue, the later correction, the final result being second-class, an encouraging letter to Mark’s from Stanley Smith, his mother’s advice to him to get a job; his taking part in white tennis tournaments, his acquaintance with a white coach, Keith Brebnor; his regular visits to Ellis’ Park every Saturday for tennis practice, improvement of his game etc.

This chapter begins with the publication of matriculation results in the newspaper, the *World*. Mark’s name was not there which meant he had failed. He was shocked. His mother was also dismayed and said that there could have been a mistake.
The next day, he went to his school at Tembisa. Already there were many students who had failed. A student shouted that the bloody Boers failed them deliberately. Mark managed to meet the principal alone and the latter showed him the computer printouts of the results sent from Pretoria. Mark got A’s and B’s in other subjects but failed in Tsonga, his mother tongue. On the following day the principal wrote to the Department of Bantu Education for clarification. In the mean time Mark could not eat, sleep or play tennis because with his failure in matric he could neither join a tribal university nor go to America. After a few days a reply came from the Department of Bantu Education. Though he failed in Tsonga, in view of his good performance in the other subjects, he was awarded a second class instead a third-class pass. This was a slight consolation for Mark. The same week, he also received a letter from Stanley Smith from America stating that George Toley, his own coach, accepted to write Mark to participate in the NCAA tournament in America going to take place shortly. This letter gave Mark a new hope and he wrote a reply to Stan. His mother asked him about his taking up a job with Simba Chips Company. Mark said ‘No’, still hoping to go to America. She insisted that he had to take up a job. As he had neither a pass nor a work permit, to apply for a job, his mother advised him to try for a permit. But he didn’t. He was jobless till February but continued playing and practicing tennis at the ranch. Though he was not a member, the white club allowed him to participate in their tournaments. In his practice he was lucky to receive training from Keith Brebnor, a so senior and experienced coach that several who received coaching from him became world class tennis stars. His practice for eight weeks under the coaching of Keith Brebnor and his practice with the white players, he being the only black, proved to be a highly rewarding experience for Mark. Keith encouraged him earnestly and advised him not to stop playing and practicing. Many whites who were trained by Keith were about to go to play junior tournaments in America and Europe. But the membership fee was three hundred (300) rands which Mark did not have. Thus he missed that chance.

In this chapter, as one can notice, the Narrative code operates via the progression of events whereas the Cultural code reveals the surprising facts about Bantu Education system and their gullibility in announcing the results of matric. Mark’s is a case in point. If the Semic code throws light on characters, the Symbolic code shows the negative attitude of the Boer education system against those who do not learn local languages as per their expectations.
Chapter 53: Narrative, Cultural, Semic, Symbolic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.328-345)

This is rather a lengthy chapter in which a number of events are narrated. Mark is arrested for moving in the white neighbourhood; his interrogation by the police, and his release being a student, his father’s anger, and his mother’s advice to him to get a job; his increased sympathy for his mother who becomes a diabetic now; his getting a job at Barclay’s Bank on Andre’s recommendation as Andre’s father is a member on the executive board of the Bank; Mr. Bandridge’s, the personnel officer of the Bank at its Johannesburg headquarters, liking for Marks for his good performance in the interview; his appointment; his bitter experience at the government office to obtain a pass and permit, particularly the physical exam. The entire process taking a full day; his not getting any letter from America; his joining the new job at Elloff Street branch of Barclay Bank; his getting the first pay cheque for 295 rands; his buying a new suit for himself and new clothier for his siblings; his mother’s joy; increase in his salary for his good performance; his preference to stay at Alexandra instead of Tembisa; his continuation of tennis practice at Ellis Park; his meeting with a tennis star, Lennart Bergelin a white South African coach and also with Guillermo Vilas another player and poet; Marks participation in a Grand Prix Tournament at Ellis Park; his receiving two letters from America etc.

As hinted above, this passage marks the final turning point in Mark’s career. He obtained a job in Barclays Bank with the help of his white friend, Andre and his father, and received salary on a par with white and Indian employees in the Bank. With his appointment, he also succeeded in getting a pass and work permit though after long waiting and physical humiliation. He received his first salary of 295 rands which was a fabulous amount for his family. He bought new clothes for himself and for his brother and sisters. His mother was happy. He also got an increment of 40 more rands in recognition of his good performance. Though he became eligible to live in a house at Tembisa, Mark preferred to live at Alexandra in order to continue his tennis practice. He participated in a Grand Prix professional tournament at Ellis Park and conducted a tennis clinic along with such white African tennis celebrities like Lennart Bergelin and made friends with an Argentenian player, Guillermo Vilas who was also a poet. Mark also had written some poems in English. They exchanged their pleasure in poetry. After the tournament was over, Mark received two letters from
America – one from George Toley and another from Dick Benjamin from Princeton University. He replied to the Princeton University letter giving the necessary details about his family, income etc. He also wrote a letter to Stan. But he kept everything about his American information a secret for an obvious reason that the South African government might thwart his attempts to go to America. A month later, he received a letter from Princeton University that he would be given admission along with a scholarship to meet all his expenses. He was asked to fill in an application form and send it immediately. In June, Mark received another letter from America, from the tennis coach of a Limestone College in Gaffney, South Carolina. The coach, Professor Killion wrote this letter which was short. Mark was offered 6,000 U.S. dollars a year as a tennis scholarship and advised to sign the contract form and send it back, and that Mark had to be there by 18th September. Mark sent his letter of agreement signing the contract. He shared his joy with his family first and later with Wilfred and Owen. All were very happy. His mother warned him not to announce this news to all, and reveal it to others only when he would be leaving. As there was still time for his departure, he went to the US Consulate library and read books about American culture, society and government. Particularly the Preamble of the American Constitution and Declaration of Independence impressed him so greatly that he copied it several times as if it were his Bible!

At the end of June, he received a package from Limestone College containing a letter of admission, a letter from Bethel Baptist Church in Gaffney welcoming him and another letter of congratulations from Professor Killion. Stan offered him help to get a visa. Then accompanied by Mr. Montsisi, he went to the Department of the Interior in Pretoria to apply for a passport. But their effort was in vain, the passport was denied for the present as it would take a longer time to complete the official procedure. Then, Stan suggested on phone to approach the American embassy for a visa. After three days he obtained the visa and again went to the Department of the Interior for a passport. This time the official asked Mark to deposit four hundred rands for the passport and show the source of money for the plane ticket etc. Mr. Montsisi said that they would be taken care of. For the four hundred rands Mark along with Mr. Montsisi approached several members of the BTF board and others. Luckily one of them who was a white multi-millionaire industrialist, Alf Chalmers, gave him 1200 rands which was adequate enough for the plane ticket as well as for the passport.
money. Mark obtained his passport in August. Then he quit his bank job and utilized the remaining time for tennis practice and for preparations for his American trip.

In this chapter, the Narrative code takes care of the progression of the story while the Cultural code describes the arrest and release of Mark by the police, his getting a Bank job and his efforts for a pass and permit, his good salary and his ultimate success in getting a pass. The Semic code throws light on the different characters and places while the Symbolic code delineates how non-cooperative the black and Afrikaans officials were in helping Mark as against his white friends and well-wishers who helped him. The Hermeneutic code finally resolves the problems faced by Mark in obtaining a visa and a passport and in buying the plane ticket with the help of a white multi-millionaire industrialist on the board of BTF and his final tennis practice and preparations for his flight to America. Thus Mark’s problems and ambition which have been kept under suspense hitherto are resolved in this chapter in terms of the Hermeneutic code.

Chapter 54: Narrative, Cultural and Semic Codes (pp.345-350)

This is the final chapter of Part Three as well of the novel. In this chapter the realization of the protagonist’s dream to go to America is described.

On 16th September, 1978, the entire family of Mark’s woke up early in the morning because it was the day of his departure to America. Mark completed his eighteenth year and now he was going to his Promised Land. He was “the first black boy ever to leave South Africa on a tennis scholarship”, an important link between his country and the outside world. (346). The baggage was packed and ready. His going to America on a tennis scholarship was almost a miracle. All the members of his family were tense with anxiety, joy and sorrow. It was half-past five. He bade farewell to his crying mother who assured him that her tears were those of joy. She said:

“I’m very happy that God has given you this opportunity to make something of yourself, of your life. Don’t waste it, child”. (346)

He promised her not to waste the opportunity. His brother George began crying. Mark kissed each of his five sisters and they also began crying. He kissed his father again and again and the old man advised him to take care of himself. His father also shed tears, as he was his father after all, in spite of his differences with his son.
Mark also shed tears. He promised them to write always as requested by his father. His mother came to him and kissed him again and said:

“Wherever you go in this world, child, always believe in yourself. Always have hope. Always have faith. Always believe in the power of God and never forsake Him. Trust in Him, always, with all your heart and all your strength, and He will guide you in all your ways. He made it all happen”. (347)

The day was breaking outside the shack. Again Mark embraced and kissed his brother and sisters who had been an integral part of his life. He shuddered about the future of South Africa, of Alexandra and of his family because of apartheid and whether his family would remain together before his return after four years. Particularly his siblings were young and innocent liable to be subjected to a lot of suffering and feared whether they would survive it. He remembered the happiest and the most miserable times he had spent with them. He pondered over:

I felt the responsibilities piling on my conscience. By going to America I felt that I owed the duty to my race and country to use my life in a meaningful way, to see my success and failures as the successes and failures of the black race. Would I, in whatever endeavours I ended up undertaking in America, succeed, and would I do so nobly? (348)

He felt that he could never really leave South Africa and Alexandra as he was part of South Africa described as “a tragically beautiful land” by Alan Paton. Then the driver brought the car to take Mark to the airport. It was a small car and the driver-cum-owner offered Mark a free ride. None of the members of his family could accompany him to the airport. Therefore, his mother requested the car driver to see her son off at the airport because her son was now “in God’s hands” (349). Again his brother and sisters started crying. Holding back his own tears Mark consoled them saying that he would be back in four years and would write to them and send postcards of big cities in America. Inside, his heart, he was afraid whether his letters would reach them because such letters used to disappear mysteriously in Alexandra. So leaving everything to time, he hardened his own heart, kissed his brother and sisters for a third time. His youngest sisters clung to him. His mother and Flora, the eldest sister, took them away. He didn’t dare to kiss his mother for fear of enhancing the sadness of the situation and looked at his brother who almost reminded himself at
that age. He wanted to take him with him as he was worried about his brother’s future in Alexandra. He advised him to be brave, have confidence in himself, to set goals and work hard to achieve them, and to take care of their ailing mother, father and sisters. Then he moved to the car and, got into it. When the car moved forward on the rugged road he turned back to find his entire family standing in a row and sadly waving their hands. Mark followed his destiny.

This is a very moving chapter that describes Mark’s parting with his family in Alexandra and in South Africa. One can notice how, beside the Narrative code, the Cultural and Semic codes are manipulated in the narration of events. If the Cultural code reveals the distinct achievement of Mark the “Kaffir Boy”, who is now going to America on a tennis scholarship, the Semic code holds mirror to the family affections and bonds of love within the members of a family whether poor or rich, black or white and so on. Apartheid may be a matter of South Africa, but love, separation, sorrow and anguish about the unknown future – all are universal human sentiments. In this way, the narrative ending acquires a universal appeal.

