THE DEPICTION OF HOMELESSNESS IN K. SELLO DUIKER'S *THIRTEEN CENTS* AND PHASWANE MPE'S *WELCOME TO OUR HILLBROW*

by

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Declaration

I, **Freddy Mahori**, Student No. 9306454, declare that the dissertation "The Depiction of Homelessness in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*" is my own original work in both design and execution, and has never been submitted for examination at this or any other institution of higher learning.

Abstract

In this study, I explore the depiction of homelessness in K. Sello Duiker's Thirteen Cents (2000) and Phaswane Mpe's Welcome to Our Hillbrow (2001). Against the background of post-colonial and transcultural theories, I explore the effects of homelessness on select characters depicted in the two novels, particularly how homelessness and its effects impact on the characters' identity and human dignity, as some of the themes which the two authors deal with. I achieve this through a close analysis of themes, characterisation and style as well as a demonstration of how the metaphor of the plight of the homeless is drawn from the experiences of the homeless characters portrayed in the novels.

I establish, through this study, that the two novels depict characters on whose identity and human dignity, colonialism had an adverse impact. I argue that the corroded dignity and identity of the select homeless characters can be restored through the application of the tenets of transcultural theory.

I consistently identify the central morals of the two novels under study as highlighting the need for society to address the plight central to the two novels' major themes of homelessness, poverty, identity and human dignity against the backdrop of postcoloniality and transculturalism.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my late mother, Mjaji Nyanisi Mahori, *ne´e* Rhangani Sambo who worked on a farm to raise tuition fees for my first entry into university. She spent the better part of her life in the then Eastern Transvaal, now Mpumalanga, eking out a living for a family of six after my father's demise, whose memory to me is so distant because he died when I was only ten years old.

Today that elegant woman is no more, but her legacy lives through us who remain.

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Chapter One

Conceptual framework of the study

1.1 Introduction

This study explores the depiction of homelessness in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001). In essence, I explore the effects of homelessness on select characters depicted in the two novels, particularly how these impact on the characters' identity and human dignity, as some of the themes which the two authors deal with. I achieve this through a close analysis and illustration of how the metaphor of the plight of the homeless is drawn from the experiences of the homeless people as portrayed in the characterisation and narrative styles that the two authors employ.

In the opening chapter, I outline the aims and objectives as well as the rationale for the study. In addition, I elucidate the research approach and methodology that I adopt in exploring the depiction of homelessness in the two novels by Duiker and Mpe. Finally, I give an overview of the conceptual framework and the theoretical background of the study in relation to how Duiker and Mpe depict homelessness in the post-apartheid South Africa.

1.2 Aims and objectives of the study

This study sets out to investigate how K. Sello Duiker and Phaswane Mpe depict homelessness in *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) respectively. As I pointed out in the preceding section, I investigate how the metaphor of the plight of the homeless is drawn from the

experiences of the homeless people as portrayed in the characterisation and narrative styles the two authors employ. Against this background, I will pay particular attention to the use of literary devices such as metaphor and irony in the depiction of homelessness by both Duiker and Mpe.

I explore the different socio-economic strata that constitute the South African social formation *vis-à- vis* the notion of 'home'. In addition, I explore the trope of the South African migrant and the foreigner, particularly in the latter novel, in relation to the concept of dislocated identity and psyche, which are the hallmarks of postcolonial effects on the affected characters. The tropes of the foreigner and the migrant are encapsulated in the movement of characters from their original homes to the urban spaces of South Africa in search of job opportunities and a better life.

I further explore how the selected narratives portray homelessness and its impact on the identity and dignity of homeless people in the two novels. I will achieve this by critically analysing available literature in the area of homelessness. I will explore the tropes of life as a journey and displacement/dislocation of both identity and psyche primarily through close analysis of the overriding theme of homelessness as portrayed in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001). The trope of the foreigner and the South African migrant will serve as a sounding board to foreground the notion of displacement from one's original or habitual place of abode to a foreign or other place as a consequence not only of individual choice, but also what McLuckie refers to as "human power structures that govern life" (McLuckie, 1993:429). This impact manifests in restlessness and hybridity which are typical features of city or urban life in South Africa, which I will further investigate.

In addition, I analyse the predicament that homelessness breeds, which I posit as a vicious cycle in which homeless people live, as some slip in and out of homelessness in their lifetime. Further to this predicament are the issues of isolation, alienation and stigma that homeless people have to contend with on a day-to-day basis. When people are isolated, alienated, and stigmatised, as is often the case with homeless people, questions of moral issues come to the fore as these people are frequently exposed to criminal activities and abuse by unscrupulous elements within society. I will closely examine the portrayal of characters such as Azure in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*, who are caught up in a cobweb of homelessness alongside other characters in the narrative to establish the veracity of the argument that homelessness breeds psychological predicaments among the homeless people. Such an examination is crucial in substantiating that Azure is an embodiment of the myriad of experiences of homeless children in Cape Town, and potentially throughout major South African cities.

1.3 Approach and Methodology

I conduct this study within the premise of looking at how Duiker and Mpe depict different tropes of homelessness in their narratives. I employ the two novels, namely *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) as a point of departure and primary sources from which this research project emanates.

I conduct this study within the domain of literature and present the arguments through the analysis of the two texts in terms of the treatment of themes, portrayal of charaterisation and employment

of style. I will focus on homelessness and its attendant problems, in both K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* as the overriding theme.

In analysing both novels, I focus on the portrayal of charactersation and the employment of literary devices; particularly diction and imagery in the representation of homelessness. Cole and Lindemann define diction as, "(a writer's choice of words) in a literary work…" (Cole and Lidemann, 1990:113). On the other hand, Cuddon asserts that "Imagery as a general term covers the use of language to represent objects, actions, feelings, thoughts, ideas, states of mind and any sensory or extra-sensory experience" (Cuddon, 1991:322). Other literary texts such as Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* (1973) [2005], a play that focuses on the plight of a trio of homeless people, will serve as reference points.

In view of the nature of this research project, the method of collecting data is qualitative. Creswell defines qualitative study as, "an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (Creswell, 1994:1-2). On the other hand, Boeije refers to qualitative research as a method of inquiry whose purpose "is to describe and understand social phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (Boeije, 2010:11). Boeije further elucidates thus, "In qualitative research inductive thinking is paramount, which means that a social phenomenon is explored in order to find empirical patterns that can function as the beginning of a theory" (Boeije, 2010: 5). The qualitative research method will be appropriate for this study as it will allow analysis of previous findings on the concept 'homelessness' and integration of these with relevant and pertinent theories formed around this concept.

Apart from analysing the treatment of themes, portrayal of characterisation and the employment of literary style by Duiker and Mpe in *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) respectively, I consult secondary sources with a view to substantiating the argument I put forward regarding the two authors' use of figurative language in their representations of homelessness in post-apartheid South Africa. In addition, I consult articles in peer-reviewed journals, books, chapters in books, newspaper articles and internet sources that deal with the theme of homelessness in South Africa and any other place. I will further critique government policies and programmes on homelessness which are in circulation in the form of conferences and high-level meetings with a view to ascertaining the progress made since the post-apartheid government made the promise to end homelessness in South Africa at its inception in 1994. Such a determination is especially necessary considering that if one looks at each State of the Nation Address in Parliament every year, the issue of ending homelessness is recurrent. In this regard, I will critique the efforts made by the relevant authorities to realise this ideal. I will achieve this within the context of how the two authors treat the theme of homelessness.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

By undertaking this study, I hope to contribute constructively to the debate on eradicating homelessness, poverty and inequality at a micro level while elevating the discourse of displacement through engagement with post-colonial literary texts. The dialectic of the impact of colonialism, particularly displacement, however, will be viewed from both local and global perspectives in order to shed better understanding of the plight of homelessness; especially its causes and effects.

Published research findings on the concept of homelessness consistently indicate that homelessness is caused primarily by poverty. It cannot be overstated however, that poverty is just one string of a whole lot of issues that emanate from the effects of colonialism in a broader sense. In the context of South Africa, from where the two authors write, in colonialism, which saw the black people's dispossession of land by the imperial white regime, I see the offshoot of dispossession manifesting in the form of poverty, homelessness and inequality which are taking inordinate time to redress, despite the concerted efforts of the government which continue to yield ignoble results when analysed and reported to the nation on a year-to-year basis in the country's "State of the Nation Address".

In view of the ever-growing number of homeless people in South Africa and worldwide, as can be corroborated by various research findings, I find the theme of homelessness fascinating to the extent that it deserves deeper investigation.

However, in the South African literary landscape, the kind of displacement portrayed in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* in particular is one that is complex in nature and often eludes researchers. I am of the view that the impetus with which Duiker portrays the characterisation of Azure in *Thirteen Cents*, in the context of the novel's overriding theme of homelessness will perhaps arrest scholarly attention to this neglected subject, a fact borne out in Raditlhalo's observation that:

> Duiker's first novel, *Thirteen Cents*, goes to the core of what has been a clear *subject of avoidance* for writers: the astonishing rate at which children are now victims of a (violent) society intent on turning a blind eye to the plight of its weakest members (Raditlhalo 2005: 97-98) (my emphasis).

Raditlhalo's observation highlights the often neglected precarious conditions under which homeless children survive. It further lends credence to the fact that Duiker's depiction of homeless children is astounding as the encounter with the character Azure provides shocking revelations of children who live on the streets. Kim (2009), corroborates this observation when she asserts that *Thirteen Cents* "…is one of those books that will make you feel dirty if you say that you enjoyed it".

1.5 Conceptual Framework

Social critics Nkomo and Olufemi, in highlighting the plight of many ordinary and unfortunate citizens in the country, document that the first record of street children in South Africa was reported in 1917 (Nkomo & Olufemi, 2001:340). To a large extent, one can argue that the effects of the Natives' Land Act of 1913 (Act 27 of 1913) did not take long to manifest in the form of what has become popularly known as "street culture". Plaatjie metaphorically captures the notion thus, "Awaking on Friday morning, June 20, 1913, the South African Native found himself, not actually a slave, but a pariah in the land of his birth" (in Willan, 1996: 186). In light of Nkomo and Olufemi's observation cited at the beginning of this paragraph, it can be inferred that it was hardly four years down the line after the promulgation of the Natives' Land Act (Act 27 of 1913) that its effects were beginning to show in the form of homelessness as the Natives were driven out of the farms they used to call home.

Njabulo Ndebele's assertion demonstrates the effects of the notorious Land Act of 1913, and in particular the extent of the plight of landlessness by contending that the Act "…was responsible for the granting of only 13 percent of land in South Africa to Africans, while the rest was to be the domain of the white man" (Ndebele, 1991: 157). On the other hand, Willan asserts that, "The South African Native National Congress protested vigorously to the South African authorities about the Natives' Land Act, but to no avail, and the legislation was duly enacted in June 1913" (Willan 1996: 125). The reader is also given to know that just after the promulgation of the Act, "…in the Orange Free State" … "white farmers took advantage of the legislation and forced many Africans to leave their homes in search of *places to live*" (Willan 1996: 125) *my emphasis*. Davenport (1977)

reports that the farmers proceeded to evict their squatters, "…rightly thinking that the law required them to do so" (Davenport 1977: 335-336). This development reveals that the Natives' Land Act of 1913, (Act 27 of 1913) "had at least much to do with the preservation of cheap labour, and created far greater difficulties for later generations than were appreciated at the time" (Davenport 1977:165). I, therefore, note that one of the difficulties created by this piece of legislation is the homelessness that we see mushrooming in and around South African metropolitan areas. Thus the homelessness evident today can be seen as a direct spiraling effect of the enactment of the Natives' Land Act (Act 27 of 1913).

The South African Natives' Land Act (Act 27 of 1913) was intended, primarily, to restrict black people's access to land. However, it is ironic that in some instances the Act has had repercussions for both black and white citizens of the country. Modisane aptly describes the culture of white hoboes in South African cities as telling evidence that although the architects of segregation are whites, they too are affected by similar social ills that plague the South African society. Modisane (1986) [1963] points out this fact thus:

> The public image of South Africa is white, and this single factor is dramatically illuminated by the white hoboes in the street; they have to reach a certain depth of depravity before they can confront an African for alms, because the Africans – in the eyes of the upper white caste – are lower than the lowest white man (Modisane, (1986) [1963]:156).

While the above observation highlights the hypocrisy of the white elite and the social irony of South African spatial distribution, the point is made that homelessness affects all race groups in the South African social formation. That is, while whites considered themselves first class citizens during the Apartheid era, they suffer the same social ills as blacks, who were regarded as second

class citizens. Ironically, their plight stands out more than that of their black counterparts as the repercussions of the Natives' Land Act (Act 27 of 1913) inadvertently went beyond just diminishing the dignity of Black South Africans. Certain sections of the White minority were also affected by that decision of the then Parliament of the apartheid regime.

Homelessness is a phenomenon that emanates from the scourge of poverty and landlessness, which are among the prime challenges the new post-apartheid government is grappling with and attempting to find ways to redress. The government's efforts are yet to bear tangible rewards despite almost two decades of democratic rule in South Africa. Since homelessness cannot be viewed in isolation from other social ills like poverty and diseases, it should be viewed as an extension of what the then Premier of the Eastern Cape Mr. M. Sogoni (2008) calls "public enemy number one", which is poverty. I therefore argue that poverty is the source of both homelessness and diseases in any state.

In their study, "Health and wellbeing of people living on the streets in South Africa", Seager and Tamasane define homeless people as those who "sleep in the open, one or more nights per week" as well as "those making use of shelters specifically for the homeless" (Seager and Tamasane, 2008: 3). Additionally, Makiwane, Tamasane and Schneider (2010) in their study of the societal origins of homelessness contend that, "Factors that contribute to [homeless people] becoming homeless were poverty, unemployment, a lack of affordable accommodation, divorce, disability, illness and underprivileged childhood" (Makiwane et al., 2010: 39).

The definition of poverty can be deduced from the noun 'poor' which the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines as, "having little money and/or few possessions" (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 2003: 961). The phrasal noun "poverty line" offers a more enlightened explanation of what it means to be poor. "Poverty line" means, "the official level of income which is needed to achieve a basic living standard with enough money for things such as food, clothing and a place to live" (*Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* 2003: 969). This phrasal noun seems to encompass the definition of poverty in a manner that ties in with this study, since it even refers to 'a place to live', which is a home, hence my decision to focus on the socio-economic plight of homeless people in South Africa as depicted in the two selected novels.

Considering poverty as one of the causes of homelessness, one can link poverty to landlessness in South Africa, since landlessness itself is a metaphor for dispossession that owes much to the dire consequences of colonialism/apartheid. In response to the socio-economic complexities caused by apartheid-era policies, the first democratic parliament of South Africa, which came into power in 1994, promulgated the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). In the words of Nelson Mandela, "At the heart of the Government of National Unity is a commitment to effectively address the problems of poverty and the gross inequality evident in almost all aspects of South African society" (White Paper on Reconstruction and Development, 1994). In this preamble of the RDP, Mandela outlines the aims and objectives of the RDP as well as the commitment to address poverty and gross inequality.

In his Inaugural Address to the Joint Sitting of Parliament on 24 May 1994, Mandela made this statement:

> My Government's commitment to create a people-centred society of liberty binds us to the pursuit of the goals of freedom from want, freedom from hunger, freedom from deprivation, freedom from ignorance, freedom from suppression and freedom from fear. These freedoms are fundamental to the guarantee of human dignity. They will therefore constitute part of the centerpiece of what this Government will seek to achieve, the focal point on which our attention will be continuously focused. The things we have said constitute the true meaning, the justification and the purpose of Reconstruction and Development Programme, without which it would lose all legitimacy (Mandela 1994).

On that same day, Mandela enumerated a number of projects to be initiated within a period of 100 days, one of which was provision of basic needs. This commitment from the Government of National Unity can be summed up and interpreted to mean that its thrust is in the eradication of poverty.

When his successor Thabo Mbeki ascended to the presidency, the South African society was still grappling with the challenges of lack of proper housing. This was particularly the case for the majority of poor South Africans.

Subsequently in 2003; February 14, in his State of the Nation Address, the rhetoric of poverty eradication pervaded Mbeki's speech. With reference to his previous speech Mbeki said, "Last year when we spoke from this podium, we said our country has a continuing task to push back the frontiers of poverty and expand access to a better life for all" (Mbeki 2003).

The current South African president, J.G. Zuma (2012), continues to echo the sentiments of his predecessors. In his State of the Nation Address 2012, President Zuma said, "The year 2013 will mark the centenary of the Natives Land Act of 1913, which took away 87 percent of the land from the African people" (Zuma 2012). Highlighting a serious backlog and the slowness of the process,

Zuma went on to indicate that, "We have only distributed 8% of the 30% target of land redistribution for 2014 that we set ourselves" (*Ibid*). In an attempt to address this issue, he added, "We urge the public to participate in the process of improving land redistribution and reform to reverse the impact of the 1913 Act" (*Ibid*).

I want it noted that Zuma had targeted his speech at tackling what he called, "…the triple challenge of poverty, inequality and unemployment…" (2012), which to me are just the three sides of the same coin, that contribute significantly to homelessness.

In his subsequent State of the Nation Address in 2013, the President said, "In June we will mark the centenary of the 1913 Land Act which turned black people into wanderers, labourers and pariahs in their own land (Zuma 2013). He continued thus, "On the 15 (sic) of August last year, the National Planning Commission handed over the National Development plan, the vision for the next 20 years in this august house" … "It is a roadmap to a South Africa where all will have water, electricity, sanitation, jobs, housing, public transport, adequate nutrition, education, social protection, quality healthcare, recreation and clean environment" (Zuma 2013). The president's representations can be inferred as an acknowledgement that the country has a challenge of landlessness and poverty which it needs to address.

