

## **Alienation and Identity Crisis in Fictional Characters in Joseph Diescho's *Troubled Waters***

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### **Abstract**

*This paper examines the various forms of alienation and identity in Joseph Diescho's *Troubled Waters*. According to Hussam (2013), alienation and identity crisis form the subject of many psychological, sociological, literary and philosophical studies. Hussam (2013) goes on to say that these are major themes of the human condition in the contemporary epoch. It is hoped that the paper will help students, researchers and teachers in enhancing their interest and encouraging them to explore alienation and identity crisis in any genres of their interests. The paper will, therefore, look at the plot, Diescho's technique and a concluding remark on the novel as a whole, major characters associated with alienation and identity crisis and an analysis of the objectives in this paper. The two main objectives in this paper are: to identify and examine how Joseph Diescho presents the concept of alienation and identity crisis in *Troubled Waters* and to examine the experiences of the major characters in *Troubled Waters* and extract lessons learned. There are so many editions of *Troubled Waters* (1993) but this paper used the reprint version of 2003, ISBN 0-86848-810-0)*

**Keywords:** alienation, identity crisis, fictional characters

### **Introduction**

*Troubled Waters* is not set in the period of imperial German colonial domination from 1884 to 1915 but in the Namibian people's second war of liberation against the South African apartheid regime, which lasted from the 1960s until the country's independence three decades later. It was written by Joseph Diescho, the first author to publish a Namibian novel in English. The narrative tells of the difficult relations between the South African occupiers and the members of the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) of South West Africa, now Namibia.

The action focuses on two young people who were shaken loose from their roots in family and tribe by the winds of political change. There was the Transvaler Andries Malan, conscripted into the South African bush war against SWAPO and posted to teach Biblical Studies in the black school near Rundu in South West Africa, now Namibia. In addition, there was Lucia, subtly alienated from the local community by her university training, whom Andries loved briefly and left pregnant when his tour of duty ended. Surrounding them, or surfacing in memories and dreams, were other border crossers: Mavis, the house cleaner who was closer to Andries than his own mother but whose children he had never met; Frank the misfit Suitwester, who honoured the ways of the children he taught; and Moyo, the herdboyc, who became a guerilla and always present yet barely glimpsed as brief apparitions among the foliage of trees, the PLAN fighters ([www.libraryofbook.com](http://www.libraryofbook.com)).

As the action shifted from South Africa to South West Africa (now Namibia), the order and dignity of tribal life were irretrievably fractured by the imposition of puppet self-rule on an ethnically defined Kavango region in Namibia. Diescho highlights a penetrating political scenario which centres on the troubled minds of Andries and Lucia. Arich-Gerz (2010) says that there has been only a very sparing literary analysis of the work in contrast to that of other novels in this paper. Joseph Diescho is a male writer who describes fictional events from the mid-1970s mainly through the eyes of a female protagonist. Lucia's diaries and letters are revealed to the reader, the confidential and fictional contents of which revolve around the relationship with Andries as a representative of the political enemy and later also include Lucia's pregnancy, a result of the liaison with the South African white male.

Arich-Gerz (2010) continues to say that Diescho portrays firstly a short trans-ethnic and ultimately doomed liaison during the armed conflict to point out the socio-political demands in the era of decolonisation and its difficulties without lapsing into a one-sided depiction at a time when this conflict was long over and the country had achieved its independence. The author is concerned with the themes of alienation, identity crisis and reconciliation. He is careful not to create characters, which merely serve to justify one side of the story. Kerstin (2018) says that the creation of the figure of Lucia as a character who went through alienation and an identity crisis was quite convincing. She was first alienated from her rural home going to South Africa to do her studies. After finishing her studies in South Africa, she returned to the Northern part of Namibia in a period of social upheaval and soon got confronted with a situation where she had to deal with a situation of identity crisis as she battled to “find herself” in the community. Lucia’s mind raced!

The title of the novel, *Troubled Waters*, focuses on Andries and Lucia. Both characters came from two different cultural backgrounds. Andreas was from the white community, and Lucia was from the black community. It was during the time of apartheid, and most white people were indoctrinated to think that black people were inferior to white people. Lucia was aware that black and white did not mix.