In this section on Kaffir Boy, it is noted how the Semiotic codes have operated together to provide a unifying narrative thread to the novel which is purely realistic, being an autobiography, in spite of the fact that the narrative is simply chronological without twists or any other fictional techniques like flash-back or Magic Realism, it makes a very interesting reading as a story thus proving Mark Mathabane to be one of the best story tellers from South Africa, though it is his own story. Finally, one can say that this novel is a best example of Realism in the genre of autobiography. Nowhere does the reader feel bored, precisely because of this quality, during the process of his reading. This aesthetic effect is largely due the convergent function of the different Semiotic codes, excellently manipulated by the author, Mark Mathabane.

4.2. WAYS OF DYING BY ZAKES MDA

This novel was first published in 1991 by Oxford University Press, South Africa, and its second edition in 1995 by Picador in New York. All the citations from this text in this chapter refer to the second edition of 1995. It may be noted here, however, it is considered chronologically an apartheid novel first published in 1991 whereas the system of apartheid came to an end in 1994 when South Africa attained political independence under the leadership of Nelson Mandela.
The text of this novel (1995) consists of ten chapters and runs into 212 pages. It is the story of a black South African youth named, Toloki, and his village woman Noria, both who left their village in rural South Africa and reached the capital city, Johannesburg at different periods of time, either not aware of the departure of the other.

The specialty of this novel is that it constitutes three major themes: first it narrates the story of the two main characters that belonged chronologically to the last phase of Apartheid in South Africa; second, the narrator of this novel is the collective community voice which is omniscient and omnipresent; and third, the author employs the new fictional technique of Magic Realism. Thus this novel has its own distinction in comparison with the other novels under study in the present work.

**4.2.1 A SYNOPSIS OF WAYS OF DYING**

In a certain village in rural South Africa, during the last years of the Apartheid, there lived some farmers in a small village. Jwara was a blacksmith and he had a black and ugly looking son, Toloki. There was another prosperous farmer and owner of cattle, by name Xesibe whose wife was known popularly as That Mountain Woman since her native village was located in a far off mountain valley. She was a tall and beautiful woman who was daring and modern in outlook. She also helped the villagers by curing their illnesses by giving herbal medicines. They had a daughter called Noria who was also very beautiful like her mother and additionally she had a sweet voice, mesmerizing smiles and laughter. People used to gather around her, make her laugh so that they would enjoy her enchanting laughter and song.

Toloki was sent to the village school when he was ten years old. Before that, he used to help his father by taking cattle, (goats and sheep) to the fields as a shepherd boy. Noria was also admitted in the village school. The school was a stone building with iron sheets for roof and it also served as the village church during holy occasions like Christmas, Sunday prayers and other festivals like baptism. The Principal of the school also served as the priest. Toloki was senior to Noria by three years. It is particularly interesting that Jwara loved Noria more than his own son because like many other villagers, he was also enchanted by Noria’s smiles, laughter and song. He made it his habit to work creatively in his smithy while Noria gave him company laughing and singing in an enthralling manner. Gradually Jwara neglected his normal work as a blacksmith and started making strange figurines with iron and brass under
the spell of Noria’s wonderful singing. For this service, Jwara would buy her sweets, chocolate and other gifts. Noria’s mother would feel proud of her daughter’s special gift of entertaining people with her sweet and pleasing laughter and songs. When Noria left the village school and joined the town school, even the bus drivers or mini-taxi drivers would not charge her any fare as they loved her for her smiles and laughter. Toloki continued his education at the village school. There was a love story about Noria’s mother, That Mountain Woman, that when she went to her parental village for delivery, a sexual relationship developed, by accident, between her and a young handsome medical assistant at the government hospital in a nearby town where she used to go for frequent medical check-up and for collecting the nutritious food items given to pregnant women at the hospital. This happened when she was eight months pregnant. One day the assistant came to her village receiving a fake message from the village that she had a severe pain in the abdomen. He borrowed the Land Rover Car of the hospital and reached her village. Sending out all women and men from the house, he spent more than one hour with this woman. Obviously they were enjoying sexual bouts. An old woman suspected something wrong and when her father and others broke open the door, they found the two lovers naked. The medical assistant was beaten black and blue, but a policeman appeared on the scene and saved him from death stating that it was the duty of the police to punish anyone and not the common public. After delivery, That Mountain Woman reached her husband’s village with her pretty baby, Noria. Though the scandal reached her husband’s village, she did not show any shame or regret and moreover, became more aggressive, and dominated her husband. This was, perhaps, the reason that Toloki’s mother always referred to Noria as that ‘stuck-up bitch’.

Toloki was a talented boy despite his ugly appearance, and one of his drawings of the month of April won him a prize in the national art competition and a copy of the calendar was kept in his classroom in his school. Strangely when he showed a copy of the national calendar with his April month drawing to his father, Jwara, the latter became furious and ordered him to throw it away. This incident greatly dismayed Toloki. His father always considered him ugly and worthless. On some other occasion, during Easter, Toloki unknowingly drank brandy with some other village boys who stole it from the priest’s house, and were drinking it hiding behind the church. Intoxicated by the brandy which he had tasted for the first time in
life, Toloki went into the church, and started singing hymns wrongly and too loudly for a long time and fell down unconscious on the floor. It was only the next morning that he came back to senses and went home. His father, who came to know about this shameless behaviour of his son, beat him up severely and kicked in his stomach such that Toloki vomited blood. His mother became very angry but she was helpless before the angry and aggressive mood of her husband. Feeling that he was alone and not wanted by anyone in the world, Toloki left home deciding not to return to his village as long as his father was alive. At that time he was hardly fifteen years old. He walked and walked through many villages without food for many days. And one day when he was almost exhausted and about to fall down on the road, a stranger helped him by giving some bread to eat as Toloki would not accept any alms. This stranger helped him to get a part-time job in a mill. There Toloki made friends with a fellow labourer who gave him shelter in his small hut where he and his father were living. This friend died accidentally when his white boss was experimenting shooting with his gun. For the white man it was ‘a fun’ to shoot at black workers and kill them to satisfy his sadistic pleasure. This incident made Toloki very sad and lonely and he left that village and reached the city of (Johannesburg) on foot.

His journey on the road took him three months to reach the city. After reaching the city, with great difficulty, he was able to find a job as a labourer at the docklands in loading the ships. He started sleeping in a place near the toilets at the railway station and thus the docklands became his residential ground for many years to come. Even this temporary job at the harbour was lost and he became jobless again. Luckily he had saved some money in the post-office with which he bought a cart-like trolley in which he kept sliced bread rolls and other eatables and roasted the meet and bread. He started a business of selling these eatables at a city centre and his business prospered. He made many friends, both men and women with whom he moved, drank, and spent time in the evenings. But unfortunately, one day his trolley was stolen when he went to the butcher’s to buy meat. His business collapsed and all his friends including the prostitutes, who had entertained him before, abandoned him. Again he was jobless. Then he remembered that Nefolovhodwe, his father’s friend and the poor carpenter in the village, had come long before to the city on Toloki’s father’s advice and now he grew into a prosperous businessman making coffins of different types and selling them. Hoping some help or employment from the
carpenter, Toloki went to the carpenter’s house which was a big mansion. But to his utter disappointment, Nefolovhodwe pretended not to have remembered either Jwara or Toloki. On continued persuasion, he gave him a part-time job on a commission-basis. Recently, the carpenter discovered that some thieves had been digging out his coffins from graves after the funerals and selling them at cheaper rates and making illegal money. Therefore, he appointed Toloki as a spy to catch hold of such coffin-thieves at graveyards in the night time. The payment would be in the form of commission, and not any regular salary. In this new job also Toloki failed because he could not catch any such thieves. Even the three thieves, whom he confronted one night at a posh cemetery, mercilessly beat him up unconscious. He came back to senses the next morning, went to his employer and reported what had happened. Nofolovhodwe became very angry and fired him from his part-time job. The carpenter had a young wife that is his second wife in the city while his first wife and nine children starved in the village. Luckily, this woman used to give Toloki some food to eat whenever he visited their house. Toloki left the carpenter’s house stating that he would pay back to the last cent which Nefolovhodwe had spent on him. The carpenter laughed at him mockingly.

A few days before, Toloki was lucky enough to have built a shack for himself along with a large number of homeless black people who against the law built shacks on the outskirts of the city. Losing his job, Toloki returned to his shack and started thinking seriously about his future. He starved for several days and spent sleepless nights. Then a new idea occurred to him. If making and selling coffins which were associated with death helped Nefolovhodwe to become rich, why would the same concept of death not help him? He wanted to start a new profession as a Professional Mourner, the first of its kind in South Africa (and in Johannesburg).

It was in Johannesburg, in the funeral of a young boy, on the Christmas Day that Toloki as a spectator saw Noria, nearly after twenty years. Her son was dead and his funeral was being conducted by the residents of a shack-settlement. Normally, funerals were not held on a Christmas Day, but on the insistence of Noria, the mother of the deceased, it was conducted and this showed her great influence on the poor and black residents of the settlement. The Nurse, who conducted the funeral, explained that this boy was killed by his own black people. Toloki did not understand this. When the funeral procession reached the main street, Noria sitting in a small van
driven by Shadrack, a tiny man who was the owner-cum-driver of the van, a long and grand marriage procession was moving from the opposite direction and both processions stopped and neither would give way to the other. The drivers abused each other and were about to come to blows. Then Toloki, in his costume of Professional Mourner interfered with the result that the driver of the marriage procession gave way not so much because of his respect for the Professional Mourner as because of the nauseating smell emanating from Toloki’s body and costume. Then Noria wanted to thank him and when he approached her, both of them recognized each other. Noria asked him to join for food after the funeral arranged at the house of the squatter-camp chairman. Toloki followed, washed his hand and left without eating any food. The next day Toloki went to Noria’s shack in the squatter camp, one of its kinds which rose up on the outskirts of the city against the wishes of the white Government of South Africa.