Landlessness in South Africa has transcended its connotative meaning to becoming a symbol of dispossession of land by colonial masters and apartheid practitioners, either by forced removals or by annexations. Landlessness in the South African context, therefore, can be summed up as the denial of the right to land ownership by blacks through the enactment of apartheid legislation.

Although this was done almost a hundred years ago, the impact is still with us today. It is for this reason that the impact of landlessness on the dispossessed needs to be adequately addressed as the question of land is intricately linked to means of production and livelihood. In the South African context, landlessness can also be seen as an embodiment of dispossession, displacement and dislocation, hence the connection with homelessness.

Looking at the issue from a literary theory perspective, Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin 2002 argue that, "A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 2002: 8).

Additionally, Ashcroft *et al*. contend that, "A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or voluntary removal for indentured labour" (Ashcroft *et al*. 2002: 9). This suggests that when people move from their original places of abode, their identities are usually affected, either negatively or positively. In this study I seek to explore the effects of such dislocation as outlined by Ashcroft *et al*. To this end, I will explore homelessness, taking into consideration how this scourge impacts on issues of identity and dignity as depicted in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001).

Fanon views the colonised black or Negro as a hybrid entity. He submits that "The black man has two dimensions. One with his fellows, the other with the white man." (Fanon 1967: 17). He goes

on to argue that a Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro, and refers to this phenomenon as 'self-division', which he ascribes to "…a direct result of colonialist subjugation" (1967: 17). In essence, Fanon's observation portrays a black man or native as having accepted an imprinted mentality of an inferior person to the white man. The black man affirms this status quo by adopting an inferiority complex which he manifests time and again in his interaction with the white counterpart.

Fanon makes grave comments on the denigration of the colonized's culture thus: "Every colonized people – in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality – finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, the culture of the mother country" (1967: 18).

Fanon (1990) also alludes to the colonial world as one divided in compartments. He argues that "It is probably unnecessary to recall the existence of native quarters and European quarters, of schools for natives and schools for Europeans; in the same way we need not recall Apartheid in South Africa" (Fanon 1990: 29). This implies that hybridity is the hallmark of colonialism, with the colonised experiencing this sense of 'self-division' in their existence as the lingering byproduct of being subjected to colonialism.

In his treatise, *The location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha (1994) views subordinated people as living unhomely lives. He contends that it is critical for subordinated peoples to "[assert] their indigenous cultural traditions and [retrieve] their repressed histories" (Bhabha 1994: 9). He further avers that "Although the 'unhomely' is a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition, it has a

resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of trans-historical sites" (1994: 9). Bhabha further postulates that "The unhomely moment relates to the traumatic ambivalence of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" (Bhabha 1994: 11).

Mphahlele (2002), argues from an 'Afrikan' Humanism perspective that, "With the disruption of family and community life by migrant labour, landlessness and other economic forces, we observe survivals of the communal soul in various new forms of social structures" (Mphahlele 2002:133). Among these structures, Mphahlele cites *stokvels*, burial societies, sports clubs, the church and other associations that create their own rituals, etc. Thus Mphahlele weighs in on the discourse of post-colonialism by suggesting that concepts such as migrant labour and landlessness, among others, are a byproduct of dispossession, and inherent features of post-colonial literatures.

1.6 Conclusion

In South Africa and beyond, the theme and trope of homelessness as depicted in Duiker and Mpe cannot be treated in isolation from other related themes of poverty, alienation, identity and displacement. I analyse the treatment of themes and portrayal of characterisation as well as the use of figurative language in relation to how these aspects depict homelessness and its effects on the identities and dignity of displaced and homeless persons in both novels.

1.7 Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Introduction – this chapter deals with the conceptual framework of the study.

Chapter Two: Homelessness and Displacement: Local and Global Perspectives

– the chapter will entail a close examination of homelessness and displacement from both local and global perspectives.

Chapter Three: Homelessness in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* – focusses on the depiction of homelessness in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001).

Chapter Four: Homelessness in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* – focuses on the depiction of homelessness in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000).

Chapter Five: Comparative analysis of Duiker and Mpe's depiction of homelessness

Chapter Six: Concluding Remarks and Recommendations

Chapter Two

Homelessness and Displacement: Local and Global Perspectives

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I focus on the review of existing literature on homelessness from a global perspective, with the thrust later shifting to South Africa in particular. My main focus is on the concept of homelessness and the enactment of legislation that had a catalytic effect in the perpetuation of homelessness. In addition to conducting a review of literature on the topic, I will deal with the causes and effects of homelessness.

In an effort to achieve the objectives outlined in the preceding chapter, I will, initially, expand further the concept, 'homelessness', which was defined in the previous chapter, as well as define and put the concept, 'displacement' within the context of the study. In light of the foregoing, it is appropriate however, to initially deal with the concept displacement, exploring several notions on the concept before embarking on an extended discussion of homelessness.

2.2 Displacement

Crisp (2012) relates the term "displaced people" to "those who have left their usual place of residence in order to escape from persecution, armed conflict, or human rights violations" (2012: 2). Crisp goes on to indicate that people who move in such circumstances and who cross an international border are referred to as 'refugees', while those who remain within their country of

origin are described as 'internally displaced persons (IDPs)'" (2012:2). Kaur (2014) sheds more light to the plight of the displaced persons thus: "… each year, millions of persons are forcibly displaced by development projects, whether dams, roads, reservoirs or oil, gas and mining projects" (Kaur 2014: 1).

Furthermore, two definitions of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) have been offered by the United Nations on two occasions; in 1992 and 1998 respectively. In 1992, IDPs as cited in Mooney, (2005) were defined as:

> Persons or groups who have been forced to flee their homes suddenly or unexpectedly in large numbers, as a result of armed conflict, internal strife, systematic violation of human rights or natural or man-made disaster, and who are within the territory of their own country (Mooney 2005: 10).

The above definition tends to focus on groups of people and excludes individuals, who may for one reason or another be displaced from their original places of abode. In 1998, the definition was rephrased to include but was not limited to groups of individuals, with the new version of the definition of internally displaced persons reading thus:

> Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (Mooney 2005: 12).

Although the 1998 definition of internally displaced persons does not particularly point to an individual person, attempts have been made to be inclusive of smaller groups of persons who have fled their homes. In the socio-political context of the South African social formation, displacement has been associated with mass forced removals of the 1960s, following the creation of Bantustans in line with the Group Areas Act (Act No 41 of 1950) where people were grouped in terms of their ethnicity. A case in point is the 1950s and 1960s removal of Tsonga-speaking people from the former Venda to the Gazankulu Bantustan. In this regard, Harries submits that, "Although whites had long employed popular stereotypes of the Tsonga-speaking population as a group, it was only in the 1950s-60s that the government actively intervened through its Bantustan policy to forge an ethnic alliance between chiefs and elements of the petty bourgeoisie and to impose a central homeland upon the disparate people who spoke Tsonga related dialects" (Harries in Vail 1989:77).

For purposes of this study, and the context within which homelessness will be discussed, 'displaced persons' will include people displaced as a result of the lingering effects of the enactment of apartheid legislations.

The notion of place and displacement has captured the attention of several post-colonial critics; notably Ashcroft, *et al*., who assert thus, "A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement" (Ashcroft, *et al*. 2002: 8). The dialectic of place and displacement gets deeper than just migration from one physical location to another, but this movement or displacement is noted to affect the whole being. This is so, because, as Maxwell in Ashcroft, *et al*. points out, in the process of displacement, "A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded

by dislocation, resulting from migration, the experience of enslavement, transportation, or 'voluntary' removal for indentured labour" (Maxwell in Ashcroft, *et al*. 2002: 9). The latter group, who voluntarily migrate for indentured labour illustrates what Rafapa (2014) observes in the characters of Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* who, "…continue to derive psychic sustenance from [village of Tiragalong] even as they embrace Hillbrow lifestyles, because for them Hillbrow has to continue as Tiragalong in order for them to make an Africanist sense of their day to day living in the westernised site of Hillbrow" (Rafapa, 2014: 64). Thus, both voluntary and involuntary displacements impact negatively on the identities of the victims, with one group being nostalgic about home, whereas the other's cultural identity gets shattered which Ashcroft et. al, refer to as 'erosion' of identity.

I argue that the psychological effects of displacement on identity are therefore manifest in homeless people of South Africa and any other place, following the physical removal of the individual from a habitual place of abode. I therefore concur with the views expressed by Maxwell in Ascroft *et al*. cited above, that displacement of any kind may erode the active sense of self, thus resulting in denigration of self and identity.

In his preface to *The Wanderers* (1971), Es'kia Mphahlele adds a slightly different dimension to the concept 'displacement' when he depicts how it unfolds for some characters who are featured in the literary work. He submits that displacement begins at home as "…men, women and children are forever moving, in the hope that they will discover the whereabouts of their [missing] loved ones who have been separated from them by the political system" (1971: 6). The exile that

Mphahlele talks about in this instance refers to migration for indentured labour, as discussed above.

2.3 Homelessness

In shedding light on the plight of homelessness, Nkomo and Olufemi (2001) observe that, “The homelessness problem in South Africa has been significantly influenced by past discriminatory policies of racial separation and residential segregation, which led to the development of large concentrations of blacks in so-called black townships” (Nkomo and Olufemi. 2001: 341). I argue that these dense populations invariably led to the mushrooming of back door shacks and other informal settlements in the periphery of almost all South African cities as the carrying capacity of allocated townships could not accommodate all black people who live in urban areas. Moreover, the majority of black South Africans who live in abject poverty cannot afford to participate in the housing market.

As submitted elsewhere in this study, the plight of homelessness cannot be confined to lack of housing, but includes improper housing like shacks and makeshift housing. The situation depicts the dire need for proper housing among many poor South Africans, which tends to manifest in the plight of homelessness, with the sight of hoboes and street children being such a common feature of South Africa’s major cities. Nkomo and Olufemi (2001) further contend that “Homelessness is a general manifestation and consequence of the deprivation suffered by blacks under a series of apartheid laws, spurred further by the rural-urban migration during South Africa’s industrialisation period and the onset of the globalisation process” (Nkomo and Olufemi 2001:341). It is particularly

poignant that the scourge of homelessness is also felt by innocent children who roam the streets of major South African cities and other places. In addition, Ross argues that, "South Africa's street children are an uncomfortable reminder of the racial legacy: they are yet more of apartheid's victims", (in Nkomo and Olufemi 2001:341) hence the validity of Nkomo and Olufemi's observation that street children are almost predominantly of African and coloured origin. In both texts, Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001), the authors draw the attention of the audience to the plight of homeless children of African descent.

Following the promulgation of the Natives' Land Act of 1913 (Act No. 27 of 1913), it is submitted here that the first record of street children in South Africa was reported in 1917 (Nkomo and Olufemi, 2001:340). This lends credence to the argument that the street children phenomenon is one of the effects and the offshoots of the notorious Natives' Land Act, as described by Ndebele in his Noma Award Acceptance Speech cited elsewhere in this study.

The series of apartheid laws which Nkomo and Olufemi argue are responsible for homelessness include the Natives' Land Act (Act No. 27 of 1913) and the Group Areas Act (No. 41 of 1950) which were responsible for the appropriation of land and the forced removals of Africans, Indians, Coloureds and Asians respectively from their places of original abode.

In the context of the intentions of the two Acts cited above, the then Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism Pallo Jordan describes apartheid as a multi-faceted and comprehensive system of institutionalised racial oppression, one of whose characteristics was the conquest and

dispossession of the indigenous people of their land and its wealth, institutionalised in formal legislation, the 1913 Natives' Land Act being seminal (Jordan 1997).

Not only did apartheid set out to dispossess land and wealth, but, as Gaylard contends, it "constituted a systematic and deliberate denial of the humanity of black South Africans" (Gaylard 2004: 267). Gaylard posits that moral, intellectual and political opposition to that system was based in part on an affirmation of the humanity of black South Africans (2004: 267).

Plaatjie elaborates on the conditions of homelessness that these affected black people went through after the promulgation of the Act thus, "[the Act] has cut off the very roots of Native life by depriving [blacks] of nature's richest gift – [blacks]' ancient occupation of breeding cattle and cultivating the soil" (in Willan 1996: 254). The severity of this plight was further evident in that a spate of compound effects were to follow which include that, "Natives would occupy land as servants, Natives who formerly earned a decent livelihood by hiring pieces of land from white men, cultivating the same and sharing the produce with [the] landowner, have been evicted and replaced largely by ill-requited labour" (in Willan 1996:254).

Plaatjie tells the readers that other natives trekked around with their emaciated stock in search of a place to graze them, and in the process lost many herds by starvation on the trek. In addition, we learn that they left the Union territory for protectorates or Portuguese East Africa where they perished through privations or succumbed to malarial fever or other climatic diseases in strange regions. Those who decided to sell their cattle, we are informed, "…have drifted into the cities where, their lot became unbearable" (in Willan 1996: 254).

The other effects as elucidated by Plaatjie corroborate Ndebele's assertion that whites gave themselves eighty-seven percent of land, leaving twelve and a half to Natives through the Native Administration Bill of 1917. This Bill, Plaatjie contends, "…further proposes to divide the Union into white and black areas, allotting over 87 per cent of South Africa to one million whites, leaving 12 [and a half] per cent of South Africa to the five million blacks" (in Willan 1996: 255). It was also indicated that much of the twelve and a half percent of land was awarded to blacks because of its unsuitability for cultivation and its unhealthy climate, thus whites took over all the arable land for themselves. Milazzo (2015) weighs in on this fact by citing an observation by Steyn and Grant (2007) that "Twenty years after the official end of apartheid, racial inequality remains rampant in South Africa". Milazzo further concurs with Steyn and Grant's view that, "White people, less than 10 percent of the population, own approximately 85 percent of land, 85 percent of the entire economy, and over 90 percent of the largest companies". This is compounded by the differential life expectancy of less than 50 years for Blacks and over 70 years for whites, speaking to "a ghastly politics that does not value Black life" (Milazzo 2015: 8).

Steyn and Grant (2007) in Milazzo (2015) postulate that "Undeniably, whites still act as gatekeepers for the majority group who are in power politically but certainly not economically" (in Milazzo 2015: 8).

I submit that this allotment was grossly unfair and that it would be reasonable to assume that it accounted for sparking and exacerbating ever-increasing impoverishment and homelessness among blacks today. Those who drifted into the cities presumably found themselves living in

unbearable conditions and ended up homeless. I can therefore safely argue that in the South African context, homelessness owes much to dispossession of the indigenous African people's land which was formalised through a series of legislations including amongst others, the notorious Natives Land Act discussed above.

On a political level, conclusive evidence for the causes of homelessness in South Africa can be attributed to evictions and land annexations highlighted above. It should however, be noted that other factors, apart from political factors are at play in homeless people becoming homeless. Thus, I argue that it would be rather simplistic to conclude that homelessness is merely a political issue. There are other socio-economic factors that contribute to people becoming homeless.

Nkomo and Olufemi (2001) assert that, "There are many causes of homelessness including rapid industrialization, rural-urban migration, unemployment and poverty" (Nkomo and Olufemi 2001: 338). It is interesting that the three causes that Nkomo and Olufemi outline are intricately linked to the question of land in the South African context. It is equally interesting that in Plaatjie's exposition of the effects of the Natives Land Act, these factors come up as the off-shoots of the Act.

In their study of the societal origins of homelessness, Makiwane, Tamasane and Schneieder (2010) identify four pathways to homelessness, namely, underprivileged childhood and troubled youth, joblessness and poverty, disabilities and domestic and personal circumstances (Makiwane et. al. 2010: 42 -45). Other reasons given for people becoming homeless are poor educational background, prolonged joblessness, imprisonment, disability or poor health, domestic violence or

abuse, divorce and retrenchments (Makiwane et.al. 2010: 42). In their study, "The Causes of Homelessness in Later Life: Findings from a 3-Nation Study", Crane *et al*. 2005 establish that there are two broad explanations namely, one associated with structural economic and policy conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and a shortage of affordable rented housing; and the other featuring personal incapacity, vulnerability and behaviour (Crane *et al.* 2005: S153). Cohen mentions other factors contributing to people becoming homeless, which are, mental illness, deficient economic and social resources, early-acquired personal characteristics and poor health (Cohen 1999 in Crane 2005: S154). In addition, disturbed childhood is said to have influence on the entry into homelessness in young adulthood (Crane *et al.* 2005: S154).

Claphem, 2002, 2003, Gilchrist & Morrison, 2005, Johnson, Gronda & Couts 2008, Padgett, 2007 in Clapton, *et al.* 2014 attribute the causes of homelessness to a myriad of factors. They assert that "Poverty, family violence, relationship breakdown, drug and /or alcohol misuse, life course disruption, geography, leaving state care, individual pathologies and structures of social policies have been identified as contributing factors and pathways to chronic homelessness" (in Clapton, et.al. 2014: 33). I therefore postulate that apart from apartheid laws in South Africa, other factors contributing to people becoming homeless are generic across the world.

In their study of homelessness as culture, Law and John (2012) assert that culture comprises, "…shared values, norms and beliefs, and a shared ethno-history, language, behaviours and habits". In elucidating the concept of transcultural theory, Leininger views culture as "the learned, shared and transmitted values, beliefs, norms and lifeways of a particular group that guides thinking, decisions and actions in a patterned way" (Leininger 1982: 74). Consonant to this assertion, Law

and John argue that homelessness can be seen as culture, and that transcultural theory is a useful guide in meeting the health needs [wellbeing] of the homeless" (Law and John 2012: 371).