Andries and Lucia were confused about their roles and their love. They knew who they were, but their lives hang together because their different backgrounds affect their identities. Lucia suffered from the inferiority identity crisis while on the other side, Andries suffered from an ego identity. The two characters were passing through a phase of confused identity. However, in their confused identities, Andries and Lucia both fell in love and entered the troubled waters of race. It was difficult to pour oil on troubled waters since both races did not tolerate each other.

Kroger and Marcia (2010) state that identity rooted both within the individual as well as the communal culture can have devastating consequences. Although Lucia and Andries loved each other, the system of apartheid would never entertain interracial marriages. The child to be born would be alienated from the father and at the same time, Lucia had to explain to the community how she got pregnant and worse, was still carrying a coloured child. She stood the risk of being alienated further by her people and was at risk of being killed for violating the apartheid policy which prohibited interracial affairs.

### **Plot and major characters associated with alienation and identity crisis in Joseph Diescho’s *Troubled Waters* (1993).**

#### **Plot**

Frank (2018), in his abstract about Individual and Communal Values, Voices, and Perspectives in Namibian Novels, gave a synopsis of *Troubled Waters*, one of the novels by Joseph Diescho, a Namibian prolific writer and an academic guru. *Troubled Waters* (1993) was the first Namibian novel in English published after Namibia’s independence. Its heterodiegetic narrator (not part of the story world) told the story mostly from the point of view of the two main characters. These characters are Andries, a white South African, who was sent to Namibia as a soldier but was then deployed as a schoolteacher to fight the battle against liberation on the pedagogical front; and Lucia, a black Namibian woman who was a teacher at the same school as Andries (Frank, 2018). The following is a speech from the Headmaster of Louis Botha High, where the protagonist of the novel, Andries Malan was a student. It is from this speech that the reader knows why Andries had to leave his family to be deployed as a soldier to South West Africa, now Namibia.

"Every year our school participates in camp. It is an old tradition. The seven boys who have been selected will leave next Friday, driven there by one of our school drivers. These are boys who are about to become young men. Perhaps we should already address them as young men."  
(Diescho, 2003, pp. 3-4)

The figurative phrase of the title *Troubled Waters* means a particularly tough or confusing period or a situation with a lot of disagreements and problems. Black people suffered or had a tough time during the apartheid era. From this title, Joseph Diescho focused on the problems, hiccups, or hurdles faced by both black and white people during the apartheid system. The two major characters in the novel, Andries Malan and Lucia were culturally, socially and racially alienated from their own societies.

Despite the apartheid system, the political tensions, and the fighting between the South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the South African troops, Andries and Lucia both fell in love and entered the troubled waters of race. It was difficult to pour oil on troubled waters since both races did not tolerate each other. When Andries was called back to South Africa and left Lucia behind, she was pregnant, but did not tell him, knowing that it would not change anything and that her parents and home village would help to raise her child.

The second part of this analysis requires the reader to understand the term focalisation. Genette (1980) defined focalisation as the perspective through which a narrative or story is presented (point of view). Focalisation looks at internal focalisation and external focalisation. Internal focalisation focuses on the thoughts and emotions of characters, while external focalisation focuses solely on the characters' actions, behaviour and setting (Genette, 1980).

The technique of internal focalisation, which switches between Andries and Lucia, shows their different cultural backgrounds and value systems but does not judge them from the outside. According to Kerstin (2018), both characters distanced/alienated themselves from their cultures with their strict, literally black-and-white structures and were confused about their roles and identities in the face of political and cultural change. At the very end, when Andries was gone, Lucia wondered:

"What world will this child be born into? What community? [...] Once community came first, children were not above the community. As the traditional order becomes obsolete, there can only be a confusing vacuum which everyone runs to fill." (Diescho, 2003, p.187).

The contrast between the sense of community among the rural black population and the individualist, egotistical values of the white colonisers was a recurrent topic throughout the novel. Andries was shaken when even his students confronted him with it:

"In our language, we say 'I am because you are; I am because others are'...Our people do not live as isolated individuals, each one pursuing an independent goal. The goal of each individual in our village is pointed toward the need of the others, of the whole." (Diescho, 2003, p.73).

The student's statement resonated with the southern African philosophy of Ubuntu, which highlighted humanist values and the dependence of individual identity on communal identity and interpersonal relations (Diescho, 2003, pp, 156–58). In the novel, the gap between Andries' and Lucia's value-systems is confirmed when, in the end, Andries sets off on his own, while Lucia is prepared to raise her child as a part of her community.