Next, the story of Noria, as narrated by the collective community narrator’s voice is as follows: As already mentioned above, Noria had grown into a beautiful girl. Before that, when Noria was ten and Toloki was thirteen, as schoolmates, they attended a funeral ceremony in their village for the first time. A girl of the school and Noria’s best friend was shot dead in the city where they went to perform choir singing at the funeral of their schoolmate, another girl, from the city who had been admitted in the village school by her parents as they wanted that their daughter had to be exposed to traditional education which was not offered in the city schools. This girl used to commute between the village and the city. Suddenly she had caught pneumonia and died. His funeral was to be held at the city churchyard. So, the village school principal who was also the village priest took in a bus, a group of girls and boys who had earned name as the best choir. This village choir performed excellently at the school girl’s funeral in the city and this made the local choir extremely jealous and angry. One of them who was crazy, opened fire. Unfortunately a girl in the village choir and the best friend of Noria’s died. Strangely enough, a day before, this girl had told Noria that she would die laughing shortly. Her premonition turned true, and her dead body was brought to the village and her funeral was conducted by the school’s principal who acted as the Nurse. This was an unforgettable and most sorrowful memory for both Toloki and Noria.
When Noria came of age, she looked most beautiful so that many young boys wanted to marry her, but That Mountain Woman, Noria’s mother, had high plans for her beautiful and fashionable daughter, i.e., Noria. In the mean time, a scrawny youth, Napu by name, who would frequently saunter in front of Noria’s house was successful in winning her love. Telling her mother that she was going to Jwara’s smithy to sing for him, Noria would meet Napu in the bushes on the outskirts of the village where they used to make love. The younger village boys who were mostly cowherds used to watch the sexual intercourse of the two lovers, hiding behind bushes used to enjoy the exciting spectacle. Once, Toloki also joined them, but his experience was different. After watching the love-making of Noria and Napu, Toloki vomited. Subsequently, Noria and Napu had a registered marriage in the town nearby much against the wishes of Noria’s parents. Her father disapproved of their marriage since Napu had not paid any ‘labola’ (i.e., the birde-money) as per their custom and his wife, That Mountain Woman, also hated the marriage because Napu was neither handsome, nor rich. Therefore, Noria left the village with her husband for the town where Napu had a small job. She became pregnant and came back to her village for delivery. She bore the child for fifteen months. When a boy baby was born, there was a serious dispute about naming the child, but Napu, with his strange courage incited by alcohol, succeeded in naming the boy Vutha after his own father. After a few days, when Noria went with her son back to her husband’s house in the town, she found that Napu had developed an illicit sexual relationship with a neighbouring woman. Angrily, she returned to her parents in the village. Her mother received her with affection, while her father hated her for this. After a few days Napu came to the village and begged Noria’s parents to send his wife and son with him. Against the wishes of her mother, and to the liking of her father, Noria left her village once again. Unfortunately, there was no improvement in Napu’s behaviour as he was a ‘koata’ (i.e., an uncivilized and uncultured person) as Noria’s mother used to call her father. Their financial situation was deteriorating day by day. Noria wanted to educate Vutha and in two or three years, Vutha had to be admitted in school. In the mean time, the town also had developed extensions. So she wanted to get a job of a sweeper or maid in one of the new government offices. But Napu would not agree to this. The next day Napu returned home fully drunk and drove her away from his house. Spending the night in a neighbour’s house, Noria returned to her native village next day along with her son. But the situation at home had changed: her mother was hospitalized with cancer for
which there was no cure in those days and her father was unwilling to let Noria live under his roof. He clearly told her that he would not take the responsibility of Noria and her son, nor would he feed them. Fortunately, Noria got the job of a sweeper in a government office in the town. So, she would travel to the town early in the morning and return home in the afternoon at 3 p.m. The taxi-drivers who had known her from her childhood would allow her to travel free without charging her any fare. Once she visited her mother in hospital. But her father at the village would not care for Noria’s son or wouldn’t give any food to the boy. Vutha was playing with the other village children in the mud. Noria was very much unhappy with her father’s irresponsibility and son’s miserable life. One day it so happened that when Noria was about to serve tea to her big bosses in her office, the big tray slipped from her hands so that the cups and saucers were broken into pieces. Immediately, she was dismissed from her job. In a depressed and dejected mood, she went to her mother in hospital and told her about what had happened. Another female patient in the bed side by, listened to her story and recommended Noria in her own place at the Bible Society where she herself had been working but she couldn’t rejoin due to her serious illness. Thus, Noria joined the Bible Society service as a sweeper. The other workers were also women and Christian. They were kind to her. One of these women, though their salaries were low, used to wear expensive dresses and lead a comfortable life. She had been working at an expensive hotel at night. She introduced Noria also to the nightly job at the hotel. Foreign tourists would stay in that hotel, would offer drinks, money and gifts. Obviously this was a call-girl’s job. But Noria started earning more money. With this money, she bought a new school uniform and shoes for her son and enrolled him at a private school in the town. But she could not look after her son because during the day time he was at school and in the night time, she was engaged in her job at the expensive hotel. This made her unhappy and there was no help whatever coming forth from her father. To solve this problem, she engaged a woman to cook food, feed and look after Vutha in her father’s house during her own absence. Once she also visited her mother in hospital along with her foreign friends. Her mother felt happy and assured Noria that in a short time, she would return home and teach a lesson to her father. When Vutha was in the second year of schooling, one day Noria returned home and found that the woman who was looking after Vutha was crying because Xesibe, Noria’s father, attempted to molest her. Therefore, that woman packed her things and left. Once again Noria was in problems. So taking her son and her things in
a suitcase, she left her father’s house and returned to her husband’s house in the town. But now Napu was living with another woman. Noria, asserting her position as Napu’s legal wife drove away that woman and started living there with her son. Napu, feeling guilty, could not stop her. Nevertheless he used to threaten her when he was drunk that he would run away with Vutha one day and teach her a lesson. They were not on talking terms. As if to make his threat true, one day when she returned to her shack, she found that Napu had run away with her son. She reported this to the police to no avail. The police said that those days several children were missing and it was not their duty to trace such children. Later, after many days Noria came to know from a tactless customer at the shebeen where she helped the owner, that Napu made Vutha a beggar boy and spent all the money given to Vutha as alms, drank and led a wayward life. They used to live in a cardboard hut under a bridge outside the city. One day, Vutha earned more money by begging. Napu took all that money, chained Vutha to a pole and left. He went on a drinking spree for days and, when he returned home, he found that Vutha died of starvation and stray dogs were feasting on his corpse. Napu became semi-mad, went on running and finally he fell in the river and was drowned to death. Noria left the town and reached the city of Johannesburg in a desperate mood. She couldn’t find any job there, but in the squatter camp, an old woman also a shebeen queen who had come to the city years ago from the same village as Noria, gave her shelter in her shack as a token of her gratitude to Noria’s mother who had cured her illness in the village years before. Though unemployed, Noria was able to live comfortably by helping other settlers and doing them service in need. She had acquired a shack of her own and cut all relations with men. Nevertheless, she became pregnant again and after fifteen months, she delivered a boy child and called him Vutha. She believed that the first son Vutha was reborn. The neighbours called him Vutha The Second. This boy who was very active was killed by the Young Tigers who were freedom fighters of the settlement, suspecting that he along with another boy divulged their plan of ambush to attack the rally planned by the migrant miners in the hostels, the followers of a wicked village chief and the soldiers of Battalion 77, and thus turned traitors. That is, Noria’s second son and the other boy who were black children were killed, having been set on fire by their own black people called Young Tigers. It is this Second Vutha’s funeral that Toloki attended as a spectator and not as a Professional Mourner, and met Noria nearly after twenty years.
The rest of the story deals with, Shadrack’s love for Noria and her rejection, several funerals in which Toloki acts as a Professional Mourner. Noria’s admiration for Toloki for his humanitarian and compassionate behaviour, Toloki’s leaving the docklands to live in Noria’s shack and their liking for each other etc.

Toloki helped Noria in rebuilding her burnt shack and decorated it with colourful pages from furniture catalogues and other pictures. They lived together happily. One day Nefolovhodwe, the rich carpenter, came to Noria’s shack in his big car and a truck. He told them that Jwara died a miserable death and his wife was now living with Xesibe. This became a scandal in the village. He brought the iron and brass figurines made by Jwara, Toloki’s father as per Jwara’s will. Jwara had haunted the carpenter in dreams and threatened him with ruin unless he handed over the figurines to his son as his legacy. Afraid of Jwara’s spirit how Nefolovhodwe brought all the figurines from late Jwara’s ruined smithy in a truck and dumped them beside Noria’s shack. Toloki first refused to take them, but on Noria’s persuasion he allowed the carpenter to leave the figurines there. These figurines in their odd, unearthly and awkward shapes interested the children and the passers-by greatly. As per the carpenter’s report an art dealer and the keeper of an archeological museum were interested in buying these figurines. Toloki decided to sell them and donate the money to the orphanage (i.e., the dumping ground) maintained by Madimbhazi where Noria also worked for orphaned and handicapped children.

There are many sections in the novel which describe the travail and tribulations as well as undeserving deaths of innocent and poor black people who came to the city from villages in search of employment and who lived illegally in squatter camps. They were killed by the police, by the wicked migrant miners from the hostels, by the cruel gangsters on the streets, on trains and everywhere. These are the several ways of dying. Nevertheless, Toloki and Noria who had also suffered in life for a long time started a new life in Noria’s shack in the squatter camp on the eve of the New Year’s Day. It is interesting to note that the narrative begins on a Christmas Day and concludes on the New Year’s Day.

4.2.2 A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF WAYS OF DYING

4.2.2.1 Chapter 1: Narrative, Semic, Cultural, Symbolic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp. 7-24)

This novel narrates the story of Toloki and Noria young South African villagers. Toloki leaves his native village at a very young age having been insulted by
his father, Jwara, a blacksmith, and reaches the capital city of South Africa, Johannesburg, travelling on foot for months together. On the way, he performs odd and sundry jobs to make a humble living. Once he reaches the city, he meets a former native of his own village, Nefolovhodwe, a furniture-maker who was a poor carpenter in the village and who had left for the city on the advice of Toloki’s father, his well-wisher and friend. Presently, this man has grown into a prosperous businessman dealing in making and selling coffins of different sizes and prices. Toloki was of the hope that being his father’s friend, this prosperous furniture-maker would be able to provide a job for him. To his great disappointment, Nefolovhodwe pretended not to have known Toloki or remembered Jwara, his erstwhile benefactor. Instead of helping Toloki, he abused, insulted and drove him out of his mansion. Now Toloki is reduced to almost a beggar and shelterless wanderer in the city. On Toloki’s serious thinking for days of suffering and starvation, a new idea strikes him. If coffin-making business which is associated with death enabled Nefolovhodwe to grow into a rich and successful man, the same idea of death should help Toloki also. Therefore, he invents a new profession, namely a Professional Mourner which has been unknown hitherto in the city. Thus, Toloki becomes the first Professional Mourner of South Africa. He also acquires a new type of costume for this new profession in a very ingenious manner. Between two big restaurants there is a small garment shop which gives different types of dresses and costumes on a rental basis. There Toloki finds a very attractive outfit in the window which he thinks will suit his new profession quite appropriately. But it is too expensive for him. Unable either to buy that dress or to escape from its attraction, Toloki starts sitting on the pavement and looking at the dress for the whole day, salivating with the gob of desire. The owners of the two restaurants who served food to the customers in chairs arranged on the pavement complained that this strange looking man with a leaking mouth was frightening their customers. On enquiry, they found the reason for Toloki’s regular and repugment appearance on the pavement. They made a compromise that they would buy him that dress on their own if he promised them not to be present there forever in future. This is how Toloki has acquired a strange-looking and odd outfit for his costume as a Professional Mourner.

As a Professional Mourner, Toloki is able to earn some money that helps him survive. The first chapter of this novel begins with Toloki attending the funeral of a
young boy who was killed by his own countrymen, and not either by the police or the government soldiers. The Nurse (i.e., the conductor of the funeral) explains to the audience who has attended the funeral, the circumstances in which the boy was shot to death by the black men who are fighting for freedom. This is unfortunate because the regular killing of the black people by the police has itself been the worst misfortune for the people of the squatter-camp (i.e., slum area inhabited by unemployed black dwellers) this boy’s death by his own black people is the most unfortunate event.