While the South African citizenry might tend to single out the causes of homelessness as emanating from the effects of the draconian Natives' Land Act, (No. 27 of 1913), the international communities present numerous causes of this plight. It is acknowledged, however, that empirical studies conducted within South Africa produced similar findings and corroborated those conducted elsewhere in the world. To this end, I submit this claim with full awareness of the devastating effects of civil wars, genocides, and economic meltdowns which can undoubtedly contribute to displacement of people and the resultant homelessness.

2.4 Conclusion

The foregoing discussion shows that the main cause of homelessness is poverty and that the effects of the Natives' Land Act, particularly for the South African context, have contributed to pushing the black South African populace to the periphery of economic activities, which in turn has contributed to homelessness and its attendant problems.

Chapter Three

Homelessness in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

3.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the depiction of homelessness in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001). I analyse the treatment of themes, the portrayal of characters, and the employment of narrative style to investigate the extent to which the author depicts homelessness in South Africa; its causes and effects on homeless people themselves and the society in general.

3.2 Mpe's Depiction of Homelessness

In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001), Phaswane Mpe does not seem to devote much effort to the theme of homelessness; however, the brief and subtle statements he makes on homeless people are enough to shine the spotlight on the subject. Mpe takes snapshots of disparate locations of homeless people in Hillbrow. The author deftly highlights the plight of people in the streets through various gestures; these include a young man who crawls out of a dog kennel and old people sitting against the cream and brown wall of Usindiso City Shelter. Although Mpe does not employ the stream-of-consciousness narrative style, these episodes and depictions, to the perceptive reader, speak volumes about homeless people. Mpe's style in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* engages the readers on matters of social urgency, one of which is the plight of homeless people which he traces, so to say, on a thematic level, through the deterioration of the quality of life of one homeless individual on the verge of death. Notably, in the process of developing this theme, Mpe touches

on the effects of homelessness on homeless people, but never suggests the causes thereof. He leaves that to the audience's imagination.

I argue that *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* makes grave comments about homelessness in South Africa, hence the need for and the novel's allusion to the right to housing and the government's drive to eradicate poverty through its various machineries. The novel thus confirms Gaylard's submission that *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* "can be approached as […] a post-apartheid dystopian novel" (in Mzamane 2005: 180). Mpe's homeless characters do not have names; they are either "street kids", "young men" or "old men" (2001: 5, 12). The nameless characters, the non-entities of Hillbrow inner city, are a metaphor for the plight of homelessness. My opinion in this regard is that these nameless labels that Mpe attaches to his characters obscure them and further push them to the fringes of mainstream society, thus compounding the marginalisation and alienation of the homeless people. For instance, the concealment of the identities and voices of the homeless characters in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* has a literary significance, which lends credence to the perception that homeless people exhibit a dislocated identity. In the narrative, Mpe dexterously plaits the triplets themes of homelessness, poverty and identity to bring about the discourse of homelessness and other post-apartheid social ills like xenophobia and diseases.

As argued in the preceding paragraph that Mpe's homeless characters are "[the] young man", "old people" or "street kids" without names (2001: 5, 12), one also argues that the concealment of the identities of homeless characters is a deliberate attempt by the author to elevate and engage with the issue of identity as it relates to homelessness, which ties in with Olufemi's assertion that "they [homeless people] lack basic needs (with no access to safe water, sanitation) and lack personal

needs (self-determination, creativity, dignity, expression and voice)" (Olufemi 2000: 224). I will discuss the issue of the various depicted characters' lack of voice later in the chapter.

Mpe's focus on homelessness as one of the themes that he treats in the novel is evident from the outset with the depiction of street children "[…] drunk with glue, brandy and wild visions of themselves as speeding Hollywood movie drivers […] racing their wire-made cars through red robots, thus increasingly becoming a menace to motorists driving through Hillbrow" (2001: 5). In this episode, Mpe implicitly touches on the effects of homelessness on children who are portrayed in the early hours of the day as already befuddled with glue. It seems to be a tendency of street children to sniff glue, perhaps as part of a coping strategy as the stress on the streets is doubtlessly quite high. These children do not have basic needs such as food and clothing, let alone receive care. I postulate that they get their food from the rubbish bins, left-overs on restaurant tables where they are not even welcomed, because on entering, they seemingly devalue the up-market restaurants. The reason for not identifying, by way of giving names to his characters, may also be that they are too numerous to mention or that they lack identities, thus re-affirming or lending credence to Olufemi's assertion above. Even the fifteen old people (2001: 12) in Kotze Street, may have been for Mpe too many to list by name, or it may be yet another suggestion of dislocated identities; marking them out as people the society is oblivious of. This might also be a way of telling the South African population that our society is breeding more and more homeless people and degenerating into a society with undesirable sub-cultures that are created by the system of government, despite the promises that are made every year by the country's successive presidents in their consecutive state of the nation addresses, claiming *inter alia* that, "…the struggle to

eradicate poverty has been and will continue to be a central part of the national effort to build the new South Africa" (Mbeki, T.M. 2004).

The issue of identity in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is figuratively represented by the presence of migrants, (illegal) immigrants, and the homeless people. The narrator in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* argues that almost everybody who is found in Hillbrow is from another part of the country or from other African states. The narrator tells the audience that, "Anyway, there are very few Hillbrowans, if you think about it, who were not originally wanderers from Tiragalong and other rural villages, who have come here, as we have, in search of education and work" (2001 :18). Clarkson (2005) makes similar observations about the novel: "Few of the inhabitants of Hillbrow are native to the place…" (Clarkson 2005:452). Clarkson further observes that "[Refentše]'s personal history and memories originate elsewhere: he is new to the place, and the place is new to him" (Clarkson 2005: 452). I can, therefore, justifiably argue that Clarkson is asserting that individuals face a challenge to adapt to new places, particularly as they move from their habitual places of residence to other places. Although Refilwe is comforted by pubs such as *Jude the Obscure* in England which reminds her of *Sweeney's* back home in Hillbrow, the audience is told that "Although she was coming to England for the first time, Refilwe was not an absolute stranger to the country…". Additionally, the reader is told that "…she knew at least one soul there who could welcome her…" (2001: 97). The audience is further told that, "She had first met Jackie when [Jackie] came to do voluntary work, after her first degree, in South Africa" (2001: 97). However, Refilwe has to adapt to the English beer, which she "concluded that it tasted like nothing so much as hot urine" (2001: 99). Comparing *Jude the Obscure* in England with *Sweeney's* in Hillbrow may be gratifying Refilwe's nostalgic feelings about home. I, therefore, argue that displaced

characters tend to continue to experience homesickness while they are away from home, hence the narrator's assertion that, "…a conscious decision to desert home is a difficult one to sustain. Because home always travels with you, with your consciousness as its vehicle" (2001: 55).

One notices from Refilwe's experiences, depicted in the episode above, that there is a definite paradigm shift as one moves from the comfort of home to the uncertainty of new surroundings, and similarly when one moves from having a home to becoming homeless. This is often evidenced in the character's deviant behaviour which in most cases is, notably, not a factor prior to the character's change of circumstances which ultimately leads to homelessness, hence the trauma that accompanies the misfortune.

It is interesting to note that as they get displaced, characters from other places and Tiragalong in particular, recreate themselves and assume new identities, degenerate and die. Death, in this particular instance is both a condition and a metaphor. Portrayed as a world of rampant sexuality, Hillbrow indeed swallows Refentše and Sammy who are children of Tiragalong, confirming stories of South African migrants who claim that "Hillbrow had swallowed a number of the children of Tiragalong, who thought that the City of Gold was full of career opportunities for them" (2001: 3). However, the above statement cannot be entirely true, because we learn that Refilwe contracted HIV/AIDS from Tiragalong. The narrator tells us "… yet Refilwe was infected a decade ago" (2001:101). A decade ago, Refilwe was in Tiragalong in the Northern Province, as such, her infection cannot be attributed to her migration to Hillbrow. Notwithstanding, the migrants are ironically vindicated.

In the same way that individuals gravitate towards the dehumanising effects of homelessness, they also tend to lose what Clarkson (2005: 454) calls 'background beliefs' which in essence are shared beliefs. Clarkson contends that "It is hardly surprising that educated and urbanised individuals should no longer feel obliged to offer a common and accountable response to that which 'community' represents" (Clarkson 2005: 454). No wonder MacIntyre's argument that, "…this dissolution of the whole into its parts is precisely what one should expect in a society in which the background beliefs which make it possible to identify and understand the whole are no longer shared" (in Clarkson 2005: 455). Mpe and Clarkson's observations converge at the point of 'a conscious decision to desert home being a difficult one to sustain' (2001: 55) and 'total erasure of an allegiance [of Tiragalong and Hillbrow and its people] is not possible' (Clarkson 2005: 455). This, Mpe argues is because home travels with you (2001:49). Mpe's character simply referred to as "young man" in the novel, who dies of a strange illness in Hillbrow, "while his poor parents imagined that he was working away in the city, in order to make sure that there would be a huge bag of maize meal to send back for all at the homestead" (2001: 3), embodies "urbanised individuals" who no longer feel obliged to offer a common and accountable response to that which community represents. In the light of the discourse of homelessness, it can be inferred that this indifference highlights the alienation of homeless people from mainstream society and the resultant 'othering' of homeless people versus housed individuals.

In addition, Cousin's attitude towards homeless people, which is discussed elsewhere in this study, as contrasted to that of Refentše, shows the alienation that mainstream citizens create between themselves and homeless people. For instance, the audience is informed that Cousin calls homeless people "beggars" (2001:12), a label based more on others' opinions rather than interaction between

this group of people and him or Refentše. This outlook signifies the chasm that exists between homeless people and mainstream citizens, a chasm that undoubtedly emanates from a dismissive attitude among some members of mainstream society towards people otherwise considered to be insignificant. Most importantly, the behaviour and attitude displayed by Cousin underscores the need for a change of societal attitudes, which could pave the way for re-integration of homeless people into mainstream society.

I argue that although homelessness is not the overriding theme in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* as it is in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*, it is one of the themes that Mpe depicts and develops in an arguably engaging manner alongside the themes of moral decadence, xenophobia and HIV/AIDS.

3.3 Alienation of Homeless People

Refentše's first encounter with homeless people in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is presented under the auspices of Cousin's attitude premised on the assumption that homeless people are beggars. The narrator who addresses the deceased Refentše reminds him of an incident which took place while he was still alive: "Further on, about fifty metres from the head of Kotze, you see some old people, about fifteen of them, sitting against a cream and brown wall … Cousin tells you that they are beggars" (2001: 12). In this regard, Mpe deals with the stock attitude that South African citizens display towards homeless people. In other words, the attitude that South Africans display towards homeless people is informed by the mindset that the latter are a burden to society. Schmidt (2015) observes that visibility of homeless people in the city is "discussed in the context of removal and expulsion from inner city areas as part of process of (sic) gentrification and cleansing" (2015: 284).

The narrator subverts this attitude by making it known that "But they do not beg anything from you and Cousin" (2001:12). I argue that, this being the case, it brings to the fore the issue of lack of voice that I highlighted earlier in the study. The homeless people of Mpe's novel neither beg nor say anything except for the old man who shouts, "*Aibo!*" (2001: 12), as a way of greeting and in this respect the reader is justified in concluding that Cousin's assumptions about homeless people are without substance.

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that Mpe is cautioning South Africans to refrain from thinking that all homeless people are simply there to beg and nag people. I argue that homeless people are human beings who have simply become unfortunate because of the conditions beyond their control and that they need society's collective understanding and empathy rather than the general dismissive attitude and condemnation often directed at them. Society therefore needs to appreciate that homelessness cannot solely be a matter of choice. Even children who run away from home do so as a consequence of compelling circumstances, poverty being chief of these circumstances. For instance, in attempting to explain contributory factors to homelessness for children and young adults, Makiwane *et. al*. has cited underprivileged childhood and troubled youth (Makiwane *et.al.* 2010:42).

The effects of stock attitude and the perception that homeless people are beggars breed unjustified alienation. This is further compounded by the displacement of homeless people into the periphery of social circles. It is common knowledge that homeless people live in the streets and outside normal homes. If they are in any formal structure it is usually in the form of shelters. In this regard, reference is made in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* to Usindiso City Shelter where homeless people

are housed. The life experiences in the streets and the shelters literally alienate homeless people from mainstream society, while offering them no permanent solution to their plight.

Throughout the novel, Mpe strives to demonstrate that the homeless people he portrays possess human dignity which should be respected as enshrined in the Bill of Right as they are citizens in their own rights, despite hostile attitudes evinced by characters such as Cousin, which show total disregard for the homeless. The fellow who shouts "*Aibo"* (2001: 12) shares a warm greeting with Refentše in a rather quiet manner. There is no conversation between the two, but just an exchange of gestures. It could have been merely a wave of hand, but that was enough recognition for the homeless fellow.

Another homeless character who Mpe portrays in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is the young man who, according to Refentše, sings melodiously, although Refentše cannot understand the lyrics of the song as they might probably have been sung in isiZulu or isiXhosa, which are foreign to Refentše. This tells the audience that homeless people, just like others, are resourceful people as asserted by Seager and Tamasane in their study of homeless people. Seager and Tamasane (2008) conclude thus: "A lasting impression when talking to homeless people is that they are vulnerable yet resourceful people"

In the episodes cited above, Mpe deals with the attitudes of South Africans towards homeless people; particularly the 'othering' and stigmatisation of homeless people. Based on these episodes, one can safely argue that South Africans have mixed attitudes towards homeless people; with a proportionately few showing empathy, while others tend to display total disregard for this section

of society. Inferring from the tone of the author, I find that the author condemns this disregard for homeless people. Flowing from the findings by Seager and Tamasane (2008) and the postulation by Law and John (2012), discussed elsewhere in the study, I can make a call to South Africans that homeless people need to be culturally understood in order to help them transcend their plight.

3.4 Treatment of the theme of homelessness in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

Although Mpe only takes snapshots of homeless people, homelessness, poverty and identity are issues that appear to be close to his heart. Throughout the novel, Mpe implicitly highlights the plight of homeless people in South Africa. He is concerned about the erosion and dislocation of identity that homeless people experience. His commentary on dislocation of the psyche emphasises the importance of identity. This is evident where the narrator tells us, "… a conscious decision to desert home is a difficult one to sustain" (2001:55). This idea is sustained by the trope of exile and rural-urban migration. The narrator tells us that Refentše would reason with Cousin and tell him that "[T]here are very few Hillbrowans, if you think about it, who were not originally wanderers from Tiragalong and other rural villages, who have come here, as we have, in search of education and work" (2001: 18). Clarkson (2005) contends that "Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* traces on a thematic level the dissolution of notions of 'home'; what constitute a 'community', as the characters move from the rural village, Tiragalong, in an impoverished Limpopo Province, to Hillbrow, inner-city Johannesburg" (2005: 451). These notions are also discussed in Manase's (2005) depiction of city space where he argues that, "[…] the city is portrayed as a space inhabited by different characters each uprooted from his or her home and family – where colonialism and apartheid placed them and all contesting for different opportunities" (Manase 2005:101). This

corroborates Clarkson's observation that Hillbrow is "… a disparate conglomerate of all the *Makwerekwere* of the continent" (2005: 452). The word *Makwerekwere* has gained recognition as referring to all African internationals in South Africa regardless of where they come from. The homeless characters and migrants, in Mpe's novel, do not only attest to this claim, but they, themselves appear as characters who have been uprooted from their communities to lead an uncertain life in Hillbrow. Indeed, as characters have to move across the country and the continent to assemble in Johannesburg and seek new opportunities, notions of 'home' and 'community' are dissolved in this conglomerate of all the *Makwerekwere* of our continent.

In the novel, we hear the lamentation by citizens of Tiragalong, probably senior citizens who bemoan the notoriety of the city Hillbrow. These citizens have attained in the novel a status of being called 'authoritative grapevine'. They submit that, "Hillbrow had swallowed a number of the children of Tiragalong, who thought that the City of Gold was full of career opportunities for them" (2001: 3). In addition, the Tiragalong 'authoritative grapevine' demanded to know, "How could any man have sex with another man?" the practice which is 'rampant' in Hillbrow, making Hillbrow appear to be monstrous indeed in line with Clarkson's observation that Hillbrow is "… a disparate conglomerate of all the *Makwerekwere* of the continent" (2005: 452). This also corroborates Gaylard's contention that "Hillbrow comes to stand as a metonym for the modern city or metropolis, and, as the novel demonstrates, this is a place characterised more by the absence of human community than by its presence" (Gaylard 2004: 277). This could be due to the fact that Hillbrow is, so to speak, a melting pot of diverse cultures which necessitates adjustments and the dissolution of notions of 'home'.

The above observations essentially hinge on the impact of the convergence of the varied peoples and cultures in this overcrowded space, as alluded to in the beginning of the novel that, "[Hillbrow] is that locality of just over one square kilometre, according to official records; and according to its inhabitants, at least twice as big and teeming with countless people" (2001: 1).

Mpe's concept of homelessness goes beyond not having a roof over one's head, but also encompasses concepts such as, legal or illegal migration, exile and any other form of displacement. I argue that the discourse of homelessness in Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow* should not be confined to the homeless characters, considering that almost all Hillbrowans are people from different places who have come to Hillbrow in search of job opportunities and a better life. Therefore, the depiction of homelessness extends to encompass Mpe's concept of homelessness as I propound. In other words, both the African and South African migrants as well as the exiles in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* represent the homeless by virtue of deserting their homes for whatever reasons. To this end, the narrator in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* says, "You always took Tiragalong with you in your consciousness whenever you came to Hillbrow or any other place" (2001:49). Although to some extent it might seem to contradict the notion of alienation cited above, the narrator's statement highlights the spiritual connection to home that cannot be dissolved by displacement.