This topic was not only expressed in the plot and in the characters' words and thoughts but also on the levels of narrative technique and focalisation. While others complement Lucia's point of view from her community, Andries was the only white focaliser in the novel, except for brief glimpses into the mind of the white commissioner of Lucia's hometown in the Kavango region of Namibia.

An extended flashback in the middle of the novel describes Lucia's childhood, her education, and her scholarship to a South African university, which opened doors for her, but also estranged her from her family and village and caused her socio-political liminality. This flashback described the crucial political events of the time. In 1966, the white commissioner of the Kavango region offered privileges and salaries to the chiefs of the tribes in return for their loyalty to the South African government and for their acceptance of the homeland policy of the Odendaal Commission, which was passed off or made public to them as independent self-governance. Before and during the commissioner's meeting with the chiefs, the point of view changed between the commissioner, external focalisation, the chiefs as collective focalisers, and the individual chiefs with their own concerns and doubts (Diescho, 2003, pp. 87–98). The following passage shows the chiefs as collective focalisers:

“Anticipation filled the air. The chiefs felt a great responsibility. They would have to go back to their people and tell them what was going on. They were filled with fear and many doubts, but they did not want in any way to appear not strong and powerful.” (Diescho, 2003, p.93).

This group's perspective was broken up soon after into insights into the chiefs' individual minds:

“Lucia's chief kept thinking about his uncle who fled and he wondered what the white people were trying to do now. Matumbo shifted on her bench trying to get the commissioner to look at her, annoyed at how he spoke past the women and looked only at the men. The eldest chief, to whom the commissioner had spoken earlier, nodded his head all through the speech. The chief of the Kwangali was the most sceptical. In his mind, he rehearsed the meeting he would hold on his return to his people, planning to ridicule the white commissioner.” (Diescho, 2003, p. 95)

These brief glimpses into the chiefs' thoughts and feelings revealed their different concerns, depending on their particular positions determined by age, gender, and other factors. During the meeting, the perspective continued to oscillate between individual and collective focalisation. When the chiefs had decided to accept the commissioner's proposals, the perspective of the two female chiefs was shown:

“The two women continued to glance at one another. They were both thinking about the coming trip on the big bird. Women were not known to take long trips. Their power was always at home. It was there they ruled, responsible and dignified. Now they would have to depend on other people, mostly men. Once they lost their power to make decisions independently, people would begin to mistrust them.” (Diescho, 2003, p. 98)

It became clear that western civilisation had penetrated so quickly. The new power structures imposed by the white South Africans did not only disempower the indigenous Namibian population in general but also manipulated the traditional hierarchies within this population toward a more strictly patriarchal system, a side effect of colonisation that had a lasting impact in many African countries (Frank, 2018).

After the meeting, focalisation shifted first back to Lucia studying in South Africa and then to the schoolchildren of Rundu in the Kavango region, who were told to celebrate the new “self-government.” (Diescho, 2003, pp .99–100).

This rapidly changing, flexible use of variable focalisation repeatedly emphasised the gap between communal and personal identities. The commissioner carried through his plans by dividing the community and appealing to the interests of individuals. The shifting focalisation during his meeting with the chiefs showed how his plan succeeded, how in their minds the chiefs gauged the situation and assessed their personal benefits from his offers. Thus, the seeds of Western individualism and materialism were sown, and the chiefs signed away their rights. The techniques of focalisation here revealed the psychology and the moral implications of this political act (Frank, 2018).

For the main part of the novel, however, Andries and Lucia took turns as focalisers, and this insight enabled the readers to trace their individual developments away from the stable, traditional worldviews of their communities and toward cultural openness and each other. The ending did not destroy this tentative hope, but it showed that the time had not yet come for a relationship like theirs. Lucia’s doubly vulnerable situation as a black woman was emphasised when she got pregnant and Andries left, but at the same time, she was sure of the help and support of her community, while Andries returned to a family from whose values he had been estranged.