Toloki attends this funeral not as a professional mourner but as a spectator. He has an inkling that the deceased boy’s mother looks like Noria, his village woman. So, he pushes forward, but people object to his presence because they don’t need his services as they cannot afford to pay him. When he moves close to the people, they feel nauseated at the bad odour emanating from his body, his mouth and also from his old costume. He does not bathe every day, while the kind of food he consumes makes his mouth and breathe release a bad smell in conjunction with the dirty smell of his unwashed costume. After the Nurse’s speech, the funeral procession, an old van in which the deceased boy’s mother sits and other people walking on foot, leaves the church and reaches the main street, a marriage procession in several decorated cars is also in progress from the opposite direction. The two processions stop and there is a traffic jam followed by a confrontation between the two drivers. The van driver is a tiny man while the car driver is a huge person. When the quarrel assumes a serious proportion, Toloki marches forward and talks to the car driver. Immediately the car driver stops his cars and gives way to the funeral procession. The narrator(s) tell the reader in a humorous vein, that the car driver changed his mind not so much by the reverence evoked by Toloki’s costume as by the foul smell spreading from Toloki’s body and mouth. Then, the people around him, particularly the deceased boy’s mother, thank him for his intervention and peaceful resolution of the tangle. As expected by Toloki, the boy’s mother is no other than Noria, his village woman, who is still beautiful in spite of being thirty-five years of age. Toloki recalls that she left their village twenty years ago when she was fifteen. He was three years older than her. That is Toloki is thirty-eight years old now. Noria invites him to her shack in the squatter camp where there will be customary washing of hands and food arranged by the squatter camp committee after the funeral. Toloki decides just to visit her place, wash his hands and leave without taking any food.
This is the very first chapter of the novel which reveals the operation of almost all the five codes. The Narrative code operates by inaugurating the narrative process which describes the funeral of a boy who died at a very young age, on a Christmas Day. If the funeral is covered by the Cultural code through the explanatory funeral speech of the Nurse, the Semic code operates in the description of the scene while the Symbolic code reveals the alteration between the van driver and the driver of the first car in the marriage procession. The Hermeneutic code introduces Toloki’s suspense about the deceased boy’s mother and the later revelation that it is Noria, Toloki’s childhood friend and his village woman.

4.2.2.2 Chapter 2: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic Codes (pp.25-49)

Now the community-voice narrator tells the story of Noria and Toloki in their village through the sensibility of Toloki’s memories. Noria as a girl was very beautiful and people who observed her laughing would feel enchanted and would not leave her. The village was a small hamlet with huts like hovels in which poor families of farmers lived. Only a few of the houses were white-washed or decorated outside with geometric patterns of red, yellow, blue and white colours. His father had three huts and a homestead stone building with four walls and a tin roof which was his workshop. His father, Jwara, was a blacksmith with a towering handsome personality. Some days he was engaged in creating figurines of iron and brass while Noria gave him company singing with her melodious voice which seemed to have been inspiring Jwara in his creative work. On such days Toloki was not allowed to enter the workshop. Toloki’s mother used to shout at Jwara for wasting his time with Noria who, according to her, was a stuck-up bitch though she was only seven years old. Even Noria’s father, Xesibe, another prosperous farmer in the village did not like his daughter to spend long hours in Jwara’s workshop. But his wife known to the people as That Mountain Woman liked the idea of her daughter’s ability to inspire the process of creation and abused Xesibe for interfering in this process. For Toloki’s mother Noria was always a stuck-up bitch. When Noria was five, and Toloki was eight, they used to play silly games outside the workshop. In fact Jwara used to shoe the policeman’s horses and in the evening time he joined his friends like Xesibe and Nefolvhodwe. It was rumoured that as a baby Noria had a beautiful laughter. Her mother came from a village among the mountains and she was tall and beautiful. She also helped the villagers by giving different curative herbs and medicines to people
who fell ill. Whenever Jwara bought sweets and chocolates for Noria her father was angry while her mother was so happy that she used to abuse him publicly even in front his friends. The villagers were afraid of her sharp tongue. It was the traditional custom that a newly married woman should give birth to her first child among her own people. Thus when she was pregnant, she travelled to her mountain village where in a town nearby there was a government clinic in which she was examined every mouth by the nurses and given free powdered milk, cooking oil and oat-meal. But these edible materials would last for a few days as the entire family used to consume them though they were intended for their daughter. This forced her to visit the clinic more frequently in the pretext of medical examination for some sort of illness or the other. She rode on her father’s horse to the clinic in a valley over the hills in spite of being eight months pregnant. On one day it so happened that when she entered the examination room and lay on the bed stripped naked, a male health assistant came in and unexpectedly made love with her physically. As he was handsome, she also enjoyed the intercourse. To meet again they made a plan. A few days after return to her place, she was attacked by strange pains in her stomach and a horseman was sent to fetch the doctor. The same young health assistant, who had been waiting for such a call from her, readily came in a Land Rover car borrowed from his officers and reached the village and entered the room and examined her belly. He sent away all the people outside and closed the door. People were happy at the kind gesture of the health assistant. But the door was not opened for an hour which made an old woman suspect something fishy. The pregnant woman’s father kicked the door open only to find her daughter and the doctor naked. The latter was kicked out in spite of his protest that he was using a new method of treatment. He would have been killed but for the policemen took him away stating that it was their duty and not the villagers’ to punish him. Six months later That Mountain Woman returned to her husband’s village with baby Noria on her back. The story of her scandal had reached her village before she did. But she had no sense of shame whatever. It was generally believed that Noria took after the handsome doctor and therefore she was beautiful.

Toloki attended a funeral when he was thirteen and Noria was ten. The Principal of village primary school where Toloki studied was the Nurse (that is, the conductor of the funeral). A schoolmate of Noria had died a painful death of the gun. This happened in the following manner. The school choir was known for their best
performance and they were invited to take part in the funeral of another school girl from the city who had joined the village school because her parents wanted her to be trained at the village school which was peaceful and imparted traditional education also. But unfortunately she had caught pneumonia and died. Her funeral was being held at the city. The Principal and the select group of the Church Choir pupils in which Noria and her friend also were members, travelled to the city in an old bus which commuted between the city and the village. Toloki also was interested in going to the city but his father ordered him not to go. At the city the Principal was the conductor and, the choir of the children sang at the funeral of the deceased schoolmate. The city people greatly appreciated their singing. Unfortunately some of the city youngsters, also members of the local choir, did not like this particularly when an employee from the radio station offered to record the village choir’s singing and suddenly one angry man stood up with his gun and opened fire at the village choir and by accident Noria’s friend was shot dead. She died laughing as she had predicted before her death as if she had a premonition of her untimely death. This girl’s funeral was held at the village and was conducted by the Principal of the school. It was a magic moment for Toloki to listen to the words of the Principal who was transformed into a different person in contrast with his stern behaviour as Principal of the school.

Now Toloki takes a taxi and reaches Noria’s squatter camp. He was wondering how her son was killed. It has been a wicked practice of the police to shoot at black innocent children for fun. When it was complained at the police station they would say that children were missing everyday and there was nothing they could do about that. There was a crazy multi-killer who, preyed on defenseless children in the townships. His victims ranged in age from two to six years and their sex organs were mutilated. The squatter community concluded that it was not the multi-killer who was responsible for the death of Noria’s son. When Toloki reaches the squatter camp he presents himself as such a strange spectacle that the dirty children and many mongrels follow him, the former laughing at him and the latter sniffing and barking at him all the time. Ignoring them all, he enquires for the shack of Noria, and reaches Noria’s shack.

In this chapter four Semiotic codes, viz. Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Symbolic codes play an active role. The Cultural and Semic codes account, respectively for the socio-cultural details of the life in the village while the Semic
code introduces the important characters and the Symbolic code reveals the facts relating to the funerals of the two girls and the dual role played by the Principal as head of the school and also as a Nurse at the funerals. These funerals are part of the flash-back. This chapter also describes the first and close meeting of the two major characters, viz. Toloki and Noria after gap of twenty years.

4.2.2.3 Chapter 3: Narrative, Semic, Cultural, Symbolic and Hermeneutics Codes (pp.50-66)

Hearing the noise outside, Noria comes out and drives away the children and the dogs. He gives her zinnias, a type of flowers, and she smiles. He feels proud that he has made Noria smile. He recalls an incident in his village years ago when people surrounded Noria admiringly when she laughed and they made her laugh more. When he joined the crowd, the others drove him away calling him an ugly boy whose presence would stop Noria’s laughing and spoil their enjoyment. But today, on this Boxing Day, he is able to paint a smile on Noria’s sad face. She thanks him for the flowers and he regrets that he could not spray perfume on them as he left the perfume at his headquarters which is a place on the sea-shore at the docklands public toilet. He has an old trolley in which he keeps a few other things of his, like an old blanket and a single dress which he wears at home. When he goes outside generally, he wears his professional costume which is also becoming pretty old. Noria’s shack was petrol-bombed after they killed her son. Therefore, it has to be rebuilt again. She touches his hand causing a strange stir in him but he has been away from female association for so many years that he doesn’t understand whether his present feeling is pity or love for beautiful Noria. Years ago, when he was living near the seashore observing the sailors, he happened to get some pages of a pamphlet from a pink-robed devotee getting off from a boat returning from the east. On reading the pamphlet Toloki developed a great fascination for the life of oriental monks, particularly the way of life of the aghori sadhus who were greatly revered by the devout Hindus. An aghori sadhu, to Toloki’s knowledge, “spends his sparse existence on the cremation ground, cooks his food on the fires of a funeral pyre and feeds on human waste and human corpses. He drinks his own urine to quench his thirst. The only detail missing is a mendicant’s bowl made from a human skull for he shuns the collection of alms”(15). The aghori sadhu, avoids any relationship with women and observes strict celibacy. Toloki has been inspired by this information and seems to have taken the aghori sadhu
for his role model. Prior to this he had some accidental affairs with women who were mostly prostitutes. Since he has taken up his new job of Professional Mourner he has avoided women. He offers Noria to help her rebuild her home, saying that there is a lot of material like plastic and canvas and sheets of corrugated iron at the docklands lying waste which would be useful for rebuilding her shack. But bringing them from the docklands to the squatter camp will be a problem. Noria has a friend, Shadrack by name in the neighbourhood, who runs an unlicensed grocery shop in a shipping container in his yard. He also runs a van for bringing commuters to and from the city and the settlement. Thus, the three of them travel in Shadrack’s van to the docklands and bring the material thrown there as a waste. Shadrack does not accept any remuneration because he loves Noria secretly. Unfortunately, his own son was also abducted and killed by migrants from the hostels. The miners who came from a group of villages have been patronized by a wicked and most selfish village chief who supplied them with country rifles in order to establish his monopoly of rule not only in his village but also in nearly twenty surrounding hamlets and villages. These migrant miners are very cruel and are used to shoot their own black brothers without any discrimination. There is a rumour that they are also supported by the police in the city.

Now, it being a full-moon night, both Toloki and Noria successfully build a really elegant shack much better than the one Noria had before. They work throughout the night and by the morning; there is a new and beautiful shack for Noria. She thanks him earnestly and on Toloki’s enquiry informs him that her son’s funeral was held in the house of the street committee’s chairman. In turn, she asks him how he left their village. He tells her that his father beat him up one day, so he ran away from home and vowed never to return while his father was alive. He had no money and walked all the way from the village to the city. It was a long journey that took him three months. On the way he passed through a lot of suffering and starvation but avoided begging. With the help of a passer-by who gave him some food when Toloki refused to take alms from him, Toloki gets a job at a milling company. He makes friends with another fellow worker who gives Toloki shelter in his own small house where he was living with his old father. Unfortunately this friend was shot dead by another white friend who played fire tricks and called it a game which led to the young man’s death. His old father in spite of his misfortune and helpless condition, offers to give Toloki
some money which the latter refuses to take. On the way Toloki passes through several villages taking part-time jobs with farmers when he ran out of money. Almost in every village, he witnessed deaths and funerals taking place as a result of the unruly gangsters who used to rape maidens, rob and murder defenseless community members. Even the police were unable to take any action against these gangsters. Thus, people in these villages looked like walking corpses. At the end of three months after leaving his village, Toloki finally reached the city.