Building on the idea propounded above, homelessness cannot only be confined to 'rooflessness', but, migration, exile and displacement of any kind. Clarkson's (2005) article "Locating Identity in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*", discusses the concept of home. Clarkson argues that, "Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* poses a radical challenge to notions of 'community', of

what constitutes 'home' in the same instant that the narrative is generated by these notions" (Clarkson 2005: 451). On the other hand, Liz Gunner finds Jonathan Morgan's *Finding Mr. Madini* (1999) interrogating the concept of 'homelessness' and at the same time… "begging the reader to ask, 'What is home, and how does the national space change if it becomes 'home' to the new African immigrants as well as people already there?" (Gunner 2003: 3). Gunner here brings to the fore the concept of habitability of national space as a qualifier of a 'home'. This could mean that there is a need for social cohesion if people of different cultural backgrounds are to co-habit Hillbrow or any other place.

Mpe further consolidates the tenets of *The Children's Charter of South Africa* (1992) when he brings into the narrative the significance of the song "See the World Through the Eyes of a Child" by the renowned South African music group Stimela, which is about "a neglected, homeless child, exposed to much street violence and blood, and subsequently grown to be scared of darkness" (2001: 84). This intertextual narration is Mpe's literary characteristic of telling stories within stories. The narrator tells Refentše that, "[the song] was special to [Refentše]" (2001:84). The significance of the song is to highlight Mpe's concern for the neglected, abandoned and homeless children. Thus, Mpe takes an advocacy stance for neglected and abandoned children. In this regard, it can be inferred that Mpe is echoing the tenets of The *Childrens' Charter of South Africa* discussed elsewhere in this study, particularly its condemnation of the abandonment of children. It should also be noted that this is the only instance where Mpe explicitly employs the word, 'homeless' in his narrative.

For Mpe, homelessness is depicted as a social vice that is destroying the lives of children before they flourish. In addition, substance abuse, which is common among both street children and adults living on the streets, is highlighted in the novel as one of South Africa's post-apartheid social ills which is adversely and indiscriminately affecting society, including children. It has been established at a global level that homelessness more often than not breeds socially unacceptable behaviour for the affected parties. For instance, the National Coalition for the Homeless in the United States of America postulates that "The relationship between homelessness and substance abuse is complex, with studies suggesting that substance use can be both a cause and consequence of homelessness" (in Polcin 2016:2). This observation is unequivocal about the reciprocal relationship between the two, and Mpe appears to share similar views in his narrative.

3.5 Portrayal of characterisation in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

While I concur with Gaylard (2005) that *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* can be approached as an autobiographical novel, I also agree with Gunner (2003) that the novel is the biography of Hillbrow inner-city more than that of Refentše. In her analysis of Jonathan Morgan's *Finding Mr. Madini* (1999), Gunner observes that "The text can also, like *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, be seen as a biography – of the inner city itself; we face the violence of downtown Johannesburg, its stress" (Gunner 2003:4). The readers are told in the novel that Refentše asked, "How does it happen that Hillbrow is so popular, but writers ignore it?" (2001:30). It is for the same reason that I maintain that in this context, Hillbrow is a character as well as the setting of the novel. I further find Mpe's interview reinforcing the argument that Hillbrow is a character in the novel as Mpe himself attests that when he wrote *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* he was just doing "…Hillbrow the Map" (Interview

with Lizzy Attree 2005). I find the description of streets that adjoin Hillbrow, downtown Johannesburg and Park Town so graphic that they effectively describe the nature of the city; that is, the description of various streets such as Kotze and the busy movements of people across the streets (2001: 6) which add to the bustling activity that describes Hillbrow city life. Gunner (2003) captures the crossing and re-crossing of streets thus:

> Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) is a text saturated with death yet in its characters' *crossing and re-crossing* of the streets of inner-city Hillbrow it has affinities with de Certeau's gestures of reclamation where "the chorus of idle footsteps" creates a language set apart from the overpowering "letters" of the skyscrapers" (Gunner 2003) (my emphasis).

In this instance, the readers are made to see the inhabitants reclaiming the city through walking the city as de Certeau (in Gunner 2003: 1) claims a "rhetoric of walking" in which "even place names of streets and monuments become part of the new meaning given by the movements of travelers in the city". This corroborates the assessment by Clarkson (2005) of "Mpe's treatment of identity as a response to place as a physical and a linguistic inscription" cited elsewhere in this study.

In light of the foregoing, I proceed to analyse other aspects of characterisation that Mpe portrays apart from the personified city, Hillbrow. The character of Cousin for instance, is an embodiment of a judgmental attitude towards foreigners, homeless people and prostitutes. Furthermore, it is ironic that Cousin is a policeman and when the police are indicted of the actions that run contrary

to human rights, Cousin is also found to be a culprit. In the novel's depiction of Cousin's dismissive attitude towards homeless people, and the subversion of this attitude by the narrator, it appears that the latter embodies the values upheld by the author Mpe.

In the vein of Duiker who portrays Cape Town as a character, Mpe also portrays the Hillbrow inner city as a character. He thus, portrays Hillbrow metaphorically. To say, "Hillbrow had swallowed a number of the children of Tiragalong, …" (2001: 3) is to personify her. The personification of the two cities bear features similar to Gunner's (2003) viewing the text as a biography of the city itself, rather than just a locale. Mpe's portrayal of setting through the narrator depicts the adoration that the character Refentše has for the city Hillbrow. It is however surprising, how, despite the South African migrants' perceptions of Hillbrow inner city as a "monster" (2000:3), Refentše still finds himself drawn towards Hillbrow. The narrator tells Refentše, "Your first entry into Hillbrow, Refentše, was the culmination of many converging routes. You do not remember where the route first began. But you know all to (sic) well that the stories of migrants had a lot to do with its formation" (2001: 2). Thus, through listening to stories of South African migrants, Refentše's imagination could be worked out to envision a notorious South African city, Hillbrow, whose notoriety draws instead of repelling naïve and curious minds from rural Tiragalong as well as from other parts of the continent.

In writing that Refentše "… already knew that Hillbrow was a menacing monster…", Mpe further personifies the city, giving her dreadful qualities that are supposed to repel the visitor from the city. But ironically, "The lure of the monster was, however, hard to resist" (2001: 3). The monster motif strengthens the argument that Hillbrow is persistently personified. This lends credence to

the nature of the city that Mpe is describing in Hillbrow. To say that "Hillbrow had swallowed a number of the children of Tiragalong…" (2001:3) is to metaphorically portray the characterisation of the inhabitants of Hillbrow in general, thus portraying not only the characterisation of individuals in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, but also the character of the setting itself, which breeds this monster. Gaylard argues that, "'Hillbrow comes to stand as a metonym for the modern city or metropolis, and, as the novel demonstrates, this is a place characterised more by the absence of human community than by its presence" (Gaylard 2004: 277). Thus, Hillbrow represents the modern city with an inhumane nature. It is described as cruel and dreadful; it can be imagined as a city that habours within its borders, criminals and bandits.

The portrayal of characterisation through the employment of as many as fifteen homeless characters has thematic significance. The homeless characters in the novel, as portrayed in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, graphically highlight the social strata that prevail in South African social formation. These strata range from the abject poor to the filthy rich. The narrator tells the reader that white suburbs like Hyde Park and Sandton have lily-white reputation for safety and serenity, although that is not always the case. For instance, the readers are told that "The first time someone took out a knife on Refentše, it was at Hyde Park Village, near Sandton, where [he] accidentally disturbed thieves stripping cars of their radio sets in the parking lot… (200: 22). Describing the settlements or setting as serene has literary significance in that it highlights the peace and safety that the rich in South Africa enjoy, while the poor languish in abject poverty as well as living in unsafe environments.

The fifteen homeless people who sit against the brown and cream wall of Usindiso City Shelter represent first of all, the unknown, neglected and forgotten. They may as well represent the government's concerted efforts to eradicate the plight of the homeless (2001: 14-15). However, while it is commendable that the government appears to be at the forefront of fighting poverty and depravation, piling people in homeless shelters only partially addresses the plight of the homeless. Kertesz in Polcin (2016) argues that "Even when individuals in linear service models achieve abstinence, they are vulnerable to relapse and reoccurrence of homelessness if they are not able to find permanent housing" (in Polcin 2016: 3). The linear service model is one of the two models, the other called Housing First, which are established by the government to assist people suffering from homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness in the United States of America. I argue that total human freedom entails identity and dignity, as Olufemi (2000) contends. In this respect, I can also argue that homeless people in shelters do not enjoy the kind of total freedom enjoyed by those who own a place they call their home.

On the other hand, Mpe portrays street children as "drunk with glue, brandy and wild visions of themselves as speeding Hollywood movie drivers […] racing their wire-made cars through red robots, thus increasingly becoming a *menace* to motorists driving through Hillbrow" (2001: 5) my emphasis. Mpe portrays street children not as individuals but as a group of children, which may be the author's way of suggesting that when people are stripped of qualities that make them different, only one uniform characteristic can appropriately describe them. In the portrayal of street children as stripped of their identities, I am compelled to agree with Freud in Frankl (1989) when he asserts that:

> Try and subject a number of very strongly differentiated human beings to the same amount of starvation. With the increase of the imperative need for food, all individual differences will be blotted out, and, in their place, we will see the uniform expression of the one unsatisfied instinct (Freud in Frankl 1989:424).

To describe street children as *a menace* appears to be an exaggerated expression of what children can become. It is unimaginable that children could be seen as posing such an overstated threat to society. In this respect I argue that the behaviour of such children is an indication that they need attention. Children are the simplest and most vulnerable people in society. They can be taught anything. *The Children's Charter of South Africa* condemns the abandonment of children. My assertion is that the extent to which children can be abandoned is the same as the extent to which they can be nurtured. This line of argument supports my conviction that society should shoulder the responsibility of nurturing children through whatever possible means, rather than resorting to labeling them a *menace* to society as cited above.

Portrayal of characters such as Refentše's cousin, who in this instance is fittingly made to inherit the name Cousin is effective employment of characterisation to subvert certain stereotypes maintained by Hillbrowans. In African tradition, a cousin is one's uncle's or aunt's child, contrary to Western culture where one's father's brother's child is referred to as cousin. To this end, I note that this narrative emanates from a truly African perspective where cousins are supposed to take care of each other. This resonates with Eskia Mphahlele's tenets of African humanism discussed elsewhere in this study.

The narrator tells the readers that Cousin refers to the homeless people as "beggars", but, "they do not beg anything from [Refentše] and Cousin" (2001: 12). This exposition may be the author's way of pleading with the readers, evoking feelings of empathy from them that although the homeless might beg, and despite their situation, we have to rightfully consider them and ultimately treat them like the human beings that they are. Therefore, I concur with Seager and Tamasane's (2008) description of homeless people as fellow human beings, some of whom are quite resourceful.

Characters such as Cousin however, represent a segment of society that frowns upon homeless people, a practice that is not commended by the author. It is a slight on Cousin to have to be reminded that although he calls homeless people beggars, they do not beg anything from him. Although the author says that, "…but, they do not beg anything from you and Cousin" (2001: 12), the emphasis is that they do not beg anything from the contemptuous Cousin and so his attitude towards them cannot be justified. Thus, Mpe subverts the stereotype that homeless people are beggars, and does so with a sharp indictment of Cousin. Mpe has at heart, like Duiker, the plight of the homeless and the challenges that the South African society is faced with in the post-apartheid era.

While it can be inferred from the text and argued that Refentše echoes the sentiments of the author, one can trace such idiosyncrasy in the manner that Refentše relates with homeless people. From the very beginning, he responds favourably to the homeless old man's greeting who shouts "A*ibo*" (2001: 12) "*Aibo*" in this instance is an expression of surprise. The character is surprised at how Refentše and his Cousin could pass by a group of people without greeting them. This has a serious

bearing on African humanism (*Ubuntu*) mentioned above. It is un-African not to greet but to simply mind one's business.

When Refentše exchanges greetings with one of the homeless people, Cousin advises him that "You do not go around greeting every *fool* in Hillbrow" (2001: 12) my emphasis. For Cousin, homeless people are just a bunch of imbeciles. Conversely, for Refentše, homeless people are just like any other human being; for this reason he shows respect for this community of people and he establishes friendship with one of them. The narrator reminds the deceased Refentše that, "It was during your second month as a lecturer that you saw *your friend* from the shelter being wheeled away in a wheelbarrow, in the direction of Hillbrow Hospital in Klein Street" (2001: 16) (my emphasis). This episode will continue to be cited throughout the study as it evokes a number of arguments that I will put forward in the analysis.

The image of a person wheeled in a wheelbarrow indicates the quality of life of homeless people. It lends credence to the postulation that the shelters mentioned in the novel are dumping sites for homeless people. This does not auger well for the respect of human rights and dignity. Although the narrator detaches himself or herself from the scene, the tone of the author can still be inferred as one of disapproval of the act of wheeling a patient in a wheelbarrow to the hospital. It is ironic that in a busy city like Johannesburg where the probability of ambulances passing by cannot be ruled out, someone has to be transported to a hospital in such an unceremonious manner. Such a scene is without doubt an indictment of the state by the narrator. The Department of Health and Social Development is effectively put on the spotlight as its emergency services vehicles are

intended to offer services under such circumstances. Yet in this episode it is evident that the Health and Social Development system has dismally failed the very same people it purports to serve.

My interpretation of Refentše's characterisation is that he embodies the sentiments of the author and is considerate and compassionate to the plight of the homeless. I argue, therefore, that the author recreates himself in the main character. His disposition towards the homeless people reveals his sympathy and empathy for them. For instance, we are told that in response to the plight of the homeless in Hillbrow, Refentše was "persuaded to search [his] trouser pockets for a cent or two…" (2001: 15). We are also told that "[t]his procedure is one that is to repeat itself many times for the rest of that year" (15). Mpe's sentiment in this regard can be inferred as one of compassion as one examines Refentše's interaction with the homeless people in Hillbrow. My argument is based on the fact that among other things we are told that, "On the other side of the park, just across Clarendon Place, is Hillbrow Police Station, in which you take minimal interest" (2001: 11), while it can be argued at the same time that the interest he shows in homeless people attests to his compassion towards them. The reason for Refentše's indifference towards the Police Station may be the author's way of suggesting that people's perception of the Police Stations is reminiscent of impervious tendencies of the apartheid regime and police brutality. Millazzo (2015) comments on police brutality thus: "… realities of change and stasis appear indeed entangled in a 'new' racial order that continues to rely considerably upon 'old' colonial and white supremacist methods, such as political violence, *police brutality*, segregation, criminalization, disenfranchisement, mass incarceration, hunger and death" (2015:37) *my emphasis*.

Although the apartheid regime has collapsed, its aftertaste still lingers. Despite being warned by Cousin that he should not greet homeless people, Refentše continues; defying Cousin's counsel and developing friendship with an old homeless man who shouts "*Aibo*". It is for this reason that the narrator tells the audience that "…*his friend* was wheeled in a wheelbarrow …. Hillbrow Hospital in Klein Street" (2001: 16) (my emphasis). This defiance may be a way of communicating the author's advocacy for a considerate stance towards homeless people; that an attitude such as that displayed by Cousin needs to be rooted out if society is to end the scourge of homelessness.

On the other hand, the portrayal of Refentše's character is of someone adventurous and daring, yet a very fragile person – adventurous and daring as he is the first person from Tiragalong to go and study at the University of the Witwatersrand (2001: 10), and fragile in the sense that upon discovering the illicit relationship between Lerato, his girlfriend, and Sammy, his 'mutual friend' he slumps into a depression and self-pity which lead to his suicide (2001: 25). It is surprising that he cannot handle this discovery, yet when Refentše discovers Refilwe's illicit relationships with four other men, he moves on with his life and refuses to reunite with her. She tells Refentše, "I love you Refentše. I wish we could go back to those days of yesteryear" (2001: 87). Despite these seductive attempts, Refentše does not return her love again.

A close focus on one of the homeless characters will shed light on the erosion of a person's identity, and dislocation of the psyche. The old man who shouts "*Aibo!"* is described thus:

> He looks very grimy. Out of his mouth come strong whiffs of methylated spirits. And spittle drools down his dirty beard onto his bony chest. His trousers are inclined to intimate that urine has gone through them quite a number of times. He leans against the wall more steadfastly, seeming satisfied with your response.
>
> (2001: 12)

It can be inferred from the portrayal of this character that the old man's dignity is eroded, his psyche is dislocated, his person is displaced and identity is lost. I assert that he is a microcosm of the entire homeless community. The whiffs of methylated spirits symbolise substance abuse and the rest of his disposition is a symbol of homelessness, its causes and effects. This exposition attests to the fact that poverty is the cause of homelessness and a hallmark of both the old man's personality and his milieu.

Refentše calls Lerato "bone of my heart" (2001: 68). Ironically, Lerato is the cause of Refentše's suicide in that he discovers to his peril the sexual encounter between Sammy and her. Although Tiragalong village and its authoritative grapevine, the migrants, feel vindicated when Lerato cheats on the relationship, it is ironic that the audience knows that she is not a city girl. Therefore, one can safely argue that as characters move from rural to urban environment, they are prone to make adjustments and in some cases maladjustments. Certain adjustments they make are amiss and detrimental to their survival. This might lend credence to the assertion that *Welcome to our Hillbrow* features another theme, the Jim-comes-to-Jo'burg theme which ties in well with the rhetoric of displacement discussed in the literature review.

Sammy, who cheats with Lerato, is Refentše's friend and is from Tiragalong. His character development is a typology that further gives credence to the argument that characters sometimes change for the worst as they move to urban spaces. Upon coming to Johannesburg, Sammy adopts the fast-paced lifestyle of the city. We are told that he hangs around in pubs and drinks too much. He is typical of the young man who comes to Jo'burg as the migrants claim, and is swallowed by the city (2001: 3). His dementia confirms what the migrants say about Hillbrow, that it "has

swallowed a number of children of Tiragalong" (2001: 3). Sammy's dementia appears to be a result of the guilt and sorrow of hurting a close friend.