To conclude this plot, it is important to look at Diescho’s technique and make a concluding remark on the novel as a whole. Diescho’s technique is unusual in that he ambitiously chose to use as his main narrative the voice of the white soldier, a focus that is possible intellectually but not experientially. He admitted that this immersion into the African psyche was very difficult – a catharsis. With his symbol of reconciliation, Diescho approached the genre of the novel within an overarching religious framework of love and reconciliation. To some extent, this reflected the class stance of an African torn between contradicting cultures, or more generally, of an academic, internationally orientated faction of the new Namibia intelligentsia. (Frank 2018).

Joseph Diescho’s *Troubled Waters* is a tale of the dilemmas thrown up by the Apartheid system. The two main characters in Joseph Diescho’s *Troubled Waters* reflect two antagonistic systems. The book is a brilliant insight into the workings of the Afrikaner’s mind and of the Namibian culture, from an African author (Diescho) both educated in South Africa and born and bred in the very part of Namibia where the story is focused. The novel, *Troubled Waters* is a masterpiece, relevant in explaining the unresolved emotions of separation of humanity by false beliefs that human beings are different. *Troubled Waters* is an awesome narration of mingling episodes of alienation, identity crisis, love, hatred and torture (Frank, 2018). The ending left room for a sequel- something that follows, or the second volume of a book that continues where the first ended or that expands the story that came before. I am sure the sequel here would be Andries coming back to Namibia after the apartheid war to be reunited with Lucia and to raise their child together!

### **Two major characters associated with alienation and identity crisis in *Troubled Waters***

#### **Andries Malan**

The story was told to some extent through Andries, an Afrikaner who had been brought up in the true Afrikaner tradition of patriotism, extreme religious fervour and the certainty that non-whites were

given to the Afrikaners as labourers by God the Almighty.” (Diescho, 2003, p.9)

The story began with Andries and six other promising Afrikaner school mates going into ‘camp’ as a prelude to joining the South African army – regarded as the highest representation of the Afrikaner ideals of courage and patriotism. However, at camp, Andries was forced to interact on an equal footing with the few black children there – an experience both he and the blacks concerned found uncomfortable but insightful. When he joined the army, Andries did not become a “fighting man” as expected. Instead, he was to be a soldier-teacher at a rural black school where he was to teach – with gun on hip – unquestioning obedience to the apartheid system.

Once Andries settled down to teaching, we follow his increasingly troubled mind as he wrestled with the enquiring minds of the children around him, and the unheroic stories of soldiers from his barracks who had been “to the front”. He found himself drawn to the oldest white teacher, who had a rapport with the black children, and to Lucia, the only black teacher, and the other central character in the book. The author did a good job of showing how the central characters, schoolchildren, and the community around them, strove to survive in a system they were helpless to change. And how they had operated in an increasingly diminished space as the South African government – mindful of the influence of the liberation movement, SWAPO (South West Africa People’s Organisation) – extended its ‘homelands’ system to South West (Frank. 2018).

The book is a brilliant insight into the workings of the Afrikaner mind and of the Namibian culture, from an African author. Andries went through a lot to understand the African culture (Kavango). That transformation made him to realise that after all blacks and whites were just normal human beings with different skin colours.

Lucia, in his letter to his friend, said something about Andries:

“He is really a good person, in every sense. In that uniform you have a decent human being with soul and feelings, all the feelings a man should have... He is very afraid that his superiors will find out. He is, after all, a soldier sent here to fight us, not to lie down with us (as the Bible says). I am also scared.” (Diescho, 2003, p. 156)

Lucia could see the bright side of Andries and that he was a decent human being but the alienation between blacks and whites because of the apartheid policies drifted them apart. Andries loved Lucia genuinely, but he was afraid that his superiors would find out, and according to apartheid policies, interracial relationships were not permitted and the punishment was lethal.

Lucia’s friend was quick to point out to Lucy the dangers of interracial affairs;

“Be careful with your white chap. Don’t get too involved in a dangerous situation. Don’t forget that you are in the war zone ” (Diescho. 2003, p.157).

Andries’ love for Lucia drove him into an identity crisis because of apartheid. He mentioned that in his letter to her:

“My feelings for you are deep and my desire to be with you is haunting...Being with you is like something divine...I have insufficient words to describe what I feel and why...I feel secure in a strong person’s arms... You are on my mind. Please burn this paper immediately ” (Diescho, 2003, p.171).