In this chapter Narrative, Semic, Cultural, Symbolic and Hermeneutic codes operate. In the Narrative code, the flash-back technique is employed while the Cultural code reveals Toloki’s artistic talents as a boy as well as his wonderful help to Noria in rebuilding her burnt shack in an artistic manner. The Semic code reveals how the neighbouring children and women help Noria in reorganising herself into normal life after her shack was completely burnt down to ashes. The Symbolic code shows, how the black people themselves attack and kill their fellow blacks in the squatter camp. The Hermeneutic code takes care of the suspense about the relationship between Toloki and Noria.

4.2.2.4 Chapter 4: Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.67-98)

Noria and Toloki are very happy at their singular achievement and the neighbours also appreciate their work. Noria reminds Toloki that he was a talented artist in his school days and one of his colourful drawings of the month of April for the national calendar brought him a prize in the national art competition. That April calendar is still kept in his school. As a boy, he used to make beautiful figures, of different animals like cows, horses, sheep etc. But Jwara, his father, was very angry and ordered that the ugly calendar not to be brought into his house. Noria remembered this while Toloki has completely forgotten about his juvenile artistic talent. Now he recalls this information gladly. Even his mother used to say that Toloki’s drawings were much more beautiful than the stupid images made by her husband in his blacksmithy. Now the neighbouring women and the children help Noria to bring her shack into shape. The children bring water while the neighbouring women have brought household items like pots, a primus stove, a washing basin, a plastic bucket, a plate, a spoon and two grey blankets and a pillow. One neighbor has brought a billycan of soft porridge with steamed bread. They say they are lending these things to Noria and she can use them till her position improves. Shadrack also comes there and
appreciates their work. He tells Noria that he wants to return all the money she paid him for petrol. When asked for the reason, he expresses his dying passion for her and requests her to marry him as he is the richest of all the black people in the township. Noria gently declines his offer and he leaves away in shame. There is some unknown satisfaction in Toloki’s eyes. Noria tells Toloki also that she is going to pay him back every cent he has helped her with. Toloki feels that this is a Noria different from the young beautiful girl Noria in the village who would accept all kinds of gifts not only from his father Jwara, but also from bus drivers and mini-taxi drivers who were always ready to give her free rides from the village and the town, to and fro.

The narrator, i.e., the collective community narrative voice, tells us the story of Noria when she came off age. Young boys were greatly attracted by her beautiful appearance, sweet voice, elegant dresses and friendly behaviour. Particularly there was a young man, Napu by name, who used to come and saunter in front of Noria’s house as he had fallen in love with her. He was working in a general construction dealers’ store in a village nearby. That Mountain Woman, Noria’s mother, who had high plans for Noria’s future that her daughter to be married to a teacher or a highly educated person did not like Napu’s proposal. But they used to meet very often in the bushes on the outskirts of the village and make love there. The village herd-boys would follow them secretly and enjoyed watching the love escapades of Noria and Napu. On such occasions Noria would tell her parents that she was going to Jwara to sing for him. Finally Napu and Noria were married much against the wishes of that Mountain Woman and Xesibe because Napu was not able to pay any lobola (i.e, bride money). After a short while, Noria ran away with Napu and they had a government registered marriage. Napu’s village was situated in a far mountainous valley where he lived with his grandmother, who was dependent upon him for livelihood. He left Noria with his grandmother and went to the village where he was working. He used to send them money for maintenance. This old woman did not like Noria and always ill-treated her. Napu was coming home frequently and in the course of time, Noria became pregnant. Napu’s grandmother, with the help of an old man who was a distant relative attempted abortion to Noria by giving her certain herbal medicines forcefully such that when Napu returned home next time, Noria followed him to the town without staying along with his grandmother. At the town it had taken a long period for
Noria to deliver the baby which caused great concern for both of them. They visited witch doctors and other medicine men to no avail. In the process Napu had spent a lot of money. It was after fifteen months of pregnancy that Noria gave birth to a male baby in her parental house. There was a lot of debate and disagreement about naming the boy. If That Mountain Woman wanted the boy to be names as Jealous Down, Napu wanted to call his son Vutha after the name of his father, while Xesibe thought the best name for the boy would Mistake. Napu succeeded in confronting his mother-in-law with the additional courage he acquired on consuming alcohol, and finally the boy was named Vutha. Noria followed her husband with her son to the town where they lived in a shack. To her dismay, Noria found that Napu had illicit sexual relation with a neighbouring woman and after an angry quarrel she returned to her parents’ house in the villager. Her mother was very sympathetic whereas her father was very angry with her. Unfortunately Noria’s mother fell ill and was admitted in hospital for treatment of cancer. It was ironical that this woman who used to cure many ills of the villagers with her herbal medicines was attacked by cancer for which there was no treatment in those days. Now she was on bed in hospital. Consequently, Noria’s life in her father’s house became miserable. Her father clearly told her that he would not spend even a single cent on her son and that she should maintain her own family. Noria was forced to seek the job of a servant-maid in an office in the town nearby. As the bus drivers knew her from childhood and liked her, they did not charge her any fare for her daily travel to the down. Still misfortune did not leave her because one day, while serving tea to the bosses in a tray, the tray slipped from her hand and fell on the floor and was broken. Immediately, she was fired. Luckily on one of her visits to her mother in hospital, a neighbouring woman patient recommended her for another job in a church. Here, her colleagues were kind. One of the sisters there introduced her into a part-time job at night in an expensive hotel. At that time Noria was facing great financial difficulties and also she wanted to put her son in a good school in the town. In this respect she was like her mother who had aspired Noria to be highly educated. To meet the expenditure of her son’s education, which was costly, Noria accepted this part-time job. Foreigners would stay in the hotel, and offer her drinks and money. Perhaps there was also an element of sex in her job for she was
beautiful and attractive. But she continued to work in the hotel, killing her conscience for the future of her son, such that she gave up the small job at the Church and accepted this part-time job as a full-time occupation. As her father was not caring for her son, she engaged a woman to look after her son’s needs during her absence at home because her new profession at the hotel called only for her night services. A few days passed happily with this arrangement. One day the woman engaged for Noria’s son’s services expressed her sudden decision to leave because the previous night Noria’s father crept into her bed and tried to molest her. Therefore she left. When Noria asked her father about his misbehaviour he became enraged and ordered her to leave his house. Once again Noria with her son was on the street. She went back to the town to her husband’s house, who was living with a new woman. Noria drove her away and started living there whereas her husband who was feeling guilty could not stop her. Noria and Napu stopped talking to each other. He used to threaten her in his drunken moments that one day he would kidnap Vutha and run away with him to a place where Noria would never find them. After a few days, Napu virtually put his threat into practice and disappeared with Vutha. Noria made all efforts including a police complaint about disappearance of her son but nothing happened. Somehow, she had a faith that one day her son would return to her. Then she left the town for the city to start a new life.

Stories of past memory are painful and now Toloki and Noria talk about them and laugh. In this context the narrator says, “Laughter is known to heal even the deepest of wounds” (95). When Toloki wants to go home, both of them walk together to the taxi-stand. On being questioned by Noria why he prefers the taxi to the train which is much cheaper in fare, Toloki replies that he doesn’t want to get killed on the train. Everyday people are killed on the trains. In this connection, Noria tells him a story how a resident of the squatter camp narrowly escaped death in the hands of a group of migrant gangsters, losing one of his eyes, while Toloki tells her another story of the same kind of cruelty, how when a couple boarded the train with a one-day-old baby, a group of gangsters walked into the carriage, forcefully carried the woman throwing away her husband and the baby not caring for the couples’ repeated begging and pleas. No single one of the passengers raised their fingers to stop the gangsters from their atrocity. The gangsters gang-raped her and cut her throat. Toloki knows
this story because he mourned at her funeral. Before Toloki leaves, Noria advises him to take a bath.

This chapter is a ground wherein the Narrative, Cultural, Semic and Hermeneutic codes operate. The Cultural code continues further showing the help extended to Noria by her neighbours. The Narrative code takes care of the progression of the narrative process while the Semic code describes the spatio-temporal dimensions. Finally the Hermeneutic code exposes Shadrack’s love for Noria to which she responds in a negative manner. The important technique of flash-back is employed in the Narrative code through which is narrated the past life and story of Noria. Here, there is an element of Magic Realism when we are told that Noria was pregnant for fifteen months before she gave birth to her first son Vutha.

4.2.2.5 Chapter 5: Narrative, Cultural, Semic, Symbolic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp. 99-115)

Toloki wakes up early in the morning and takes a bath at the beach. He is very happy. A policeman orders him out of the beach because of his indecent dress. The night before he received a note left on his trolley asking him to mourn at a mass funeral of five people. He returns to the city, goes to the furniture store and collects many catalogues which are freely given and at a newspaper stall he buys ten back issues of *Home and Garden* magazine at a cheaper price. Then he also buys some cakes and his favourite Swiss roll and some green onions. When he is in taxi, now, people don’t cover their noses because he does not smell foul due to his bath.

Now the community narrative voice describes the circumstances in which Jwara, Toloki’s father, died. In the past, when Noria was in the village, she used to sing for him under the spell and inspiration of which Jwara would create odd-looking figurines of iron and brass. But now there was no Noria who had left the village for the town along with her husband. When Noria was there in the village, Toloki’s life was a hell because her father would also compare his ugliness with Noria’s beauty, and beat him. At the Easter time, an unfortunate incident took place to further worsen Toloki’s relationship with his father. It so happened that Toloki joined some mischievous boys who were drinking stolen brandy sitting behind the Church. Not used to drink, Toloki in a tipped condition went into the Church and overacted by dancing and shouting ‘Hallelujah’ on the stage. Then he fell down in a drunken stupor. He woke up the next morning and went home. By then his father came to
know about his misbehaviour and kicked him in the stomach repeatedly till Toloki vomited blood. This contrast in Jwara’s behaviour towards his own son and Noria, a girl from another family made Toloki hate Noria as well as his father for life. Toloki and other children also used to make fun of the self-styled Archbishop of the village and misbehave with him and his devotees on special days such as Easter and baptism, by pelting stones at them. When this was reported to Jwara the latter laughed it out because he was in a good mood perhaps in the company of Noria and also because he hated Christianity.

Presently, Toloki arrives at Noria’s shack in the settlement and tells her that both of them will plaster the pictures from the magazines and catalogues on to the walls later. Now he has to attend a mass funeral. Noria also accompanies him. At the cemetery, Toloki sits on one of the five mounds and groans and wails and produces other new sounds that he has recently invented, particularly for mass funerals with political overtones. These five people, brothers and sisters died over a tin of beef which caused violence - according to the explanatory lamentation of the Nurse. After the funeral service a woman pays him some money in the form of bank notes for his excellent performance that reminded her of the traditions of olden times. Toloki and Noria return to the settlement. At the this juncture, the narrator tells the reader how Jwara died and was buried. Toloki comes to know about this later from Nefolovhodwe.

After Noria had left the village, Jwara completely stopped his occupational smithy work, sat in the smithy for days together without eating food and drinking water. His wife lost hopes about him and got a job of washing for the manager of a store in order to earn a living. After some days, some people wanted to buy the black smithy equipment because Jwara was no longer using them. When they opened the door of the workshop they found Jwara dead. In front of him there was a piece of paper, perhaps, his will, on which he had written that he was bequeathing all his figurines to Toloki, his only son. He had signed the paper which surprised people who never knew that he was so literate to write the will and sign it.