I posit that characters in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are in a constant state of flux and as they move from rural Tiragalong to inner city Hillbrow, they degenerate and die, thus confirming most migrants' claim that Hillbrow is a monster. As they are in search of better life, these characters make their mistakes, some of which are fatal. They thus confirm the saying in Tiragalong that "Hillbrow has swallowed a number of the children of Tiragalong" (2001: 3). In that respect, the author echoes Paton's portrayal of his characters in *Cry the Beloved Country* (1991) that, "When people go to Johannesburg, they do not come back" (Paton 1991:7).

3.6 Language and style in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*

Language is an integral part of the narrative in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow.* It is relevant at this point to cite Clarkson's purpose of her paper as an exploration of "Mpe's treatment of identity as a response to place as a physical and a *linguistic inscription"* (Clarkson 2005) in the same way that de Certeau in Gunner finds "the chorus of idle footsteps" creating a language set apart from the overpowering "letters" of the skyscrapers" (in Gunner 2003).

Mpe's employment of figurative language, sarcasm and irony in his narrative embellishes his work and effectively communicates with the readers. Thus, the mastery of the narration, the diction he employs, the simplicity and the abrogation of the Standard English Language achieve the purpose that Mpe arguably sets out to achieve in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*; to portray the post-apartheid

city and its new challenges of poverty and homelessness, AIDS and xenophobia. Having identified poverty as one of the causes of homelessness, Millazzo (2015) argues that, "One of the apartheid structure's aim was to make 'Black poverty permanent'" (2015: 14).

In the passages wherein Mpe makes references to homeless people, no mention is explicitly made of these people. Unlike Duiker who dwells on the theme and images of homelessness, Mpe simply takes snapshots of street children (2001:5). Similarly, he casually mentions old people sitting against the cream and brown wall of Usindiso City Shelter, and a young man who crawls out of a big dog kennel (2001: 5, 14). Thus, Mpe masters the use of understatements to underscore the plight of homelessness, as his references to homeless people are implicit.

With reference to street children, the narrator further tells Refentše that, "From what you had heard about Braamfontein, you never imagined that you would find all these dirty children, occupying themselves by taking turns at glue" (2001: 13). The significance of this episode is to highlight the vulnerability of street children and their exposure to substance abuse. It is also apparent that these children spend their whole time on the streets and therefore cannot attain formal education.

Alongside the scenes of homeless people that Mpe exposes, he also foregrounds prostitution in Hillbrow. As is his linguistic prowess, the author Mpe does not overtly mention prostitution, but as the conversation between Refentše and Cousin unfolds, Cousin says "If you want it, he says wryly, you can go into this building" (2001:11). The narrator further tells the audience that "One semi-naked soul comes out of Quirinalle and Cousin's point is made" (2001:11). Thus Mpe implicitly comments on the brothels in Hillbrow and the unsavoury activities that go on there. In

this episode, Mpe masters the art of engaging with fundamental societal issues through the use of understatements. This is also a hint on the theme of moral decadence which portrays sexual activity as a commodity, a notion that is inconceivable in African cultures. True African ethos would not approve of sex as a commodity. Perhaps the narrator wants to portray to the audience the characteristic features of Hillbrow, particularly the extent of the moral decay in Hillbrow. In doing so, the author highlights other social ills that co-exist with homelessness, showing how this compounds the plight of its residents. The juxtaposition of homelessness with other social ills and the aptness of the various descriptions and references to the city as a 'monster' portrays the city as more inhabitable, and a place which fills both its depicted inhabitants and readers with trepidation.

As a post-apartheid South African novel, *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* breaks away from the tenets of protest literature and the literature of commitment. Unlike its apartheid-era predecessors, the novel does not entertain the themes of explicit political protest and commitment, but calls for self-reflection on the part of South African public, particularly governance structures. For instance, the wheelbarrow that carries an ailing patient to the hospital cited elsewhere in this study indicts the government. Street children of Banket Street in Hillbrow further put the government on the spotlight for its incompetence and corruption, a combination that makes a mockery of the government's proclamation of "a better life for all", considering that these children are unlikely to transcend street life. The above episode brings into focus the political will of those in power, questioning whether or not they are keen on implementing government policies which have already been outlined in this study. I find it hypocritical for the government to publish documents such as *The Children's Charter of South Africa* (1992), let alone the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996) and yet put minimal efforts into implementing the tenets thereof.

However, I observe that the diction that Mpe employs in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* is simple and the syntax uncomplicated, like that of black-influenced South African poetry of the likes of Serote and Mtshali who are in this context criticized for lack of exposure to 'English' models. This suggests that their English is sub-standard (Butler 1994).

Furthermore, I acknowledge among other traits, Mpe's inclination to tell stories within stories, and his reliance on various sources for this; for instance, the migrants of Tiragalong, who are referred to as "…informal migrant grapevine…" (2001: 4). Mpe's other sources of stories are Thobela FM and the television (2001: 4-5).

For Mpe to focus on the cream and brown wall of Usindiso City Shelter is a way of figuratively portraying the Usindiso City Shelter which as the name suggests is a place of salvation; offering hope for the homeless lot.

3.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, I argue that Mpe's use of language in relation to the treatment of the theme of homelessness in particular, achieves a great deal of impact in depicting the plight of the homeless, society's attitude and its overall impact on the quality of life of the homeless people in South Africa. Mpe's *de facto* homeless people have been portrayed as beggars, a young man, old men and street kids, which consolidates the argument that the identity of the homeless is obscured by their plight.

Chapter Four

Homelessness in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the analysis of the depiction of homelessness in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*. I analyse the author's treatment of themes, characterisation and style.

4.2 The depiction of homelessness in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*

In *Thirteen Cents* (2000), the dominant theme of homelessness pervades the novel in the symbols of street children, represented by Azure, vagabonds by Oscar, shack dwellers by Ma Zakes in this 'other' Cape Town. The city's 'otherness' owes much to the paradoxical juxtaposition of affluence and abject poverty, evidence of which is the portrayal of circumstances that culminate in the creation of identities such as one borne by Azure, who is motherless, fatherless and homeless. In his own words Azure reveals, "My mother has died, my father has died" (2000: 154). Duiker zooms into this character and through same narrates the story of an orphaned and homeless thirteen-year-old boy who lives alone on the streets of Sea Point.

The kind of displacement portrayed in *Thirteen Cents*, is one that is complex in nature and arguably, often eludes researchers. The impetus with which Duiker portrays the character of Azure in aiding and developing the overriding theme of homelessness will perhaps arrest scholarly attention to this neglected subject, as Raditlhalo observes:

> Duiker's first novel, *Thirteen Cents*, goes to the core of what has been a clear *subject of avoidance* for writers: the astonishing rate at which children are now victims of a (violent) society intent on turning a blind eye to the plight of its weakest members (Raditlhalo 2005: 98) (my emphasis)

Despite the writers' alleged avoidance of the subject of the plight which homeless children in particular go through on the streets, Duiker draws the attention of the audience to homeless children in his novel *Thirteen Cents*.

In her critical acclaim of Duiker's literary output, Grace Kim (2009) asserts that Duiker deservedly received the prestigious awards for both *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) because he is "[l]auded for his ability to graphically portray the gritty underground of a cruel urban landscape" (Kim, 2009:1), which I refer to here, as the 'other' Cape Town. This trope of the dichotomous city is also discussed in Manase's (2005) notion of "mapping the 'two cities in one'" in which he argues that South Africa is depicted as "an urban spatial paradigm characterised by the symbolic existence of two worlds in one city" (Manase 2005: 90). The homeless child narrator Azure in *Thirteen Cents* proclaims, "I live alone. The streets of Sea Point are my home" (2000:1). This statement underpins the depiction of a dichotomous nature of South African urban landscapes in the sense that the homeless people do not live in separate communities, but among what I refer to as normal communities or simply mainstream society. Azure's home is in the streets of Sea Point. Sea Point is a residential area in Cape Town where there are people living in their homes, alongside the homeless people whose lot are the streets.

The theme of neglected and homeless children is a matter of concern for Duiker. He is quick to reveal to the audience Azure's age through the character's own somewhat humorous declaration: "… I'm almost a man, I'm nearly thirteen years old" (2000:1). Azure's delusion that he is almost a man is an understatement by the author to reveal the absurdity with which our society seems comfortable with letting children Azure's age fend for themselves, which is tantamount to abandonment of children and a mockery of the South African society. Furthermore, this statement attests to my observation and assertion that *Thirteen Cents* can be seen as a social satire, in which society is not only indicted, but satirised for its irrationalities. At the same time the novel depicts a concern on the part of the author for the welfare of children in South Africa *vis-å-vis The South African Children's Charter* of 1992 and the *Millennium Development Goals,* both of which advocate the inalienable rights of children. Therefore, Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* can also be seen as a depiction not only of homelessness, but of the violation of children's rights in Cape Town, which is affectionately referred to as the 'Mother City', and any other place, which in this context creates an irony in the sense that the concept 'mother' embodies warmth and nourishment.

The concept of the abandonment of children in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* is reminiscent of a similar scenario in Mtshali's poem "An Abandoned Bundle" which depicts the poignant throwing away of a day-old child, by its desperate mother, into the rubbish bin, only to serve as an early breakfast for wild dogs. Mtshali captures the graphic scene of the dogs feasting on the abandoned child thus:

> Scavenging dogs
> draped in red banandas of blood
> fought fiercely
> for a squirming bundle *(Mtshali 1971: 60)*

While it is not clear whether or not the child was killed first, and then thrown in the rubbish bin or it was thrown alive, Mtshali however, goes on to sarcastically point out that the mother disappeared "into the rays of the rising sun/her face glittering with innocence/her heart as pure as untrampled dew" (Mtshali 1971: 60). The woman's actions would have undoubtedly been prompted by her personal circumstances, and possibly, the socio-economic conditions that prevailed in apartheid-era South Africa. However, the fact remains that she resorts to a horror deed in an attempt to deal with her plight, this being done at the expense of the innocent and helpless child.

It is ironic that Duiker chooses Cape Town as the setting for *Thirteen Cents.* The juxtaposition of poverty and affluence that he portrays has great literary significance when one has to consider that in such a pivotal city; pivotal in the sense that it hosts the South African Parliament which promulgates all of the country's legislations, there is the ignominious sight of homeless children roaming the streets, in the person of Azure. I see this as an acute indictment of the state and its lack of urgency in the application of policies that are pro poor, and children in particular.

In his interview with Victor Lackay (2005) Duiker contends that, "Street culture says a lot about where we are and homeless people are the lowest common denominator. They tell us a lot about ourselves" (Duiker in Mzamane 2005: 20). I argue that the significance of Duiker's observation is that street culture is a mirror through which society has to see itself, and ask itself the question, what kind of a society are we that is continuing to breed a homeless subculture, even among the most vulnerable members of our society, the children?

In his misery and the illusion that "[He] is growing up fast" (2000:123), Azure portrays a dislocated and a distorted psyche. Although he is indeed growing up, he is not growing up like a normal child. He has a distorted and alienated identity; at a deeper level, Azure is denied self-determination. Indeed, he is forced to grow up fast, because of the circumstances around him. The fact that he loses both parents leaves him with no alternative but to face the harsh life in the streets. Azure, therefore, sees no difference between himself and grown-ups, possibly because he is independent. This independence, which is forced on him by the conditions that ensue after his parents' deaths, can be read in his confession to signify the alienation that he feels and expresses. Azure says, "I have never been on my own this long in Cape Town" (2000: 110). This suggests that had his parents been alive, there would not be moments of loneliness such as one expressed here. The above exposition explains the category of homelessness that Azure falls under, which according to Crane *et. al.* (2005) is disturbed childhood.

4.3 Violation of children's inalienable rights

Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* is concerned about street children's exposure to violence. Throughout the novel there is a tendency of the strong preying on the weak, which seems to be a common inclination in homeless social structures. In the novel, gangsters and paedophiles who represent the dark side of Cape Town perpetrate a reign of terror. Not only are homeless children exposed to violence, but entrapment as well, because once children are pushed into the streets, the likelihood is that they will end up not transcending street life. To this effect, Makiwane et al. submit that, "Some people become disabled while on the streets. The health hazards of this lifestyle can lead to gradual deterioration of overall quality of life and minimise their chances of ever

transcending their homelessness" (Makiwane et al. 2010:40). Azure's return to the streets after the shacks are demolished (2000:153) attests to the vicious cycle of homelessness and substantiates the argument by Nkomo and Olufemi (2001) that, "the time they spend on the streets working, begging, or engaging in sexual activities does not equip them with developmental skills to prepare them for future challenges beyond life on the streets" (Nkomo & Olufemi, 2001:345).

I argue that although Makiwane *et al.* observe that there are social networks among homeless people, these networks and structures are not regulated. Consequently, the strong will continue to take advantage of and prey on the weak. From the onset, the notorious Gerald is depicted as a character who strikes terror in the hearts of the homeless, both young and old. In the fourth chapter of *Thirteen Cents*, the audience is told that, "Gerald fucked up this one guy with a goni because he called him driver as he got into his cab" (2000: 17). Furthermore, Azure's statement that, "…I can't go to Gerald empty-handed" (2000: 20) highlights the power relations that exist between the two characters, where one is subservient to the other. Apart from these two instances, the novel is replete with abusive words and actions heaped on Azure by Gerald. This continues to be evident from many citations from the novel that portray the relationship between Gerald and Azure. The issue of the nature of the relationship between Gerald and Azure is supported by Makiwane et. al's findings on homeless people and their social structures and hierarchies. "When asked about the nature and significance of their relationship with their fellows, most said they keep company to socialise and look after each other, but were also quick to add that they never invest too much trust in one another because essentially they are all strangers who come from different places" (Makiwane *et al*. 2010: 46).

Due to his investing much trust in Joyce, Azure falls victim to her deviousness. The unscrupulous Joyce collects money from him, claiming that she is banking it on his behalf. On the day he goes to collect his money, Joyce coldly tells him, "Your money? After all I did for you? You can't get that money. The bank won't give it to you" (2000:75). The readers are subsequently told that "[Joyce] slaps [Azure] across the face again. Hard. [His] nose starts bleeding" (2000: 75). This episode reveals the vulnerability of street children to abuse by the dishonest elements within society. As a mother, Joyce is supposed to protect and nurture Azure, instead of usurping from him the money he earns through hard and unpleasant labour.

Ban Ki-Moon, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations asks a question in his report titled "*Children and the Millennium Development Goals*": "What have we done for the children? Are today's children healthy and well nourished? Are they going to school? Are they protected from harm and preparing themselves for adult life?" (Ki-Moon 2007:1). Although Ban Ki-Moon is asking these questions from a global perspective, they are relevant to the South African context and indeed to children exposed to similar plight as that of Azure. They confirm Makiwane et al.'s contention that it might be difficult for some homeless people, especially children to "[transcend] their homelessness" (Makiwane et al. 2010: 40).

In his tribute to Duiker, Raditlhalo eulogises Duiker's *Thirteen Cent*s thus:

> In a very, very discomforting read, we are drawn to a world of rampant sexuality involving Azure and others like him, a world in which violence is perpetrated by gangland thugs and the vulnerable are exploited (Raditlhalo 2005: 98).

The above observation has a direct bearing on both social structures and hierarchies that exist among homeless people. Gangland thugs exploit the vulnerable and the rampant sexuality is clearly evident in *Thirteen Cents* as the story unfolds. Azure is constantly exposed to sexual violence. He 'services' clients as a *gigolo* in exchange for meager income. His encounter with Mr Lebowitz, the investment banker, demonstrates the extent to which Azure has degenerated into a child prostitute, and confirms what Makiwane et al find to be "more desperate coping strategies" among homeless people, which are "begging, *prostitution*, theft, robbery and drug trafficking" (Makiwane et al. 2010:41) my emphasis.

As a sex worker, Azure suffers intense pain as a result of anal penetration. To ease the pain, "[Azure] sit[s] in a willow pool and let[s] the cool water cover [him] up to [his] waist. [He] sit[s] for a while until [his] bum feels numb" (2000: 30). This episode is the author's way of drawing the attention of the audience to the helplessness of street children and the few choices available to them. Penetration in this sense is symbolic of invasion, which could mean that the child's psyche is invaded, resulting in both physical and emotional harm. It is for this reason that Azure tells the audience, "After a while the pleasure turns into sadness" (2000:86). The pleasure he is referring to is the sexual pleasure. In effect, this explains the emotional turmoil that the child narrator Azure experiences when engaging in transactional sexual intercourse with various clients. And the metaphor "fountain of sperms" (2000:86) may signify the defilement and shame that he feels as a result of these sexual encounters. Azure contends that "they want to take [his] mind" (2000: 144). Kim (2009) submits that "In his struggle against contamination by the city, Azure becomes associated with water, sun/light/fire and their related colors of orange, yellow and blue" (Kim 2009:2). The symbols of water sun/light and fire in this instance denote Azure's need for

purification. The suggestion here is that he is struggling to ward off the contamination coming from his surrounding environment.

Exposing children to sexual activities is tantamount to exposing them to sexually transmitted diseases as well, in addition to the physical and emotional repercussions of arrested development, which may later manifest as mental illness. Moreover, nowhere in his sexual encounter does Azure mention the use of condoms. This suggests that Azure and his clients are exposed to sexually transmitted diseases.