The last part of his letter instructing her to burn the letter was a clear testimony of fear that if the letter was discovered, he was going to be in trouble for transgressing against the apartheid rules banning interracial relationships.

According to Elmer (2019), the symptoms of identity crisis are that:

- You are questioning who you are — overall or concerning a certain life aspect such as relationships, age, or career.
- You are experiencing great personal conflict due to the questioning of who you are or your role in society.
- Big changes have recently occurred that have affected your sense of self, such as love.
- You are questioning things such as your values, spirituality, beliefs, interests, or career path that have a major impact on how you see yourself.
- You are searching for more meaning, reason, or passion in your life.

It is completely normal to question who you are, especially since we change throughout our lives. However, when it begins to affect your daily thinking or functioning, you may be having a crisis of identity. This is what affected Andries because, in Lucia's reply to his letter, she said:

Apartheid has taught us not to love, but to fear one another... The most important thing in life is love and there is no issue greater than love itself... It is fear, not hate, that apartheid is about... And what happened between the two of us is liberating too. Once you sleep with your enemy, you are free from the fear of the past. You are more conscious of the fact that you are white and I black than I am. It does not worry me as it worries you. For you it is a big thing. You were told that you are the carrier of your race into future generations here in Africa. I never heard my father, my mother or anybody in my family speak of whites as bad people. It's the opposite, perhaps to a fault. It is your own country that I learned of abuses. The political thing is a problem for me, not colour. It is what you do that is the matter (Diescho, 2003, p.172).

The message from the extracts of Lucia's letter to Andries points out clearly the identity crisis that Andries was going through. Andries loved Lucia, and he was now vulnerable. To love was to be vulnerable. It was life and growth. To sleep with a black woman was not a physical reality but a connection that went beyond curiosity and even rationality. Andries was in troubled waters because he thought of the way Mavis, their black house cleaner was treated by his family. They loved her services, but she had to eat outside and use different utensils from the family. Her plate was marked so that it would not be mixed with the others. They could not live without her and yet they could not eat from the same dish. Now Andries was pondering about his affair with a black woman the way his parents thought about Mavis, their black house cleaner. "His father would die if he knew he had slept with a black woman" (Diescho, 2003, p. 181).

Life had become different for Andries. As he left Namibia, he thought of the lovely, loving Lucia and the life he was leaving behind (Diescho, 2003, p. 187). It was sad to go through this crisis but for now, he had to live with his troubled mind.

### **Lucia Namvhura**

Just as her lover Andries, she too had her troubles. She had symptoms of identity crisis and went through phases of alienation. Elmer (2019) who has a passion in mental health advocacy pointed out

that if one is experiencing an identity crisis, one may be questioning one's sense of self or identity. This can often occur due to big changes or stressors in life. Lucia was no exception to what Elmer (2019) highlighted as a cause of identity crisis sometimes leading to alienation, depressed mood or feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness. When Lucia was born her mother insisted that she was different and that she was going to be offered all the things that her mother did not have. She even pointed out that Lucia was going to be "equal to four" (Diescho, 2003, p.57). Because of this praise from her mother, her six brothers were alienated from her and derogatively called her "a hard girl." (Diescho, 2003, p. 57).

When she went to study in South Africa, she was alienated from her family, friends and the community as a whole. Lucia herself highlighted this when she narrated her alienation to her niece:

Most of the people in the village outside of our family did not know where I was [...] During those years it was too dangerous for people to say too much about anybody, let alone someone studying outside of the country. The white police and soldiers would make the rest of the family suffer for not knowing enough about where and with whom I was studying. So, lack of information was their best defence. (Diescho, 2003, p. 60)

When she came back, alienation and the identity crisis gap widened. Many people asked why she never married. Lucia had to take the pains to explain that she had not received proposals from the men in the town or village. The big change that affected her identity or sense of self was love. The men in the village or town "thought she was too educated for them." (Diescho, 2003, p. 59). They gossiped that she spoke too much and cooked too little. The people had this to say about her:

"She walked differently. She spoke to white people as though she were one of them. She even ate like a white person, her home smelling of onions and peppers and leaves, all white people's food. How were the people in the village to understand?" (Diescho, 2003, p.60)

Her own mother joined other people to alienate her further by saying:

You are different... You walk different, smell different, and have a soft body...You read books and hold a pen. Look at your hair. It is like grass that is dying from lack of rain. (Diescho, 2003. p. 78)

Furthermore, her maternal uncle castigated her by saying:

Few words are needed to say many things. You are like the white people. Simple things they do not understand; big things they know and do not know how to explain [...] Maybe one day you will marry and be a normal woman [...] I am concerned about Namvhura. She is as old as our youngest daughter Nashira. But Nashira is a mother of three. Namvhura is still like a child. She is with us but she is not with us [...] I do not know what is in her head when she walks and when she sleeps. I feel powerless that I cannot provide her with a husband. (Diescho, 2003, pp.78-80)

This alienation forced her to write to her friend in South Africa to express her feelings about lack of men in her village and how she was getting attracted to a white soldier at the school:

I am all by myself... there are no men here for me... All the teachers are white. This afternoon, I will supervise at school with a soldier... He is a quite nice though, the poor chap. I wonder what he thinks of me? This morning we were alone in a room. I wish this world did not have wars,



racism and the rest of the nonsense. I am sure we could become real friends, but as you know, this is Namibia, and the struggle is here to stay. (Diescho, 2003, pp. 60-61)

As mentioned earlier in this paper, she went to do her studies in South Africa. After completing Standard 10, Lucia received a Roman Catholic Church scholarship to study in South Africa, where she majored in languages and Psychology. She was the first woman to be sent to South Africa. Lucia was beyond anyone's understanding. When she was with the white people, she was like one of them; when she was with the villagers, she was like one of them. Neither world accepted her fully (alienation crisis), and she did not want to live in one to the exclusion of the other (identity crisis). She was university-educated but increasingly isolated/alienated from her community. She was a teacher but had to sneak into the "Whites Only" staffroom (Diescho, 2003, p.53) to better prepare her work, and she could not partake in the "Whites Only" staff meetings. She went through this isolation/alienation because of the apartheid system, which forbade blacks to mix with whites. She also felt the burden of expectation from the schoolchildren when their rights were violated, and they needed a champion. The school children were fed with dog food and their only hope was Lucia who was the only black teacher at the school. Lucia was bold enough to confront the white principal, Mr Swanepoel about it:

Animal food! It was given to the students for lunch. The matron knows about it already. She made the children angrier and they came to me...They are very upset. It has already become a black-white issue! If the chiefs and elders hear that the students were given dog food, we will have a big problem on our hands. And I am not sure it can be stopped (Diescho, 2003, pp.119-120).

After Lucia's bold, confrontation with the school authorities, it calmed the volatile situation. Members of the Kavango Legislative Council, chiefs and elders were called to a meeting to resolve the problem. Her greatest predicament and a mistake she would live with for the rest of her life was being involved in an interracial relationship with Andries, an Afrikaner who was deployed to teach at Rundu Secondary School where she was teaching. This was the main source of her identity crisis.

Extracts from her letter to Andries provide evidence of all the symptoms that led to her depression:

Apartheid has taught us not to love, but to fear one another...It is fear, not hate, that apartheid is about... The political thing is a problem for me, not colour... To love is to be vulnerable. It is life and growth. You are not a stranger. You are the man I love and sleep with...Two independent units meet never to part completely again, even if they are separated physically. I have grown, gained and lost something. We make our roads as we walk them...I wish you would not go back to South Africa (Diescho, 2003, pp.172-173).

The extracts from that letter are deep and clearly show genuine love but the affair they had embarked on was illegal in apartheid terms and both lovers could not help the growing feeling of dread. Lucia did not tell Andries about her pregnancy for fear of her own people and that of Andries' family. (cultural and racial barriers). She also concealed her pregnancy for fear of apartheid. She could be killed or punished for having an affair with a white man. She did not want Andries to be rejected or punished by his own people.

When Lucia concealed everything to Andries, she deprived him of his responsibilities but at the same time, it was quite necessary, as the situation was quite volatile. Maybe his true transformation and chance to take responsibility for his actions were going to materialise after apartheid. Lucia knew the

consequences and I am sure if Andries had been told, there was going to be trouble- troubled waters indeed! That was when she had the first memory of helplessness and fear, and the following reflection by Lucia left all readers of this novel thinking deeply (Frank. 2018).