Now at Noria’s shack Toloki makes a paste with the flour and sugar he has brought and plasters the pictures from the magazines and catalogues on to the walls. These include the pictures of ideal kitchens, lounges, dining rooms, bed rooms, houses, gardens and swimming pools. Thus the shack becomes filled with wallpaper
of luxury. Then Toloki takes Noria’s hand and both of them stroll through the grandeur of imaginary bedrooms, gardens, swimming pools, music rooms etc. This is really an illusionary feast and emotional luxury for both of them. After enjoying their pleasant strolls in such a grand mansion, they sit for their meal. He offers a variety of cakes to Noria and he takes only Swiss roll and green onions for himself. When she expresses her surprise at his meager meal, Toloki explains to her that he takes limited food because he is austere like the monks from far away mountain monasteries, particularly the aghori sadhus. After sometime, Noria suggests that they both can live together in her shack as home boy, and home girl. Toloki disagrees to this proposal because he prefers to live a lonely life and Death has become a part him and his profession. Noria promises that she will not interfere with his profession and after her repeated persuasion, intoxicated by her sweet voice, Toloki agrees to live with her.

In this chapter, all the five semiotic codes function together. If the Narrative code takes care of the progression of events like Toloki’s going to Noria’s shack taking some picture papers from magazines and furniture catalogues, in the present, Jwara’s punishment of Toloki for the latter’s misbehaviour at the church in the past and again in the present, Toloki and Noria taking food at Noria’s shack and finally Toloki’s acceptance of live in Noria’s shack as the she requests him. It is notice that, as in several other chapters in the novel, the Narrative code employs the flash-back technique so that the narrative process alternates between the present and the past. The Semic code reveals the nature of the major characters like Jwara, Toloki and Noria. Toloki and Noria start taking interest in each other. The Cultural code shows how the villagers like Jwara did not like the spread of Christianity because they preferred to follow their tribal traditions. This overlaps with the Symbolic code which reveals that implicitly there is a rivalry between Christianity and the tribal religion. The Hermeneutic code operates by creating suspense about the relation between Toloki and Noria as man and woman, because Toloki, like a monk avoids women and Noria openly says that she does not take anything from the men.

4.2.2.6 Chapter 6: Narrative, Semic, Cultural and Symbolic Codes (pp.116-139)

That night at the docklands, Toloki has nightmares and mutters Noria’s name. A drunken man sitting nearby laughs at him and tells him not to disturb others’ sleep. Toloki also blames him for spoiling the place with his frequent farting. Disgusted with the drunks’ laughing Toloki leaves the docklands with his belongings like his
shopping cart (i.e., a trolley). He walks throughout the night and when he reaches the neighbourhood of the settlement, the Young Tigers who are on patrol stop him but leave him without any harm because he looks innocent. When he reaches Noria’s shack, she is already up for going to help Madimbhaza who takes care of many orphan and physically handicapped children. After Noria leaves, he spreads his blanket and lies on it. Unable to sleep, he remembers his first shack in another settlement. Eighteen years ago, when he first came to the city, he joined homeless people who defiantly built their shacks in an open land against the wishes of the government. Prior to that he had nowhere to stay and not have any job. Having heard something about the stories of sea adventures, Toloki wanted to go to the ships and with some difficulty got part-time jobs of loading ships. He slept at the docklands or on a bench at the railway station and washed himself in public toilets. He led a wayward life along with his docklands labourer-friends, visited women and joined drinking parties. It was at that time he heard about the building of shanty towns illegally by village people and in the process, he joined a group of people who built their shacks on the outskirts of the city. Thus he got a house of his own, which he decorated with newspapers and magazine sheets. Sometimes state-paid vigilantes would set some of the shanties on fire but the residents rebuilt new shacks within no time. After one year, for part-time jobs at the harbor, it became difficult to get work there due to increasing competition. Luckily Toloki had saved some money and with that he obtained a hawkers’ permit from the city council, bought himself a trolley for grilling meat and boerewors. His four-wheeled trolley was like a cart with a canvass cover and three small trays in which he put mustard, tomato sauce and bread rolls along with mealie-pop. He conducted the trade of selling spiced steak and other food items which attracted drunken customers to his street shop and he made a lot of money. People were more honest in those days and also his was a new business without much of competition. He used to keep his trolley in a shop nearby for a nominal rent and in the night time he would return to his shack. In those days he wore white overalls and an apron. One day, when he went to fetch some meat from the butchery, his cart was stolen. He reported the matter to the officer in the informal trading department, to no avail. Now, he was reduced to cooking boerewors on a small gas cylinder cooker at the same spot but the customers did not come. Thus, his business collapsed. His post office savings were not adequate to buy another trolley. When his business was profitable, he had spent a lot of money recklessly on his
friends, drinks and women who admired him endearingly. But when he became money-less due to the failure of trade, all his friends and women fled from him. Toloki did not know what to do. Then he remembered Nefolovhodwe, the village carpenter, who had been his father’s friend and who has now settled in the city as a rich coffin-maker. He specialized in making cheap collapsible coffins and costly Deluxe Special Coffins all of which were very popular. After sometime, Nefolovhodwe had a problem that some thieves were digging out the coffins at night after the burial and selling them secretly. This nefarious activity adversely affected his business. Toloki wanted to seek help from this man, his father’s old friend. In the beginning, he was received in a very cold manner and the carpenter even pretended not to have known either Toloki or Jwara. Years back in the village he used to appreciate Toloki greatly because the latter used to defend his nine children when others had attacked them. After long persuasion, he appointed Toloki on a commission basis with the duty as a guard at cemeteries at night to catch the coffin thieves. The carpenter’s new and young wife was kind to Toloki and gave him some food every time he went there to report his lack of progress in the nocturnal watch. But one night, when he was waiting among marble-tomb stones in a posh graveyard, four men came in a van, parked it outside and began to dig a fresh grave. Toloki confronted them and all of them beat him up unconscious and left him for dead. The next morning he woke up with a gash on his head and blood on his clothes. When he reported this to the carpenter, he fired him from service. Toloki went back to his shack and on thinking seriously for several sleepless nights, the concept of the Professional Mourner occurred to him. He was not successful even in this new profession as only poor people engaged him but his outlook of life has completely changed for him.

To mourn for the dead became a spiritual vocation… sometimes he saw himself in the light of monks from the orient and aimed to be pure like them. It was this purity that he hoped to bring to the funerals and to share with his esteemed clients. (134)

Noria returns at mid-day. She has been supporting herself by helping others. That is, she has no particular job. Much of her time is devoted to help the helpless children living at Madimbhaza’s yard, often known as the dumping yard. She brings some food to eat and when Toloki offers help she tells him, she does not take anything from men. Still she is happy.
When Noria first arrived in the city entertaining colourful hopes she was greatly disillusioned. She tried to get some job or the other because she was of the hope that Vutha, her son, would come back to her. Homeboys and homegirls welcomed Noria who was given shelter by an old woman now living in the settlement and who was cured of an illness by That Mountain Woman, Noria’s mother in the village. This old woman kept a shebeen where most of the people from her village would come to drink. One of such villagers revealed to Noria tactlessly that her son Vutha and husband Napu both were dead. Napu had come to the city with Vutha, and not finding any job, started begging at a street corner with Vutha holding a small can in which people would throw coins. Napu used to earn a lot of money in this way and spent all that money on drinking. He lived in a cardboard shelter under a lonely bridge outside the city. He chained Vutha to a pole and went off drinking. Vutha used to cry for Noria and for food. One day it so happened that Napu had earned a lot of money from begging. Chaining Vutha to the pole under the bridge, he went away. For days, he spent time at shebeens and by the time he returned to the bridge Vutha was dead and scavenging dogs were fighting over his corpse. Napu half drunk and half-mad ran away screaming that they had killed his son. In such a delirious condition he dived into the dam, was drowned and died.

Noria tells this dreadful story to Toloki and he tells her that some months ago he had seen a dirty beggar with a small child and they could be Napu and Vutha. Noria doesn’t want to speak about her own troubles any longer and informs him that presently Shadrack is in hospital. Both of them decide to see Shadrack that afternoon.

As in the case of almost all the other chapters, the Narrative code subsumes the technique of flash-back to describe the events of the past and also those of the present. The Semic code throws light on the characters of Toloki and Noria who now come closer and start liking each other. One important character introduced in this chapter is Madimbhaza whose yard has become a dumping ground of orphaned and handicapped children whom she looks after as her own children spending her meager pension on them. Noria helps her in this regard. This code in conjunction with Cultural and Symbolic codes describes how Napu and Vutha died in very miserable circumstances. The Symbolic code highlights the contrast between Toloki and Napu. Toloki never begged nor did he accept alms from others while Napu using his own son as a beggar earned money and spent it indiscriminately on drinks which led to the death of his son and his own death.
Noria and Toloki visit Shadrack in hospital taking him some oranges and apples. As Shadrack cannot eat anything, he suggests that they give the fruits to another patient by his bedside. The ward is overcrowded with patients sleeping on thin mats and even under the beds. All these people were injured by the war lords, the police, the army and various political organizations. Shadrack tells them his own sad story. When he was at the railway station to pick up some passengers, he was assaulted by three white men who were driving a police van. They were crazy, pulled him out of his kombi, punched him and kicked him. Then they loaded him into their van and took him to a dark room which was freezing and filled with naked corpses on the cement floor. Threatening him that they would kill him, they kicked him so that he fell down among the corpses. One of them ordered him to make love to the corpse of a young woman. When he denied, they further assaulted him and took him back to his taxi from the mortuary. All this they did for fun. With the help of another taxi driver, Shadrack made a complaint at the central police station. Even there he was threatened with death. But he was not afraid and told them that he was contacting his own lawyer as well as human rights lawyers. Several other black taxi drivers had also undergone similar tortures and this particular experience is known as the ‘hell-ride’ among the taxi drivers. All the time Shadrack was talking to Noria, he completely ignored the presence of Toloki. When Noria expresses her sympathy for Shadrack, he revives his appeal to Noria for her love but Noria gives the same negative reply which she had already given him earlier. Shadrack wonders what Toloki has to give to her and why she loves him. Shadrack is very rich but Toloki is poor and stinks. Noria replies that Toloki doesn’t stink any longer and she loves him because he knows how to live. On their way back home, Toloki wants to know why she has turned down a rich man like Shadrack’s love and prefers to work for shebeen queens for survival. She replies she has been chewed and then pewed. They reach Noria’s shack which is not locked like many other shacks in the settlement because there is nothing worth to be stolen. Only rich people like Shadrack locked their houses. Noria lights an improvised crude type of lamp. They spread some papers on the floor and sit down. For many years Toloki has spent all his evenings in waiting rooms and has not slept in a house since his shack was destroyed by the vigilantes many years ago. It was the time when he started
working as a Professional Mourner when funerals where held on Saturday or Sunday mornings and also death was not as prevalent then as it is now. The area of the settlement where he was living was suddenly bull-dozed one day and all the shacks were destroyed but people would rebuild the shanty towns within no time. The government has also devised a new strategy to torture the black people in the shanty towns by recruiting some of the unemployed residents as vigilante groups under the pretext of protecting the residents. But these vigilante groups forcibly collected protection money from the residents every week while their leader styled himself as Mayor. Because Toloki refused to pay this protection money, his shack was set on fire and he narrowly escaped death. He feels that things have changed now and life is more complicated but today people are more strongly united. Further, he wonders why Noria has invited him to stay with her and why he has agreed against his vow of leading the life of a lonely hermit for the rest of his life. He also wonders who the father of Noria’s second child was. This second child’s funeral was conducted just four days before. Noria, who has been looking at him all the while, is able to read his mind and asks him why he doesn’t ask her about his doubts. Toloki says that he is confused because he calls her second son also Vutha whereas her first son died before she came to the city perhaps seventeen years ago. She tells him that after her separation from Napu, and the death of her son and Napu in conjunction with the cruelty of city life completely killed her. All her interest in men, her uplifting laughter as well as all human desires of the flesh had abandoned her. But surprisingly one day seven years ago she discovered that she was pregnant. The other homegirls suspected her character but Toloki believes her. She explains that she has not slept with any man but some strangers who visited her in her dreams made love to her. When they reached their fourth ejaculation they looked and acted like a youthful Napu, the lover of her young days. Again she had fifteen months of pregnancy and gave birth to a male child who exactly looked like her first child. So, she called him also Vutha but to avoid confusion the homegirls called him Vutha, The Second or just The Second. Noria sincerely believed that her first son was born again as the second and therefore, for a few years, till the boy grew for five years when he died, her life was happy. Toloki expresses his condolences and tells her the following day he has to attend a funeral. Noria also wants to accompany him so that she can also become a Professional Mourner as his successor. Although he wants to sleep outside the shack for reasons of decency, Noria insists that he sleep inside because sleeping outside is
dangerous. Both of them sleep on her donkey blankets on the floor with a safe distance between them. She takes off her dress and sleeps retaining only her worn-out petty coat. Toloki is happy that she sleeps in a foetal position like all the true sons and daughters of their village. He looks at her beautiful shape for a short while and then turns his head because it would be like doing dirty things to a goddess.