Azure is not only exposed to the danger of contracting diseases, but also of losing his identity, healthy life and of facing an uncertain future. The juxtaposition of Azure's character with that of Gerald the gangster and his cohorts who have the upper hand even on the police, underlines Azure's real prospects of an uncertain future as Gerald is an unpredictable predator whom Raditlhalo refers to children as "victims of a (violent) society intent on turning a blind eye to the plight of its weakest members" (Raditlhalo 2005: 97-98). The metaphors of the prey and the predator are aptly portrayed in the relationship that exists between Gerald and Azure. This polarity graphically portrays the nature of the careless relationship that exists between the two.

The violent beating of Azure which Gerald orders (2000:39) and the sawing at the former's cast by Gerald himself (2000: 101) as punishment for Azure's wearing an orange colour, which he had been ordered not to wear, are indicative of the violent environment in which Azure finds himself as both an orphan and a homeless child, and provide evidence of the absurdity of the punishment. In this instance, the punishment is meted out to a defenseless street child. Duiker, here, intends to

show the audience the extent of the helplessness of street children. This refutes the efficacy of the government's policies that are developed in favour of children, and further downplays directly *The Children's Charter* mentioned elsewhere in this study. Azure's encounter with Vincent and his subsequent reporting of the beating that, "Since when did Gerald *moer* anyone? He got Sealy to *moer* me" (2000: 58) reveals the extent to which thugs such as Gerald are feared and the amount of power they wield. Hence, we are told of Gerald's notoriety when Oscar the vagabond comments that, "…there is this guy who lives there, right, and he is supposed to control the entire rat population in Cape Town. It is kind of an urban legend" (2000: 115). Oscar's description of Gerald, who it seems he has never set his eyes on, confirms his widespread reputation as a notorious gangster in Cape Town.

In their study of homelessness, Nkomo and Olufemi (2001) found that, "The children are also used by drug lords to sell sexual favours (as in Yeoville, a suburb of Johannesburg), and some of these children live with gangs or are gang members just to survive street life" (2001:345). These findings corroborate the events in *Thirteen Cents* (2000) as Azure has to pay a protection fee to Gerald. In explaining this, Azure tells the audience that, "I walk out of [Gerald]'s flat and try not to think of my money as wasted but as protection money" (2000: 15). The readers are also told that Azure knows that "[he] can't go back to Gerald empty-handed" (2000:20). This idiomatic expression signifies the plight that the young Azure has to contend with on a daily basis. Azure has to make money through prostitution in spite of the difficulty involved in getting a client. On two occasions he tells the audience, "The last couple of days have been difficult. I can't get a trick" (2000: 21). As a result, he has also learnt to market himself laboriously to get a sex client. He whispers to one of the *moffies* at the beach, "I'll do anything you want for fifty bucks" (2000: 29). It is the money

that Azure makes this way that Joyce and Gerald violently usurp from him. The fact that Azure has to whisper, suggests that he is ashamed of himself as a child prostitute. The significance of the irony that "[Azure] always looks at the ground when he passes [black female prostitutes]" attests to the fact that he dislikes prostitution. Therefore, Azure engages in this behaviour out of desperation, as a survival strategy, attesting to the coping strategies Nkomo and Olufemi identify and allude to in the preceding paragraphs. One can also not rule out the possibility of Azure being a drug trafficker if one considers his associations with and loyalty to Gerald and Richard.

In addition, giving an order to Azure to clean Gerald's tyres with his spit immediately after his leg is broken is quite insensitive (2000: 41). On the part of Azure, this experience is agonising and dehumanising as he is in pain because of a fractured leg. To add to the calamity, Gerald continues to heap abuse on Azure as if there is no law against his clandestine activities. I submit that this is the author's way of telling the audience that children who live on the streets are subjected to much pain and agony. Article Five (1) of *The Children's Charter of South Africa* peremptorily states that "All children have the right to be protected from all types of violence including: physical, emotional, verbal, psychological, sexual, state, political, gang, domestic, school, township and community, street, racial, self-destructive and all other forms of violence" (1992). However, I wonder if the South African government is doing enough to ensure that children are protected from abuse, such as throwing the book at the perpetrators through bringing on board the relevant organs of state. It is, therefore, apparent that unless a war is waged against this kind of abuse, children have a bleak future.

The episodes highlighted above reveal Gerald's character as that of a monstrous figure that is on a rampage. The power he wields, which even the police cannot challenge, leaves much to be desired of the police service. To have a citizen who breaks the law at will is a mockery of the system. When such actions are directed at defenseless children, as is the case in *Thirteen Cents*, the situation is much more poignant and deplorable.

4.4 Stereotypes and Societal attitude towards homeless children

Although it remains an unanswered question whether or not society is aware of the myriad of challenges that homeless children are exposed to, the attitude of society towards street children is a matter of concern in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*. In their study, "Educating Street and Homeless Children in South Africa: The Challenge of Policy Implementation", Nkomo and Olufemi found that there are "negative attitudes towards street children" (Nkomo & Olufemi 2001:347).

Nkomo and Olufemi's findings corroborate what Duiker depicts in *Thirteen Cents,* in that Duiker portrays fruit-sellers, for instance, as a yelling bunch of traders who bark every time they see homeless children in the streets of Cape Town, as evidenced in phrases such as "*Julle fokken mannetjies moet skool toe gaan*" (2000: 2). This is an Afrikaans expression for which the free English translation would be something like, "You fucking little men must go to school". The word "*fokken*" carries a negative connotation as it could mean "useless" or "fucking". The vendors' attitude towards street children as expressed in their tone is stereotypical, and one might be right to think that it is informed by the stereotypes that have been formed around street children, who

are regarded as stray children who run away from home like stray dogs as a result of naughtiness and nothing else.

It is ironic that Azure's response to the vendors' judgmental attitude is only made known to the audience and not the vendors. He responds thus:

> It is easy for them to say that. I lost my parents three years ago. Papa was bad with money and got Mama in trouble. The day they killed them *I was at school*. I came back to our shack only to find them in a pool of blood. That was three years ago. That was *the last time I went to school* (2000: 2) (my emphasis).

Azure's narrative dialogue goes a long way to explaining the conditions surrounding the plight of some street children and the phenomenon behind street culture in South Africa. The above exposition depicts the kind of society that South Africa has become. When lawlessness and violent killings are not abated, we are certain to have underprivileged children who are subjected to unnecessary destitution because of being orphaned at a very early age. I argue that the current situation reveals that South Africa has become worse in terms of morals and the respect for human life since the inception of democracy, which prohibits among other things, capital punishment. One may also put forward the argument that while apartheid was indeed a detestable and an inhuman practice, capital punishment, which was one of the apartheid's policies, worked as a deterrent of habitual killings which are almost a norm today. Crime statistics for the decade that begins with the demise of apartheid in 1994 indicate an escalation of murder with 25 965 murder cases reported in 1994/1995 and 19 824 in 2003/2004. Although there seems to be a decline in the number of murder cases reported, one notices a sharp increase in the number of murder cases

reported in 1995/1996 which stood at 26 877. The statistics also reflect that attempted murder cases reported in 1994/1995 were 26 806 and that those reported in 2003/2004 were 30 076. (www.capegateway.gov.za). Thus, with the advent of democracy, South Africa has degenerated into, among other things, a state that is ravaged by criminal tendencies, especially murder, which may be attributed to the abolition of capital punishment, which I argue was a deterrent.

Azure's justification of his maturity and sanity by saying that as a thirteen-year-old boy he is almost a man, means "…[he] know[s] where to find food that hasn't seen too many ants and flies in Camps Bay or Clifton" (2000: 1) and that this is possible "…if there aren't any policemen patrolling the streets" (2000: 1) may be the author's way of disapproving the attitude of the police towards homeless children. This attitude affects homeless children, who now perceive the police as enemies, rather than responsible adults whose duty and social responsibility are to protect children, among other things. Azure tells the audience, "[The policemen] don't like us much" (2000: 1). This remark leads me to conclude that whenever the police encounter street children, they mistreat them. It is a shame for such an institution as the police service which is the custodian of South African law to abuse children. Their actions as depicted in the novel run contrary to *The Children's Charter of South Africa (*1992) whose tenets prohibit the abuse and violation of children's rights. Article Two of *The Children's Charter of South Africa* states that, "Children have been and continue to be *abused*, tortured, *mistreated*, neglected and abandoned by the people of South Africa" my emphasis.

With reference to the character Joyce in the novel, Azure informs the audience, "She says I remind her of her son in Lichtenburg" (2000: 6). Duiker here masters the use of an understatement to tell

the reader that Joyce has abandoned her son. In light of this, Joyce's act of giving Azure food parcels may be a way of purging and pacifying her conscience of the burden of guilt that she may be carrying in her consciousness.

In *Thirteen Cents*, the abuse of homeless children is also perpetrated by the police alongside gangland thugs who are in turn portrayed as feared by the police. This situation leaves the homeless child with no hope of survival, let alone transcending homelessness. I therefore argue that the police need education regarding their social responsibility towards street children, who are the most vulnerable, and most of whom are presumably orphaned and destitute. That Azure is destitute because he lost both parents in one day further strengthens the argument that the South African social thread has disintegrated significantly. It is in this instance that I support the initiatives of African Renaissance. In a true African society one of the relatives could have taken over the responsibility of raising Azure. According to true African ethos, even if Azure did not have any surviving relatives, he would not have ended up in the streets. Here Duiker is satirising our current social formation, hence his contention that, "Street culture says a lot about where we are…" (in Mzamane 2005: 20). Furthermore, *The Children's Charter* cited above is articulate on the plight of homeless children. Article Ten (5) puts the burden of responsibility for homeless children on communities and families as the ones having "the duty to protect their children from becoming homeless and abandoned" *The South African Children's Charter* (1992).

According to Duiker, the exposition of the episode of the death of Azure's parents as narrated by Azure himself, is good enough to evoke feelings of sympathy and empathy in fellow South Africans regarding the plight of homeless and orphaned children. In *Thirteen Cents*, there appears

to be a call to a change of attitude towards street children if the society is to be of any help in eradicating the proliferation of street children.

4.5 The socio-economic plight of homeless individuals

Nkomo and Olufemi (2001) contend that "There are many causes of homelessness including rapid industrialisation, rural-urban migration, *unemployment and poverty* (Nkomo and Olufemi, 2001: 338) (my emphasis). Nkomo and Olufemi observe that "…in South Africa, poverty is the most important factor underlying the street child phenomenon" (2001: 343) thus, reinforcing the argument that the discourse of homelessness cannot be divorced from the glaring poverty that is a hallmark of the majority of South African settlements, whether they be rural or urban. The White Paper on the South African Housing Policy indicates that, "In South Africa, the effect of previous racially-based policies has left the distribution of income remains substantially skewed" (sic) (A New Housing Policy and Strategy for South Africa, 1994). According to the same source, there were 1.5 million urban informal housing units in 1994 in South Africa. By estimation, that number has considerably increased to date (A New Housing Policy and Strategy for South Africa, 1994).

According to a report compiled by Solidarity Helping Hand, poverty cuts across all races in South Africa. The report documents evidence of white poverty in South Africa in a graphic manner. The report even reveals that, "Poor white children in some areas are lured into a life of prostitution and drug-dealing by Nigerian criminals" (Solidarity Helping Hand 2008). The report goes on to reveal that, "The phenomenon of white shelters in and around Pretoria has existed for many years. Since 2004, there has, however, been a sharp increase in the number of these shelters" (Solidarity

Helping Hand 2008). This evidence proves that in South Africa poverty is a scourge that affects all races and if not arrested, will continue to affect a large number of people in our society.

Njabulo Ndebele's (1991) observation of the South African social formation and the impact of the Apartheid legislation fundamentally attributes the poverty of African life to land dispossession which also finds expression in "the sprawling monotony of architecture in African locations, which are the very picture of poverty and oppression" (Ndebele 1991: 37). The truth of this observation is supported by the sprawling and continuous mushrooming of shanty towns that are commonly located at the outskirts of South African cities, thereby expressing the dichotomy of South African urban landscapes which is a symbol of uneven distribution of wealth.

It is my considered view that with the influx of illegal immigrants from neighbouring states to South Africa, it will be difficult to tell whether these informal settlements are occupied by South Africans alone, which in turn makes it difficult for the government to plan appropriately for its citizens. This phenomenon compounds the proliferation of shanty towns in South Africa.

In a telling encounter, Azure mentions that, "[He] came back to *[their] shack* only to find [his parents] in a pool of blood" (2000: 2) (my emphasis). Shack dwellers in South Africa are an effective symbol of abject poverty that haunts our society today. Moreover, shacks represent a fraction of society that is in dire need of housing. This corroborates Olufemi's definition of the homeless in South Africa as "those who lack real homes, *live in bad housing,* sleep on pavements, lack basic needs (with no access to safe water, sanitation) and lack personal needs (self-determination, creativity, dignity, expression and voice)" (Olufemi 2000: 224) (my emphasis). In

this definition, the reader is made to understand the phenomenon of poverty and its dynamics in South Africa as intricately linked to homelessness. I, therefore, maintain that homelessness and poverty are metaphorically represented in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* and that for the purposes of a sustained argument in this study, I will treat the two concepts as two sides of the same coin.

Despite the fact that homeless people are stripped of their dignity by the conditions they find themselves in, Gaylard (2004) asserts that, "…the very concept of human rights implies that human beings (by virtue of being human) have dignity and value and (flowing from this) certain inalienable rights which need to be protected from arbitrary authority or tyranny" (Gaylard 2004: 267). Consequently, it is the responsibility of the citizenry to restore and protect the homeless people in the context of *Ubuntu.*

Whilst there are other factors such as sheer naughtiness that contribute to the growing numbers of the street children phenomenon, I contend that in the case of Azure, the conditions that lead to him becoming homeless as evidenced in the novel are the death of his parents and the ultimate consequences of being an underprivileged child, not naughtiness as the street vendors are portrayed to perceive (2000:2). It can also be safely argued that, had Azure's parents not been killed, he would probably not be on the streets, which justifies the argument above. However, Duiker makes a plea to the South African citizenry to embrace the spirit of *ubuntu* as propounded by E'skia Mphahlele in his theory of 'Afrikan' Humanism. Mphahlele contends that, "With the disruption of family and community life by migrant labour, landlessness and other economic forces, we observe survivals of the communal soul in various new forms of social structures" (Mphahlele

2002:133). Among these structures, Mphahlele makes mention of *stokvels*, burial societies, sports clubs, the church and other associations that create their own rituals, etc.

The above submission by Mphahlele attests to the disintegration of the social thread, the fabric that held African communities together and the need for African people to return to their roots. However, Mphahlele bemoans the ignorance among Africans when he asserts that, "Africans in this country, especially urbanised Africans, are confused about matters of culture" (Mphahlele 2002: 128). The phenomenon of street children or street culture in general, whose root cause is poverty, can be eradicated with the resurgence of traditional African values of *ubuntu* and commitment from political leaders to eradicate poverty.

However, Duiker makes the reader aware that there are other street children who run away from home to the streets because they are naughty. Azure's judgment of Bafana's condition attests to the above acknowledgement by Duiker. "He's a *lytie*, Bafana, only nine years old and he's on the streets. And he is naughty. He has a home to go back to in Langa but *he chooses to roam the streets*" (2000: 2) (my emphasis). However, it would be unfair to make a general statement that all street children are on the streets because they are naughty, especially after this matter-of-fact statement made by the narrator. This view is shared by Le Roux and Smith who contend that "It cannot be taken for granted that all street children have left their homes because of their deviant behaviour" (Le Roux and Smith, 1998: 1). The question that may still be asked, however, is whether it can be verified if indeed Bafana is on the streets because he is naughty. One may argue that there might be deep-seated factors behind the phenomenon; probably poverty, which I have consistently argued in this study that it is the direct cause of homelessness. For instance, Bafana

may be coming from a very poor family where it is difficult to get food, hence his presence in the streets of Cape Town.

4.6 Characterisation in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*

It is important to note that in *Thirteen Cents* Duiker portrays the characterisation of individual characters as well as the character of the city itself, Cape Town, which is not only depicted as the setting. Cape Town's dichotomous nature finds expression through portrayal of its iconic mountain and marine breeze as seen against its clandestine lifestyle of gangsterism and paedophiles who prey on the young and vulnerable victims, epitomised by Azure and others faced with a similar plight. I submit that the beautiful tourist destination is herein depicted as dichotomous; comprising two worlds in one city.

Duiker's portrayal of Azure is such that, while one may detest what he does, there is an appeal in the tone of the author to empathise with and understand the narrator. Azure is an orphan and a homeless child who lives alone in the streets of Cape Town. Azure tells the audience so: "I live alone. The streets of Sea Point are my home" (2000: 1). Azure has learned to survive on his own, without adult supervision, confirming the definition of a street child offered by the South African Department of Social Welfare and Population Development (DSWPD) that these are the "subculture of children who live an unprotected communal life and who depend on themselves and on one another, not on an adult, for the provision of their basic needs" (DSWPD. 1998:5).

For Duiker to present Azure as saying, “My friend Bafana can’t believe that I saw my dead parents and didn’t freak out… I cried then and it was over” (2000: 2) is to tell the audience that Azure is rather stoic. It is uncommon for a child his age not to grieve over parents’ deaths. This stoicism is further confirmed when Joyce hits him on the nose and he bleeds, as indicated earlier in the study; yet Azure doesn’t cry and eats his blood (2000: 75). In Azure the reader sees a child who has been hardened by life’s circumstances. He has become so accustomed to pain, and one may argue that he is well on his way to being a gangster if his exposure to abuse and criminal activities so early in his life are anything to go by. This, in itself is a serious threat to society.