What world will this child be born into? What community? Once community came first; children were not above the community. As the traditional order becomes obsolete, there can only be a confusing vacuum, which everyone runs to fill. Children can't dream about swimming naked in the rivers or dancing all night. In their dreams they run from bullets and uniforms. Before, children would go to their parents for counselling; now they go to silence them. It becomes difficult to remember who has died. If you can't remember who has died, you can't remember who was there. (Diescho, 2003, p. 187).

The ending to Lucia's story did not destroy her tentative hope, but it showed that the time had not yet come for a relationship like hers and Andries. However, Lucia was determined that her parents, maternal uncles and the community would help her raise her child. However, she would remain with her troubled mind since she was skeptical about how the community would react to her pregnancy and the author of the pregnancy! A sequel to this saga would be quite interesting to read!

### **Objective 1.**

#### **Identification and examination of the concept of alienation and identity crisis in *Troubled Waters***

*Troubled Waters* (1993), focuses on two young people who were shaken loose from within their roots in family and tribe by the winds of political change. Andreas and Lucia were two major characters who came from two different cultural backgrounds. Andreas was from the white community, and it was during the time of apartheid, and most white people were indoctrinated to think that black people were inferior to white people. Lucia was from the black community, and she was aware that black and white did not mix. Alienation became a traumatic experience for both Andries and Lucia because of racial discrimination. The two characters were culturally, socially, and racially alienated from their own societies. They both fell in love, but interracial marriages were taboo during the apartheid era.

For the main part of the novel, however, Andries and Lucia took turns as focalisers, and this insight enabled the readers to trace their individual developments away from the stable, traditional worldviews of their communities and toward cultural openness and each other. They went through their own identity crises in trying to understand their different worlds and to keep their affair secretive. However, the ending did not destroy this tentative hope, but it showed that the time had not yet come for a relationship like theirs. Lucia's doubly vulnerable situation as a black woman was emphasised when she got pregnant and Andries left, but at the same time, she was sure of the help and support of her community, while Andries returned to a family from whose values he had been estranged. In conclusion, the novel, *Troubled Waters* is a masterpiece, relevant in explaining the unresolved emotions of separation of humanity by false beliefs that human beings are different. *Troubled Waters* is an awesome narration of mingling episodes of alienation, identity crisis, love, hatred and torture (Frank, 2018).

### **Objective 2.**

#### **The experiences of the major characters in *Troubled Waters* and extract lessons learnt**

In Joseph Diescho's *Troubled Waters*, the fictional protagonists are Andries and Lucia. When Andries was deployed to go to Namibia, he did not become a "fighting man" as expected. Instead, he was to

be a soldier-teacher at a rural black school where he was to teach – with gun on hip – unquestioning obedience to the apartheid system. Once Andries settled down to teaching, we follow his increasingly troubled mind as he wrestled with the enquiring minds of the children around him, and the unheroic stories of soldiers from his barracks who had been “to the front”. He found himself drawn to the oldest white teacher, who had a rapport with the black children, and to Lucia, the only black teacher and the other central character in the book.

Andries went through a lot to understand the African culture (Kavango). That transformation made him realise that, after all, blacks and whites were just normal human beings with different skin colour. He fell in love with Lucia and during apartheid, interracial marriages were not allowed. Andries’ love for Lucia drove him into an identity crisis because of apartheid. He mentioned that in his letter to her:

My feelings for you are deep and my desire to be with you is haunting... Being with you is like something divine... I have insufficient words to describe what I feel and why...I feel secure in a strong person’s arms... You are on my mind. Please burn this paper immediately. (Diescho, 2003, p.171)

The last part of his letter instructing her to burn the letter was clear testimony of fear that if the letter was discovered, he was going to be in trouble for transgressing against the apartheid rules banning interracial relationships. Andries loved Lucia and he was now vulnerable. To love was to be vulnerable. It was life and growth. To sleep with a black woman was not a physical reality but a connection that went beyond curiosity and even rationality. Andries was pondering about his affair with a black woman the way his parents thought about Mavis, their black house cleaner.

His father would die if he knew he had slept with a black woman. (Diescho, 2003, p. 181)

Life had become different for Andries. As he left Namibia, he thought of the lovely, loving Lucia and the life he was leaving behind (Diescho, 2003, p. 187).