In this chapter also all the five Semiotic codes pay an active role in conjunction. While the Narrative code describes the visit of Toloki and Noria to the hospital to see Shadrack, the Cultural code reveals the positive custom of people taking some fruits to the patient the narrators’ voice says in this context.

They have brought him some oranges and apples, since you do not go to a hospital to see a sick person without taking him or her something to eat. (140)

It is reminded here, of our Indian custom which says that when you visit your teacher, old people, children patients or pregnant women you should not go with empty hands and you should take something for them to eat. The circumstances under which Shadrack was attacked by the police and how he was ordered to have intercourse with the dead body of a young woman in the mortuary, just for the fun of the police reveals the police atrocities on poor and helpless black people in the city under the Cultural and Semic codes. Further, this is also an instance of the Symbolic code that shows how the cruel police oppress the helpless blacks for no visible reason. The Hermeneutic code also operates in this chapter creating unanswerable questions like how could Noria become pregnant for a second time without any contacts with men? Why did her second pregnancy also last for fifteen months as in the case of her first pregnancy? How could she have intercourse with strangers in a dream? All these questions come under Magic Realism, a technique adopted by the author under the Narrative code.

4.2.2.8 Chapter 8: Narrative, Cultural and Semic Codes (pp.154-169)

The next day Toloki and Noria attend the funeral ceremony of an old man conducted by the Nurse who is also a toothless old man and an age-mate of the deceased. Toloki, sitting on the mound, produces a modern mourning sound which he has recently developed and which resembles the sounds of a goat being slaughtered. The Nurse explains that the eldest son of the deceased died before his father, a few
days before Christmas and at his burial there was a serious dispute about a custom of cutting of the hair of the nearest relatives including sons, brothers, grandsons and their women in order of seniority, a seniority of the households and not age. By mistake the deceased son’s hair was cut first and the other two sons objected to it because his first son was born to a mistress and not to a legally married wife unlike their mothers. Therefore they argued that one of their sons had to be considered senior for the ceremony of torsion. This led to a squabble and the two sons beat their father up and when the Nurse interfered and took the injured man in Shadracks’ van to hospital, it was declared by the doctors that he was already dead. It is strange as the Nurse says that a few days after his eldest son the old man also died and it is his funeral that they are holding now. The Nurse also refers to another custom of throwing soil with a spade into the grave only by the male relatives according to seniority. The Nurse says that two sons of the old man who murdered their father are waiting deserving to be hanged. In this context, the narrator observes as follows:

This sad tale confirms what Toloki has long observed. Funerals acquire a life of their own, and give birth to other funerals. The old man’s funeral has come about as a direct result of his son’s funeral. This was also the case back in the village many years ago, when the choir girl was shot dead at a school-mate’s funeral. Indeed, everyday, we hear of car accidents in which people on their way to or from the funerals of friends or relatives are killed. (160).

The funeral was followed by food at the house of the deceased. It was good food, samp and beef cooked well and served adequately. Toloki first, wanted to avoid food but he also ate it on the insistence of others. Noria appeared to have been enjoying the food not generally spiced on the occasion of funerals. In this context the narrator describes how different items of food are served at funerals in accordance with social strata and sometimes there were also quarrels in funeral gatherings. After returning to their shack, Noria goes to help Madimbhaza to help the children there and returns home after some time. There is a meeting of the community committee in the afternoon and in the meantime they talk about the world and death. Noria expresses her appreciation for Toloki’s talent of mourning and they practice some funeral sounds as Noria wants to learn them. For her they have profound meaning which comes out from the depths of Toloki’s soul. In this connection, Toloki tells her of an occasion when the whole graveyard broke into laughter. Then four funerals were
going on simultaneously. The Nurse at the Zionist funeral who had a booming voice made a naughty joke about the deceased and all the people present in the graveyard burst out laughing, some people even had stomach cramps from laughing too much while some others rolled on the ground. Toloki observes: “In our language there is a proverb which says that the greatest death is laughter” (164). They recall their village life and Noria regrets that she was not able to attend Jwara’s funeral and she wants to visit his grave and sing her last song for him. Toloki remembers his first experience at the house of Nefolovhodwe, when he went to pay back his debt to him for the food his wife had given him. He dumped some bank notes on the carpenter’s desk ignoring the latter insulting remarks.

In the afternoon Noria goes to Madimbhaza’s dumping ground accompanied by Toloki. The narrator gives the following information about Madimbhaza as follows:

Toloki learns that for the past fifteen years Madimbhaza has been taking care of abandoned children. She has often tried to find their biological parents, but usually without success. She says that some mothers have returned to collect their children because of pressure from God but others have just forgotten about their babies. Some of the children were abandoned because they were born physically handicapped. Others were crippled by polio, or other diseases at a later age and parents, unable to cope, also abandoned them at the dumping ground. The twilight mum as Madimbhaza is called in the settlement and nearby townships is very proud of all her children. (167).

Madimbhaza supported these children with her meager pension and recently a newspaper, City Press, wrote a story about her as a result of which some kind hearted readers donated clothes and blankets for the children. Some of these children were victims of the war raging in the land or whose parents died in the massacres, in train slaughters or the attacks from the tribal chief’s followers from the hostels assisted by Battalion 77 of the Government. In a recent massacre fifty two people died including children while some other children were orphaned overnight. Madimbhaza has devoted her life and resources to bring up, to educate and to give them a good start in life. Noria helps her in these efforts.
In this chapter, Narrative, Cultural and Semic codes operates. If the Narrative code describes the incidents of the present and the past, Toloki’s experience of an old man’s funeral a few days before is an instance of the Cultural code in which the traditional practices of the black villagers, particularly those at the funeral ceremonies. These include cutting of hair of the relatives of the deceased and throwing soil into the grave, according to seniority of households and not of age. In the old man’s son’s funeral before there was such a serious quarrel about this kind of seniority and in the ensuing quarrel, the remaining two sons of the old man beat him up to death. Now the old man’s funeral is being conducted. The two sons were jailed. There could also be laughter in funerals as illustrated by Toloki. The Cultural and Semic codes also function together in the story of Madimbhaza who takes care of orphaned, and handicapped children in spite of her limited resources. Her yard has acquired the name of ‘dumping ground’ of abandoned babies. Noria helps Madimbhaza. Thus these two codes throw light on the characters of Madimbhaza and Noria.

4.2.2.9 Chapter 9: Narrative, Semic, Cultural, Symbolic and Hermeneutic Codes (pp.170-192)

A community meeting is to be held in the school yard. All women of the settlement sing songs of freedom preparing food items and cutting slices of loaves of bread while the Young Tigers are dancing and singing patriotic songs with jubilation. Noria arrives at this spot accompanied by Toloki. The women make jokes about the pair and laugh. Some of the elders of the political movement from the city arrive to discuss the problems of the residents. There is also a problem of security in that the migrants from the hostels and the soldiers of Battalion 77 may attack them any moment. While Noria joins the other women in preparing the cabbage curry in a big pot, Toloki, the only man, among the women, helps them by fetching water on a wheel barrow from a community tap a few streets away. Gradually, more people gather, most of them being women, and a few men. After an hour a big black Mercedes Benz car followed by other small cars enters the school yard while women and men shout slogans and the Young Tigers form a guard of honour as the leaders walk from their cars and are seated on the chairs. Noria informs Toloki that the man who arrived in the big black car and his wife are important members of the national executive committee of the political movement for freedom and the others are members of different branch and local of committees. The meeting begins and the
leaders ask them about the local grievances. In response, the street committee presents their problems and asks the leaders to solve them. Toloki observes that the women in the settlement are the most active not only doing all the work but also playing leadership roles. They present very practical ideas to solve the problems whereas the few male residents make high flown speeches without suggesting any practical solutions to the local problems. The next item on the agenda is the preparations for a big demonstration in the city the following week. People are going to stay away from work for the whole week. The negotiations for freedom with the government may not be fruitful because the government is busy killing the freedom fighters using its vigilantes and Battalion 77. The Yong Tigers, in song and dance praise their leaders, who sacrificed their lives for freedom. They also condemn some people who sabotage the movement by calling them ‘sell-outs’. After the speeches a local committee of five is elected to organise the stayaway (strike) in the settlement. Noria is one of them. These members have to go from house to house in the settlement explaining to people why they should not go to work. This is followed by serving of food on paper plates. The leaders are served on enamel plates. The leaders called Noria and congratulated her and convey their condolences for the death of her son, but they also imply that he was not completely innocent. This makes Noria angry because there was no mention of her son’s death in the public speeches and a heavy sadness occupies her heart. After the leaders have left the resident men find fault with the women for serving only bread and cabbage to their important leaders and for being lazy to cook meat, potatoes rice and make salads. Their women give them a fitting reply by saying that they served whatever food they themselves eat. Toloki and Noria walk back to their shack and on the way Toloki notices that in the shacks the women are always doing some work or the other while the men sit all day, clouding their heads with pettiness and vain pride dispensing wide ranging philosophies on how things should be done. Noria has also the same experience and wonders why women, though they take the lead at the grassroot committees, are not given positions either at the branch, regional or national committee levels. But Toloki feels that the salvation of the settlement lies in the hands of women. Noria admires Toloki for his broad outlook and to her further surprise, Toloki decides not to wear any shoes because Noria doesn’t. That day, they fail to enjoy their garden walk because Noria is unhappy remembering her deceased son of whom there was no open mention at all at the meeting and she also sheds tears. In this respect, she feels that the leaders who claim that they are fighting for freedom
are no different from the tribal chief and his followers, since they also commit atrocities.