Duiker also portrays Azure as a character with a fragmented identity and a dislocated psyche, as almost a mental case. As much as he wants to lead a normal childhood life, he cannot. He also cannot tell the whole truth as much as he would love to do so. He tells the reader that, “I help people park cars and wash them if the owners let me” (2000: 3). This activity makes Azure assume that it is a reasonable survival or coping strategy rather than the desperate coping strategy of prostitution. He thus camouflages as a car washer. He tells the audience, “I walk further along the beach till I come to the *moffie* part of the beach. I sit on the bench and wait for a trick” (2000: 8). This episode happens when the reader has already begun to sympathise with the young orphan whose misfortune has taken him out into the streets of Cape Town. It is followed by Azure’s chronicle of what happens in the flats of Cape Town, where he has to offer himself to two white men who have sex with him, one giving him twenty rand and the other forty (2000: 10). One of the clients tells Azure that, “You don’t have to take off your clothes. I just want to be sucked off” (2000:10). The audience are made to know that Azure does not enjoy this kind of life. Had it not been for money and survival, he would not do it. He says, “I’m forced to smile. That’s what they

expect. Grown-ups, I know their games" (2000: 8). The forced smile tells the reader that similarly to the dichotomous city, there are two sides to Azure's character, which he plays out for survival.

Although he tells the reader that he washes and parks cars, the way he goes about engaging in prostitution shows that although he might not like it, he devotes energy and time to it. As Azure puts it himself, "I walk to the *moffie* part of the beach and wait for a trick" (2008: 8). This means that Azure has gone to sit at a place where he would be picked up for transactional sex.

On one occasion, Azure has to suck Richard's and his friend's penises till they reach orgasm in return for the food he eats. In commanding him to suck him, Richard says, "*Hei, gemors*, don't make me shout. I just gave you nice food" (2000: 53). This confirms that Azure sucks Richard's penis in exchange for the food he ate, which means he is effectively doing so for purposes of survival. Not only does he suck Richard, but his friend too. Duiker is persistently drawing the attention of the reader to the plight of the homeless children. He is revealing what neglected children go through on a daily basis. For instance, there is recurring sadness that Azure experiences after each sexual encounter which he explains thus: "I sit on the coach. I start to feel a little sad" (2000: 89). The only way Azure deals with this sadness is to muster strength and pretend to be happy. Azure does not even know the source of his sadness. However, all things considered, one might guess that he did not deal thoroughly with the loss of his parents. For he says, "I cried then and it was over" (2000: 2). One might argue that Azure is an orphaned child who needs bereavement counseling in order to get over the loss of his parents.

Azure is a character who is in a great dilemma as he attempts to please everyone. He is torn between almost everyone in the novel. This confusion finds expression in his dealings with Joyce, a woman who works at the La Perla restaurant. Joyce says, "And gangsters. If I ever hear that you are a member of a gang, you can forget about Auntie ever giving you food or banking your money" (2000: 13). In response Azure assures her, "Me, Auntie, I'm not like them. I'm not a *moegu*" (2000: 13). Yet the reader knows that he is not telling the truth; in fact, Azure has already subscribed to Gerald the gangster. Thus, Azure is beyond help in this regard. He is already trapped. He is not what he wishes to be. He wishes he were not associated with gangsters, yet he is already paying a protection fee to Gerald.

The above episode may also be the author's way of exposing the nature of Cape Town as a gang-infested city. It further confirms my assertion that Cape Town is not merely a setting in the novel, but a character as well. It has its monster-like side, yet possesses beautiful landscapes, mountains and marine breeze.

Furthermore, Duiker treats the theme of homelessness discursively by including white poverty through the introduction of the character Oscar, thus drawing parallels with Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* (1973). Unlike the passive homeless characters in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Oscar moves about aimlessly in Cape Town carrying his personal belongings and daily supply of food. Oscar shares his victuals with Azure. Azure tells the audience, "He offers me four slices of bread" (2001: 113).

In addition, the employment of characters such as Oscar has literary significance in relation to the theme of homelessness. Oscar is a vagabond who tells Azure that he lives in Hout Bay. Hout Bay is a fishing habour on the western part of Cape Town (2000: 113). As I argued in the preceding paragraphs, Oscar is reminiscent of Athol Fugard's coloured vagabonds Boesman and Lena in *Boesman and Lena* (1973) who wander about, building makeshift houses with no particular destination in mind. It is therefore apparent that even in Hout Bay, Oscar does not have a home. This could just be the place where he finds himself often. I can submit that he is just a homeless vagabond. For instance, during his encounter with Azure, Oscar says, "I've been walking all day. The night caught up with me" (2000: 112). Another significance of bringing Oscar into the narrative may be the author's way to project the unfortunate Azure's future prospects and destiny. That is, if nothing is done to alleviate the conditions under which Azure lives now, he is going to be another 'Oscar of Hout Bay' which in that case would suggest the perpetuation of a vicious cycle of homelessness.

For Azure to introduce himself as Blue to Oscar is a denial of identity. This reveals that Azure is not proud of himself. I therefore conclude that he has a desire to assume a new identity. He says, "Just call me Blue" (2000: 112). This denigration of self is symbolic of cultural denigration which is embedded within the context of colonisation with its deep-seated after effects. The audience knows, as it has already been alluded to elsewhere in this study that the name Blue was given to Azure by Gerald, his oppressor. This development is indicative of some of the effects of displacement and ties in with the contention by Ashcroft et. al. that, "A valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation….. [o]r it may have been destroyed by cultural denigration, the conscious and unconscious oppression of the indigenous personality and culture

by a supposedly superior racial or cultural model" (Ashcroft et. al. 2002: 9). The readers should note that the aspects that concern Azure are only at a micro level and happening against a bigger picture which only reflects at national and global spheres.

Portrayal of characters such as Oscar highlights that homelessness cuts across race and ethnicity. Oscar is white. I submit that that he is a sounding board for white poverty in South Africa alluded to earlier in this study. This corroborates Makiwane et al.'s findings that homelessness is not homogenous but cuts across race, age, gender and class (Makiwane et. al. 2010:48). I posit that the character and nature of homelessness is homogenous for both black and white in South Africa. Therefore, one can safely argue that the underlying cause of homelessness is indeed poverty as can be demonstrated in the novel that those who are homeless, both black and white, are living in abject poverty.

Furthermore, the employment of the mythic Saartjie Baartman has literary significance in *Thirteen Cents*. It would appear to me that Duiker here would like to remind South Africans that dislocation or displacement of the African soul dates back to many decades. The author may also be endevouring to bring the point home that Africans have always been regarded as second class citizens in South Africa and other places across the globe, to such an extent that Saartjie Bartman could be taken to a museum as an object of entertainment. Of course, the scene also reminds South Africans of their somewhat forgotten history. Notwithstanding, this could be the author's way of reviving undocumented South African history which was getting recognition at the time of writing *Thirteen Cents*. It can be argued here that the parallel this draws with the theme of homelessness is that Saartjie was taken away from home as a slave and subjected to extreme abuse and striping

of dignity. One wonders if Azure knows anything about Saartjie. Crucially however, reference to Saartjie in the novel ties in not only with Azure' plight but also with the concept of displacement discussed in the literature review of this study.

To have Azure see visions or dreams of Saartjie Baartman with the precision and accuracy of recorded history may be the author's way of adding to the voices that were calling for the return of her remains from abroad. One notes however, some distortions in the presentation or narration of the details by Azure. For instance, the Saartjie in the dream says, "I was once a fish" (2000: 120). The whole story of T-Rex as Saartjie's husband that follows is just as disjointed as a dream indeed. Later we learn in that disjointed dream that T-Rex is Azure's father (2000:122), which continues to point to Azure's derailment.

Over and above, Azure is a story teller. Although the story he tells is an unpleasant one involving child prostitution, he maintains honesty and integrity in his narration. He is honest to the reader, but not to fellow characters. The reader knows exactly what he is going through, but Joyce, Gerald, Ma Zakes and Richard do not know what the young Azure is going through. It is the author's invention that Azure should tell his truth to the reader.

4.7 Diction and Style in Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*

In the novel, Duiker weaves his diction and style, which are characteristically simple, and the reader encounters the child narrator who communicates his personal experiences and the experiences of others in the clandestine city of Cape Town, that unfolds as Azure engages the

reader. The appropriation and abrogation of the Standard English language depict how honestly Duiker portrays characterisation. His characters of mixed races are symbolic of the rainbow nation of the post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, he deliberately allows them to use the Afrikaans language without appending at the end of the novel an appendix explaining the Afrikaans words and expressions that some of his characters are wont to use. He is, to a certain extent, acknowledging the language as one of the official languages of the democratic South Africa, thus affirming social cohesion.

In addition, he is apparently subverting the stock perception that black South Africans hate Afrikaans. Its variant, the *Tsotsi Taal,* is commonly used by the younger generation in South African urban townships. *Tsotsi* means a member of a gang and *Taal* is Afrikaans for language. One can argue that *Tsotsi Taal*, as a matter of fact draws heavily from Afrikaans language which is dubbed the language of the oppressor.

It is therefore ironic to note that such a language which was at the epicenter of the 1976 student uprising is prevalent in the language of the young generation of the post-apartheid South Africa. Perhaps Duiker wants the readers to look beyond the effects of the Afrikaans language and eradicate any barriers that divided South Africa as a nation and move forward as a rainbow nation that embraces all official South African languages.

Through *Thirteen Cents,* Duiker has made his statement on the issue of language. However, I still find that there are languages in South Africa that are still marginalized, namely the language of the Khoi-Khoi people and the languages spoken by Indians. In other words, the author Duiker attempts to point out that although apartheid has been abolished, its effects might linger on for a

long time. This may be interpreted as a call for collective effort to eradicate the effects of apartheid, including the marginalisation of certain languages.

I stylistically classify *Thirteen Cents* as a post-apartheid novel under the genre that Gaylard refers to as 'post-apartheid dystopian novel alongside Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, discussed in the previous chapter. It is significant to note that In *Thirteen Cents*, the apartheid structure has collapsed: Azure can freely move about the city Cape Town without let or hindrance. There are no more 'no go areas' and 'white only' benches and beaches like there had been during the apartheid years. However, Duiker depicts a post-apartheid city with its completely unprecedented new challenges. As discussed above, Duiker presents among these challenges, homelessness, poverty and distorted identities.

4.8 Duiker's Techniques

Duiker portrays the life of a young orphaned and homeless Azure who roams the streets of Cape Town in search of food. Azure is faced with the challenge of survival in an unfriendly city of Cape Town. As observed by Kim (2009), the Cape Town that Duiker had to write about, is the one "[she] was neither familiar with, nor desired to know" (www.mantlethought.org). Thus indeed, Duiker "portrays the gritty underground of an urban landscape" (Kim 2009:1). Duiker portrays Azure, the shack dwellers and the vagabonds as symbols of homelessness in South Africa. For Azure, Table Mountain is meanwhile represented as a symbol of refuge and fortitude. Azure escapes his abusers; Gerald and his cohorts to Table Mountain. He says, "I head for the mountain panting like a beast"

(2000: 103). Duiker uses the simile to highlight the speed and determination with which Azure runs to the mountain.

The narrator's use of language is embellished with figures of speech. He refers to the gymnosperms that line the foot of Table Mountain as "the Lebowitz trees" (2000: 108), thus metaphorically describing the height of Mr. Lebowitz, one of the characters in the novel, who is first introduced as a moffie. Azure tells the audience, "The moffies walk by. One of them looks at me but I pay no attention to him" (2000: 81). Mr Lebowitz is further introduced in terms of race as a white man, for Azure tells the audience that "White people are full of kak, …" (2000: 82). Azure also tells the audience that "[his] suit makes [Mr. Lebowitz] look like one of those trees that grow straight and tall and have needles. And they are always green" (2000: 95). The significance of the simile and the metaphor is to describe Mr. Lebowitz's height, gentlemanliness and wealth, while at a deeper level, as one of Azure's sex clients the relationship is intended to highlight the gap that exists between the filthy rich and the abject poor. It is in Mr Lebowits' house where there are "taps made of gold" (2000: 89). I consider Mr. Lebowitz's deplorable gesture as indicative of alarming levels of depravity which involves gratification of one's sexual desires at the expense of a thirteen-year old poor boy. Duiker chooses words that can best describe Mr Lebowitz's height by likening him to the gymnosperms that line the foot of Table Mountain. The needle leaves that are always green could very well be a symbol of Mr. Lebowitz's wealth or pockets that never run dry. Collectively, it may also be a way of highlighting the magnanimous stature of Mr Lebowitz, his gentlemanliness, which at the same time camouflages his paedophilic activities, thus portraying Cape Town's underbelly.

Another aspect of Duiker's techniques can be seen in Azure's diction, evident throughout the text: a tendency to use vulgar words. For instance, Azure utters words such as "asshole" to refer to people (2000:30). This idiomatic expression (as in "he is an asshole") is commonly used to refer to a detestable person. These kind of utterances depict the kind of a street child that our system, under the current conditions, is capable of breeding. The attitude of the young Azure manifests shattered hopes and dreams as well as a vote of no confidence in adult people. "I'm done with grown-ups. They are full of shit" (2000:106). I contend that the kind of attitude that Azure displays is a result of a dysfunctional society which has deep-seated unresolved conflicts, in which the narrator is being brought up. In Azure, our system has successfully produced an impolite, violent and disrespectful child, a complete antithesis of *Ubuntu.* Ramose (2005) defines *Ubuntu* as "humane, respectful and polite attitude towards others" (Ramose 2005:37). This exposition, used as a social indicator, tells the audience how dysfunctional our society is and the dire need of a remedy; moral regeneration.

The above exposition further tells the reader that the institutions that are meant to teach children African values of *ubuntu* have collapsed. One such institution is none other than the family or a home. Duiker, here is simultaneously communicating to the audience a crucial message of restoration of our values as African people and supposedly lamenting the current conditions. The writer's concerns echo the tenets of moral regeneration movements that seek to restore African values. Such rudeness, as represented in the kind of language that the young Azure uses to communicate with the audience, is a telling statement that we do need as Africans, to return to our core values of *Ubuntu.*

Duiker's diction effectively portrays characterisation. The use of language is interwoven with characterisation to depict certain features of the characters' make up and their idiosyncrasies. Duiker weaves language and characterisation for effect and the depiction of the texture of the tapestry of the South African society. Duiker's style incorporates what may be called stream-of-conscious narration, which involves an intensive internal dialogue that goes on within the protagonist. Grifith Jnr (1990) defines stream-of-consciousness as a "technique which puts the reader literally in the mind of a character" (Grifith Jnr 1990: 62). The diction that Duiker employs to portray his characters is awash with the vulgarities of Cape Town's underbelly in both expression and appeal.

Taking, for instance, Azure's encounter with a sex client, one notices the cleanliness of the house that Azure is taken to. The house is clean to the extent that Azure has to "…walk carefully as though careless footsteps might disrupt the cleanliness" (2000: 8); yet distasteful activities take place in this house. If one is to listen to Azure when he intimates that "I know the routine" (2000: 8), referring to the whole drill of taking off one's clothes before making love for money and the cleanliness of the house, one notices the paradoxical portrayal of a clean house in which repugnant activities take place.

Duiker does not interfere with his characters by explaining what is going on. He lets them be what they are through allowing effective dialogue. Like in Herman Charles Bosman's stories, Duiker employs understatements to tell the reader something about themselves rather than his characters. For instance, for Azure to say, "They dry in the sun from all the walking I do" (2000: 12) is a way of telling the audience that he has one pair of clothing. Nowhere in the novel does Duiker ever

tell the reader that Azure has one pair of clothing. The ‘one pair of clothing’ is also a metaphor for abject poverty, confirming the latter as a cause of homelessness. It further points to the gravity of the plight of homelessness as Azure does not even have a place to keep different clothing items without a proper place to stay.

4.9 Conclusion

Although Duiker does not provide answers to the plight of street children, he gets the reader to think about the kind of society that post-apartheid South Africa has evolved to become, contrary to the expectations the majority of the citizens had when the Apartheid structure came crumbling and collapsed. At a micro level, he brings to the reader’s attention the value of the very smallest, yet pivotal, unit of society, the home.

Chapter Five

Comparative analysis of Duiker and Mpe's depiction of homelessness

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I compare and contrast the representation of homelessness in K. Sello Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001). I primarily focus on a comparative analysis of the two texts in the treatment of the theme of homelessness, the portrayal of characters as well as the literary style.

5.2 Mpe and Duiker's treatment of the theme of homelessness

As demonstrated in Chapter Three of this dissertation, Mpe's treatment of homelessness is rather general compared to Duiker's particular treatment of the theme of homelessness. Mpe takes snapshots of desperate and disparately located homeless people in Hillbrow. For instance, with reference to the dog kennel which is used by the homeless young man as a shelter, the narrator reminds Refentše that, "Although you note it, it does not strike you as an important object. Except that unannounced, a young man crawls out of it, smoking dagga and dealing glue some severe blows" (2001: 12). Mpe further points to a group of homeless people who are concentrated in a shelter thus: "Further on, about fifty metres from the head of Kotze, you see some old people, about fifteen of them, sitting against a cream and brown wall" (12). On the other hand, Duiker introduces Azure to the reader in a rather shocking but particularly personal manner. "I live alone. The streets of Sea Point are my home" (2000: 1). Azure delivers the message with immediacy and finality. That the other group of homeless people is just fifty metres away from the other is a proximity which suggests the gravity of the plight, hinting at the population of homeless people which is growing exponentially.