It was sad to go through this crisis but for now, he had to live with his troubled mind. Andries’s experiences as a white man in an environment of black children and falling in love with a black woman taught him many lessons. He realised that all blacks and whites were just normal human beings with different skin colour. This wakeup call taught him that apartheid rules were bad and oppressive. His love for the black woman taught him that love is a necessary part of political struggle and the learning that it entails. According to Bending (2002), what deserves the name of love is an effort and mind-changing on both sides. Andries was in a dilemma since he could not change the apartheid laws. Although he was willing to change, the system would not liberate him to marry the woman of his choice.

In one of the top 10 revolutionary Nelson Mandela quotes on love, he said,

No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite. (Coleman, n.d.)

The lesson we get from Andries’ experiences is echoed in Nelson Mandela quotation’s above. In conclusion, people should oppose racist laws by all possible means and that the most important thing is the deepening of the social, national, familial, and cultural bonds between all of our people.

## **Lucia**

When Lucia was born her mother insisted that she was different and that she was going to be offered all the things that her mother did not have. She even pointed out that Lucia was going to be “equal to four” (Diescho, 2003, p.57). Because of this praise from her mother, her six brothers were alienated from her and derogatively called her “a hard girl.” (Diescho, 2003, p. 57).

As predicted by her mother, Lucia got a scholarship from the Roman Catholic Church to go and study in South Africa. It was a great opportunity for her but at the same time changed her entire life as she went through alienation and an identity crisis. When she came back, alienation and the identity crisis gap widened. Many people asked why she never married. Lucia had to take the pains to explain that she had not received proposals from the men in the town or village. The big change that affected her identity or sense of self was love. The men in the village or town “thought she was too educated for them. (Diescho, 2003, p. 59). Her greatest predicament and a mistake she would live with for the rest of her life was being involved in an interracial relationship with Andries, an Afrikaner who was deployed to teach at Rundu Secondary School where she was teaching. This was the main source of her identity crisis.

Lucia fell pregnant and this pregnancy could not be divulged because her love affair with Andries was not permitted because of apartheid rules that forbade interracial affairs. When Lucia concealed everything to Andries, she deprived him of his responsibilities but at the same time, it was quite necessary, as the situation was quite volatile. Maybe the true transformation and chance to take responsibility for his actions were going to materialise after apartheid.

The ending to Lucia’s story did not destroy her tentative hope, but it showed that the time had not yet come for a relationship like hers and Andries. However, Lucia was determined that her parents, maternal uncle and the community would help her raise her child. From Lucia’s experiences, we learn that her predicament just like Andries was apartheid. We also learn that her alienation from her people was because of the education she had received, and her people thought that she was different. To aggravate her alienation problem, she fell in love with a white man and she ended up pregnant. Her pregnancy created another rift with her own people and worse still, it was not appropriate to tell Andries about it because interracial affairs would result in dire consequences. Lucia was in a situation or circumstance that was fraught with disorder, difficulty, confusion and stress. Pressures, problems, and conflicts are unpleasant facts. However, the person who can face problems head-on and deal with them calmly is way ahead of the game. Lucia was able to deal with her problems calmly and that is what we are all urged to do to avoid “troubled waters.”

## **Conclusion**

The paper presented a comprehensive analysis of the data collected based on alienation and identity crisis as presented by Joseph Diescho. The analysis, as Gibbons (2020) puts it, has enabled the reader to gain new perspectives of different cultures and discover lessons in empathy and self-reflection. As humans, we are all naturally influenced by the world around us — through our experiences, life values, environment and state of mind. When we open our minds and hearts to the thoughts and experiences of others, whether fictionalised or not, we are able to widen our personal reality beyond the perspective we have created. Through deep personal connections to the characters we read about, we often find that we can relate to their emotional journeys — we feel for them, we cry for them, and

we look at our own problems through the lens of a novel, becoming our own third narrator. A book can become a reflecting pool of our own hopes, desires, fears and struggles — giving us the tools to think retrospectively and hopefully about our lives. By diversifying our perspectives beyond what we already know and understand, we begin to learn more empathetically about the world around us. We also find that through the fictionalisation of interesting scenarios, intense dramatisation or subtle remarks, we are able to find pockets of our identity represented, and in doing so, we are able to learn a little more deeply about ourselves.

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