At this point of narration, the collective narrative voice describes the circumstances in which her son Vutha, The Second died. That boy was very active and talented. He was too young to be sent to school and so spent his time playing with the children in the neighbourhood. He was an expert in singing revolutionary songs of the freedom movement which he had learnt from the Young Tigers. He was also able to recite the Liberation Code and the Declaration of the Peoples Rights. Noria was very proud of her son’s political involvement like her and her friend Malelohomvlo, the washer-woman, who never missed a single demonstration. She worked in the city and during her absence, she left her four-year old daughter, Danisa with Noria. Vutha and Danisa played in the mud. They both played, quarreled and became friends in no time. Noria was worried because wherever there were demonstrations, Vutha was in the front line of boys throwing stones at the soldiers and the police who came sometimes in armoured vehicles to suppress the demonstrations. The Young Tigers praised Vutha as a hero among his peers. One night it so happened that when the settlement was in deep sleep, Battalion 77 supported by hostel migrants invaded the settlement. People ran amuck in fear and on that night fifty-two people were killed and a hundred hospitalized. Luckily, the shacks of Noria and her washer-woman friend were left untouched. But, as the narrator points out:

For many days that followed, a dark cloud hovered at the settlement. There was anger mingled with bitterness. People had lost friends, and relatives. Husbands had lost wives and wives had lost husband. Children had lost parents, and siblings. (183)

A biggest funeral was conducted to bury the large group of dead people. Several national leaders attended the funeral. They praised the deceased as martyrs and warned the government and the tribal chief to stop his gory activities and support the freedom movement. Further, the national president of the Young Tigers was on the war-path and called upon his followers to avenge the deaths of their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters.

The Young Tigers conducted nightly patrol and every afternoon and they held meetings about the strategies to be adopted. One day Noria was called to help a shebeen queen to draw water for her. Noria told Vutha to follow her to the tap but he
delayed behind and started to play at the marshlands catching frogs and punishing them along with an eight-year-old boy who absconded school and stayed back to play. Then, they were caught by three men from the migrants’ hostel who forcefully took them to the hostel and fed them to their fill. The next day there was a political meeting in which the Young Tigers discussed strategies for self defense and also planned to attack the rally to be held by the followers of the village chief. The next day the two boys, Vutha and his friend went to the migrants’ hostel where the older boy after having been fed with plenty of meat and pap and bribed with sweets blurted out the plan of the Young Tigers. When they were returning home, the older Young Tigers stopped these two boys and finding their pockets bulging with sweets, questioned them where they were coming from and who gave them the sweets. The children, under great fear, confessed that they had told the hostel imamates about the ambush planned by the Young Tigers who in turn became very angry and called the other children and watch what would happen to sell-outs or betayers of their movement. They put tyres around the necks of the two boys filled them with petrol and gave a match box to Danisa to set the tyres on fire. Innocently she struck the matches and threw them at the tyres. Her match fell into Vutha’s tyre. Both children ran and screamed and in no time the air was filled with the stench of burning flesh. Both of them died. This is how Vutha, The Second died and the leaders at the community meeting did not mention his name because there was also his own fault for his death. Then Danisa innocently ran back to Noria and told her that she had burnt him to death because he was a sell-out. Noria became very wild with anger and went on scolding the Young Tigers but no one responded. The entire community also blamed the Young Tigers but the real culprit was not to be found.

Now Noria asks Toloki whether her child whom she carried in her womb for thirty months, deserved this kind of death. Toloki is surprised first but understands her because he knows that Noria believed that her first son, Vutha was reborn as Vutha, The Second. Both of them are silent for sometime while tears roll down Toloki’s cheeks. Noria makes warm water in a big tin for both of them to take bath together. At her insistence, both of them take bath in a naked manner rubbing each others’ bodies like children. After wiping their bodies jointly, they spread their blankets and fall asleep on the floor separately.
This chapter is a bit lengthier than the preceding ones and combines all the Semiotic codes. The Narrative code as in the other chapters juxtaposes the present and the past whereas the Cultural code describes how social hierarchies existed even among the black leaders who advocated freedom, democracy and equality. This is reflected how the leaders from the city are served food in enamel plates. Noria’s active service is recognised but her second son’s death is not mentioned in their speeches. This betrays human hypocrisy. Vutha The Second’s death is described under both Narrative and Semic codes. The Hermeneutic code operates in the expectations of Noria and her disappointment and utter dismay. Again the Semic and Hermeneutic codes operate when the close and intimate behaviour of Toloki and Noria is described. Toloki sympathises with Noria and then they bathe together naked. Still it is not clear whether they have fallen in love with each other. Hence, the Hermeneutic code.

4.2.2.10 Chapter 10: Narrative, Cultural (Magic Realism) and Semic Codes (pp.193-212)

This is the last chapter of the novel, which describes the New Year’s Eve and one more important incident that of Nefolovhodwe’s bringing of Jwara’s metal figurines to Toloki.

It was Tuesday morning and the New Year’s Eve. When Toloki wakes up Noria is still fast asleep and now Toloki looks at the contours of her beautiful body since he no longer feels guilty since a night before she allowed him to look at her and touch her body freely. If was like a vision that confirmed that Noria is indeed a goddess. He had a peaceful sleep that night before without any nightmares and also for the first time since leaving the village, he had slept naked. He gets up, dresses himself in his khaki home clothes and washes his face and armpits and leaves the shack blowing a kiss for Noria. On the way he finds people talking excitedly about the New Year and the parties. Teenagers were also wearing cross dresses, i.e., boys wear girls’ clothes and girls wear boys’ clothes. They smeared their faces with black shoe polish and go from house to house shouting Happy New Year which means that, as on the Christmas Day, they are asking for delicacies such as cakes, ginger beer and sweets provided by many families on days like these. People are going to the city to do last minute shopping, especially for wine and brandy. Some pickpockets are also plying their trade on streets. It is like the atmosphere of a carnival. Toloki alights his
taxi and walks in the familiar streets. He goes to the water front and walks among the tourists. People do not recognize him because he does not wear his professional costume. But a watchman recognizes and accosts him. He goes to the sea-shore and watches the ships sailing. He also, sails to different strange lands in his imagination.

Now, he returns to the central business district, buys pies, Swiss roll, green onions and tarragon leaves, to celebrate the New Year’s Eve with Noria as a royal banquet. When he reaches the settlement, he finds the children from Madimbhaza’s dumping ground playing outside Noria’s shack. He greets the children. Noria comes out hearing his voice and asks him where he has been. Both sit outside watching the children. Toloki expresses his regrets that he has not brought any flowers for her but offers to draw flowers and other pictures for her today with the crayons he has brought. Now he draws pictures of horses and also human figures when Noria starts singing. Surprisingly he is able to draw very colourful pictures of children’s faces some of which resembled some real children there. He paints them with purple, yellow, red and blue colours. The drawing becomes frenzied as Noria’s song rises. Passers-by stop to watch these figures and are moved by warm feelings. It is as if Toloki is possessed by a new ability to create human figures inspired by Noria’s song just like his late father, Jwara, who used to create strange metal figurines under the spell of Noria’s song. He is exhausted after sometime, the spell breaks and the passers-by go on their way. Though they could not say what it is, but the spectators have felt that Toloki’s pictures have a profound meaning. Shadrack was one of these spectators pushed in a wheel-chair by his employee. Shadrack who has not cared for Toloki so far, now directly looks at him and appreciates his work. He has come back from hospital to open his shack for the New Year’s Day and will go back to hospital afterwards. He seems to have realized the spiritual bond between Noria and Toloki as he admits:

“I cannot spoil things between you two. Your’s is a creative partnership” (200)

As Shadrack’s van drives away, Noria smiles at Toloki and approves of what Shadrack has said. Toloki feels embarrassed when Noria remarks that he need not feel ashamed of his dreams about her. To escape his embarrassment he turns to the children and shows them techniques of drawing pictures.
Late in the afternoon, Nefolovehodwe comes to Noria’s shack in his long Cadillack car followed by a truck. He blames Toloki who looks at him angrily and also Noria for neglecting their parents. He informs them about the present situation in the village. People have become poorer, there was a drought and when he enquired to meet Toloki’s mother, he didn’t find her there and their house was almost in ruins. As a next choice, he went Xesibe’s homestead where he found that Toloki’s mother was living with Xesibe. According to him it was a scandal that the two parents were cohabiting in their old age. But Noria and Toloki burst out laughing looking at each other. Presently the reason for the rich carpenters’ arrival is that Jwara’s spirit had been haunting him in dreams and threatening him to ruin his business unless the carpenter obeyed his order that he should go to the village, bring all his figurines to Toloki and hand them over to him as his inheritance. So, he went to the village, got the ruined smithy dug out, took out all the figurines made by Jwara and brought them now to Toloki, in a big truck. The workers of the carpenter dump all these figurines by the side of Noria’s shack. They over reach the shalk’s height as a strange background while Toloki and Noria are surprised to find all these figurines shine like freshly made ones. The carpenter leaves, telling them that an art dealer and also the trustee of an art gallery of a museum, both are interested in buying these figurines as they are like antique pieces of art. The children in the neighbourhood and passers-by stand near the figurines and express their wonder and admiration. Toloki tells Noria that they will either sell the figurines and donate the money to the orphanage kept by Madimbhaza or they could build a larger shack and keep the figurines there like exhibits for children to come there to laugh and dance while seeing them. Now Noria and Toloki have their dinner of the cakes, the Swiss roll and the green onions brought by Toloki. They enjoy them greatly. Now, it is midnight while people are still shouting Happy New Year and as the night progresses there is gradual silence and smell of burning tyres without the stench of roasting human flesh. A Happy New Year is about to begin while the figurines are shining in the dark.

This is the last chapter of the novel which ends on a note of hope. In this chapter, the Cultural code depicts the mood of the general public; especially the poor black people of the squatter camp celebrate the coming of the New Year. Likewise, the Cultural code includes Magic Realism or surrealism which accounts for the appearance of Jwara’s spirit in the dreams of Nefolovhowde, the rich carpenter and
the dead man’s spirit threatening to ruin the carpenter’s business unless he brings his iron and brass figurines from the village and passes them over to his son, Toloki, as his legacy. The Semic code throws light on the characters of the carpenter, Toloki and Noria. Now Noria and Toloki have become real lovers and a period of hope and happiness awaits them as symbolised by the Happy New Year.

4.2.3 SOME OBSERVATIONS ON WAYS OF DYING:

As already mentioned in the introduction to this section (i.e., 4.2), this novel, Ways of Dying, has some distinct features in comparison with the other novels under study. These may be mentioned as follows:

i) The narrator is the collective voice of the community. This is in consonance with the most prominent feature of African folk or oral literature.

ii) Every chapter presents a juxtaposition of the present and the past. Flash-back is the major technique employed to achieve this kind of juxtaposition. Flash-back is a general narrative technique found in the other three novels also, but in this particular novel, it is most frequently employed almost in every chapter.

iii) This novel incorporates the technique of the Magic Realism also in its narrative process. Instances of Magic Realism or surrealism include the supernatural influence of Noria’s laughter and singing; her mother’s sexual bouts in her eighth month of pregnancy with a young and handsome medical assistant and people’s belief that Noria resembled him, especially in her ears; Noria’s two times pregnancy, each lasting for fifteen months and Vutha the Second’s total resemblance of the first Vutha and Noria’s belief that Vutha was reborn; her second pregnancy without any contact with real men but with her dreamland intercourse with strangers; Jwara’s ability to create strange figurines of iron and brass only when Noria keeps him company, singing and laughing; the strange circumstances in which he dies; Jwara’s spirit haunting the dreams of Nefolvhodwe, the carpenter; Noria and Toloki’s strolling in the imaginary gardens and mansions inspired by the pictures of magazine covers and furniture catalogues; Toloki’s half-knowledge about the Hindu aghori sadhu’s way of life, to name a few of them.

iv) The narrator’s voice mentions only ‘the city’ and never the name of Johannesburg though it is implied and obvious.
v) The story time of the novel is more than twenty years whereas the discourse time is hardly one week, i.e., from the Christmas Day to the New Year’s Day.

These features mentioned above strikingly distinguish this novel from the other novels under study.

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