The convergence in both authors' manner of depiction is evident in that homeless people are put on the spotlight. But, as pointed out, the manner of representation differs. Mpe's portrayal is casual whereas Duiker's is very particular and elaborate. The narrator in Mpe does not appear to care about what the homeless people go through except to tell the audience that they sit against the cream and brown wall all day, sniff glue and smoke dagga. On the other hand, Duiker, with the employment of stream-of-consciousness narration, reveals what goes on at a deeper level in the mind of the young and homeless Azure who is a prototype of the entire homeless community in Cape Town and any other place. Perhaps I can make a submission here that the choice of this particular character is to ensure a degree of integrity and plausibility to the narration as we expect the child narrator to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. It is for this reason that I argue that Duiker's depiction of homelessness is specific and intricate. He lets Azure simply relate the circumstances which lead to his homelessness and how the whole situation affects him. On the other hand, Mpe's narrator reveals to the audience the conditions of the homeless people in a matter-of-fact narration and a depiction that, to an extent, seems to portray mainstream society as mocking homeless people. This is attested to by Cousin's attitude towards homeless people, which is, at best, dismissive.

While Mpe's homeless characters are nameless, Duiker's characters have names. For instance, the narrator in *Thirteen Cents* tells the audience about other characters such as Vincent who shares the same plight as Azure. Beyond that, the readers are also told about Bafana "who has a home in Langa, but chooses to roam the streets" (2000:2). This brings another dimension to the discursive arguments about the street children phenomenon; that the street children are on the streets for

various reasons. There are those who are on the streets by choice, because they are naughty, and those who are victims of circumstances beyond their control. I therefore argue that while there are those who are genuinely homeless, there are of course, those who run away from home out of naughtiness. The street children in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are not identified by names, but by their character and actions. They are depicted thus: "drunk with glue, brandy and [with] wild visions of themselves as speeding Hollywood movie drivers […] racing their wire-made cars through red robots, thus increasingly becoming a menace to motorists driving through Hillbrow" (2001: 5). Thus, the street children in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are reduced to troublemakers. Unlike in Duiker's narrative, it is not made clear which children are on the streets out of sheer naughtiness and those who have been pushed to the streets because of circumstances beyond their control. Perhaps some of these children are orphans, abused, or abandoned, but the author does not divulge this information to the reader.

5.3 Depiction of the plight of homelessness

In *Thirteen Cents* Duiker goes into details of how homeless people, street children in particular suffer by living life on the streets. Duiker's depiction of homelessness corroborates Seager and Tamasane's report at the Health and Homeless Conference in Oxford in September 2008. Seager and Tamasane' report focused on absolute homeless people; describing them as people "who sleep in the open, one or more nights per week, plus those making use of shelters specifically for the homeless" (Seager and Tamasane, 2008). Azure has already told the audience that, "The streets of Sea Point are [his] home" (2000: 1). However, the narrator in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* tells the reader about the young man who crawls out of a dog kennel and a group of fifteen homeless people

who sit against the cream and brown wall of Usindiso City Shelter (2001:12,14). Here the name carries literary significance of depicting a place as one of "salvation" as I indicated earlier in the study. This could mean that indeed homeless people need to be rescued from their plight, and brings to mind the question whether erecting homeless shelters sufficiently addresses the plight of the homeless.

While the street children in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are portrayed as naughty and a "menace to motorists" (2001: 5) in a reference to the impact these children have in the neigbourhood, Azure in *Thirteen Cents* is depicted as a helpless victim of circumstances. It is the loss of his parents in one sad day that results in Azure leaving home for a life on the streets of Cape Town. This may therefore imply that street children in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are on the offensive, while Azure is rather on the defensive. Azure is on the defensive, although he is defenseless. He is, as I already pointed out, abused both emotionally and physically by his antagonists Gerald and Richard as well as the situation in which he finds himself, being homeless. In addition, he suffers at the hands of the paedophiles of Cape Town, both black and white who use him to gratify their sexual desires for an absolute pittance.

Being a street child, Azure distressingly grapples with a number of challenges that are beyond his age. In order to survive on the streets, he submits to Gerald, the infamous gangster of Cape Town, who is feared even by the police (2000:59). Seager and Tamasane (2008) found that the quest for survival leads to this need for connection to someone who might offer protection on the streets. Typical answers of the respondents in their study were, "Yes. You get protection that way" and "Yes. Who will look after you? Where will you get money to buy soap, clothes…?" (Seager and

Tamasane, 2008). For Azure his plight is compounded by the fact that he has to pay a protection fee to Gerald.

Readers are given to know that on one occasion while Azure is buying allegedly stolen goods from Allen, one of the gangsters, "[he] walks out of [Allen]'s flat and [tr]ies not to think of [his] money as wasted but as protection money" (2000: 15). To aggravate the matter, Azure says, "I can walk a little safer knowing that Allen has my money" (2000: 16) and he "can't go back to Gerald empty-handed" (2000: 20). This idiomatic expression again reaffirms the need for the protagonist (Azure) to please the antagonists (Gerald) and (Allen) at great personal cost.

Compounding the plight of the homeless is the societal attitude towards them. In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Cousin says, "…they are beggars" (2001: 12). In another instance, he refers to them as, imbeciles or fools (2001:12). The significance of Cousin's comments is that in his view, homeless people are useless people. Although Cousin's attitude does not necessarily mirror that of society in general, there can be no denying that there are members of society who harbour such hardened attitudes towards the homeless; and this implies that it will be difficult for society to empathise with the plight of homeless people to a point where it will take necessary measures to address their condition. In that regard, it is difficult to help homeless people transcend their socio-economic challenges. Moreover, it is ironic when such an attitude is displayed by a policeman, given that his duty should be to "serve and protect" all members of society, regardless of their stature or personal circumstances.

Commenting on society's indifferent attitude towards the homeless, Seager and Tamasane (2008) concluded that health professionals in public health centres are said to mistreat homeless adolescents. Homeless adolescents themselves report that, "We are not treated well at hospitals. Nurses treat us differently because we are homeless…" One further reports that, "They made me wait for a long time without attending to me… I slept on the floor the whole night…I got treated at around 4 a.m." (Seager and Tamasane 2008). The study also reveals that some homeless adolescents report verbal abuse such as being told that they are "smelly" by health staff (Seager and Tamasane 2008). For health professionals to degrade fellow human beings in this manner compromises their profession and indicts the institutions that they represent. If people are treated this way, it undermines their dignity, and makes them appear to be sub-human. Seager and Tamasane's findings further indicate that in a number of social structures, homeless people are not accepted for who they are. They are treated with disdain. This then points to the negative attitude that our society displays towards homeless people, thus aggravating their circumstances. I therefore argue that the authors, Duiker and Mpe indict the South Africa society for this kind of dismissive attitude towards homeless people.

In line with the above analysis, Duiker singles out in particular, the attitude of street vendors and the police, portraying them through the eye of the child narrator Azure. When Azure tells the audience, "[The policemen] don't like us much" (2000: 1), and that he can only rummage for food from the rubbish bins when the police are not patrolling the streets (2000: 1), this reveal to the reader a tale of police brutality against street children. Thus, I infer that the police mistreat homeless children whenever they find them on the streets. It is significant to note that in both narratives, the attitude of the police is eerily similar. Police in the post-apartheid era are expected

to be civil, yet in both novels they are portrayed as synonymous with the apartheid-era police force which most of the time committed atrocities against innocent and defenseless citizens.

In Duiker's novel, street vendors in Cape Town yell at street children in Afrikaans, one of South African official languages which was also known as the language of the oppressor during apartheid (2000: 2). The yelling indicates their disgust towards homeless children because yelling is reserved for someone you do not get along with, possibly someone you despise too. This apparently depicts that street vendors dislike homeless children. This is also evidenced by the vendors' throwing away of fruit instead of giving it to the hungry street children (2000: 1). Azure confirms this tendency thus, "Or if I fancy some fruit then I go to the station where the coloured fruit-sellers work. I don't like them much because they are always yelling at us to move away. Most of them throw away fruit instead of giving it to us" (2001:1). This indicates that the vendors' attitude towards street children is dismissive at best.

Although both Duiker and Mpe 's homeless characters are of all ages and races, Mpe looks at this problem from a general perspective while Duiker designates children as the most vulnerable members of society, hence the observation by Raditlhalo that, "…the vulnerable are exploited" (Raditlhalo 2005: 98). I submit that there cannot be more vulnerable people in society than children.

5.4 The influx of illegal immigrants into South Africa and its impact on homelessness

It is common knowledge that illegal and legal immigrants are flocking into South Africa at an exponential rate, in search of a better life. This influx of immigrants into South African borders has sparked xenophobic tendencies which continue to divide South African citizens and foreigners. Sentiments about the presence of foreigners in South Africa are echoed by both blacks and whites alike in Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. The White Superintendent in Van der Merwe Street says, "Hillbrow had been just fine until those Nigerians came in here with all their drug dealing" (2001: 17). Thus, foreigners, symbolised by the Nigerian majority in Hillbrow, are blamed for the "grime" and "crime" in Hillbrow (2001:17).

The presence of foreigners in South Africa poses a threat to the citizens in various ways because of the misguided belief that foreigners are notorious for taking away jobs that South Africans would otherwise occupy (2001: 18). I contend that this belief is the one that continues to fuel xenophobic attacks that we hear of in our cities. And being accused of "this and that" (2001: 18), could also mean that they are taking away a number of benefits that South Africans could otherwise enjoy, including housing. In other instances, they are even blamed for taking away South African women. These reasons, *inter alia*, spark, and continue to fuel xenophobic attacks aimed at foreigners. As a way of confirming these xenophobic attitudes and attacks, I infer from what Refilwe had to say about Heathrow International Airport that, "Our Heathrow strongly reminded [her] of our Hillbrow and the xenophobia it engendered" (2001: 102).

While foreigners, particularly Nigerians are blamed for drug trafficking in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow,* Duiker in *Thirteen Cents* depicts South African citizens as the real drug lords. Azure tells us, "… [Gerald] does drugs and everything" (2000: 58). This, not only describes what Gerald does, but borders on the portrayal of a character who is sly and clandestine and is involved in all kinds of criminal activities.

Contrary to the conventional thinking that foreign nationals should be made to feel at home within the borders of South Africa, I express a different view and postulate that if the influx of both legal and illegal immigrants is left unattended, the long-term effects will be an increase in the number of homeless people, because the more foreigners flock into South Africa, the more resources will be depleted. Therefore, the tenets of the Immigration Act (Act No. 3 of 2004) should be invoked and enforced to regulate the influx of foreigners into South Africa. If South Africa is to assist any of its sister countries, it should do so through appropriate foreign aid mechanisms.

In a quest to subvert the jealousy that Gerald displays against Azure's blue eyes, Duiker portrays Azure as saying, "But I am dark. Look at my skin. I am not far from 'makwerekwere' (2000: 35). This draws parallels with Mpe's description of Refilwe's Nigerian lover whom she meets in Oxford, who resembles Refentše except that his complexion is a shade darker (2001:109). The convergence here is that there is a general tendency to associate foreigners with deep dark complexion, which might not always be true. Readers learn that one of the African travelers "was almost ushered into the World of the Gods because he was mistaken for a *Lekwerekwere*" (2001: 102). Mpe uses the word "usher" which has the significance to convey that one is led to a place that he or she does not know, to express killing someone and sending him or her into the world of

the ancestors. This expression further ties in with Mpe's use of language which is effective in developing the theme of homelessness amongst others, and portraying characterisation. The significance of the association above is to compare the dark complexion of the skin to foreignness and to emphasize that although Azure might be a black boy with blue eyes, his skin is even a shade darker. This is a superficial way of determining nativity as well as promoting the 'othering' of people from other African states who are within the borders of South Africa.

5.5 Characterisation, Language and Style as techniques to depict homelessness

I argue here that in their depiction of homelessness, both Duiker and Mpe portray characters who are alienated, stigmatised and displaced, both physically and spiritually; pushed to the periphery of mainstream society, thus making the discourse of displacement in post-colonial theory and the tenets of transcultural theories relevant to the analysis of the two literary works.

As the sub-heading suggests, in this section I will deal with the characterisation, language and style that both authors employ in the depiction of homelessness. I focus on the modalities of the development of characters, the diction and tone of the language employed in the texts. I will base my analysis on how characters are portrayed, what the portrayal of characters and the diction they use tell the audience about their state of well-being as marginalised people.

The discourse of post-colonialism deals with displacement as one of its major aspects. Ashcroft *et al*. assert that "A major feature of post-colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement" (Ashcroft et al 2002: 8). In *Thirteen Cents,* Duiker draws the reader's attention to a

displaced child, Azure who shockingly tells the audience that, “I live alone. The streets of Sea Point are my home” (2000:1). Although homeless the survival instinct and the need to assert oneself from the effects of alienation, stigmatisation and loneliness that homelessness breeds, Azure localises himself to the streets of Sea Point, a plush residential area on the western part of the city, Cape Town. Azure goes on to reveal his innermost sense of alienation when he tells the audience that “I have never been on my own this long in Cape Town” (2000: 110). This statement corroborates my observation that as homeless people are pushed to the periphery of mainstream society, the impact of loneliness is felt and expressed in different ways. Readers will notice as the analysis progresses that this alienation can express itself in the form of attention-seeking behaviour like the one exhibited by street children of Braamfotein in Mpe’s *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*.

The homeless characters of Mpe’s *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are portrayed in a manner that echoes the tenets of transcultural theory discussed in the literature review. Transcultural theory is aimed particularly at mainstream society whose attitude towards homeless people is mean. Transcultural theory advocates for understanding of the plight of the homeless people.

Mpe’s depiction of homeless characters is rather subtle; the characters do not get to express their personal views to the reader; instead the narrator describes their personal circumstances through the third person narrator. For instance, the description of the ‘old man’ who regularly greets Refentše as he passes through Usindiso City Shelter to and from his work station at the University of the Witwatersrand goes thus:

> He looks very grimy. Out of his mouth come strong whiffs of methylated spirits. And spittle drools down his dirty beard onto his bony chest. His trousers are inclined to intimate that

> urine has gone through them quite a number of times. He leans against the wall more steadfastly, seeming satisfied with [Refentše]'s response.
>
> (2001: 12)

In this episode, the reader witnesses the deterioration of the overall quality of life among the homeless folk. The depicted character has an unkempt appearance, and is living in squalid conditions which make him prone to infection with diseases. I therefore, postulate that the stigma that is attached to homeless people may drive them to malfunction in a manner that suggests that they do not devote attention to issues of basic hygiene and their physical appearance. This assertion is corroborated by Shiner's observation that "The rough sleepers tended towards low level functional definitions of health, on the basis of which they did not define themselves as ill, and in need of health care, unless their ability to function at a basic level was compromised." (Shiner 1995: 538-539). Shiner goes on to cite examples of this client group who define themselves as 'well' thus, "…because they could cope, despite being in agony", and yet "another did not think he needed medical care for a head wound because he could 'pick himself up'" (Shiner 1995: 539).

Had the narrator gone further in his description, one could have probably learned that the old man's hair is also unkempt and his beard, through which the spittle drools, uncared for. Thus, Mpe presents to the readers, vivid visual images of a man devoid of dignity and self- worth, a nonentity in Hillbrow, Johannesburg, and a microcosmic representation of the many homeless people of South Africa.

By inference, it can be argued that the episode above highlights the lack of adequate health care for the homeless people. It is also appalling to encounter Pieter, a homeless character who Azure meets at Sunset Beach; who now and again "…coughs and spits out a blob of green from his throat" (2000: 25, 26). It can also be argued that this blob of green that he continuously spits out calls for medical attention.

In line with Shiner's observations, to Pieter the blob of green is no cause for concern. This assertion is reinforced by the instance in which the "old man" in Mpe's novel is "… being wheeled away in a wheelbarrow, in the direction of Hillbrow Hospital in Klein Street" (2001:16). It is apparent from this exposition that the old man is critically ill, yet has to rely on an adapted mode of transport despite the availability of state ambulances whose purpose is to ferry critically ill patients to the nearest healthcare centres, to get medical care, as argued elsewhere in the study. From this episode, one may conjecture that the old man might have been critically ill as the narrator tells the reader that, "He did not say *Aibo!* this time" (2001:16).

In the episodes above, the description of the conditions of the homeless people and the fate of the homeless 'old man' who is wheeled to the hospital in a wheelbarrow, speak to the tenets of transcultural theory, whose simpler version can be summed up as 'understanding and taking care of the needs of the homeless people'. This, of course, can be done by putting appropriate mechanisms in place to cater for the health needs of the homeless.

Although Mpe portrays a segment of homeless people who are harmless and voiceless, the street children in Mpe's novel are portrayed as aggressive. We are told that "[they are] drunk with glue,

brandy and wild visions of themselves as speeding Hollywood movie drivers […] racing their wire-made cars through red robots, thus increasingly becoming a menace to motorists driving through Hillbrow" (2001: 5). This behaviour can best be interpreted in the light of Makiwane, Tamasane and Schneider's contention that, "Factors that contribute to [homeless people] becoming homeless were poverty, unemployment, a lack of affordable accommodation, divorce, disability, illness and *underprivileged childhood*" (Makiwane *et al*., 2010: 39) my emphasis. Underprivileged childhood hinges on unstable, dysfunctional and broken families. Azure himself tells the audience that, "And my mother, she never cried. Her tears were her blood. She cried only when papa beat her until she bled" (2000: 24).

The homeless characters that Mpe portrays need, in line with the creeds of transcultural theory, to be understood and cared for in their own special ways taking into account their different circumstances, perhaps beginning with addressing the indifference and dismissive attitude that society displays in its interaction with the homeless people, particularly children. In *Thirteen Cents* the reader is told that even the policemen are notorious in how they deal with homeless children. Azure tells the audience that he collects food from rubbish bins in Camps Bay or Clifton. He reveals that this can only happen "…if there aren't any policemen patrolling the streets" (2001:1). These revelations by the narrator are not merely an indictment of the attitude of the police, but one can conclude that the criticism is levelled against mainstream society at large.

The extent of the indifference shown by members of mainstream society is so central in the narrative that this issue is highlighted by Duiker as soon as the novel commences. For instance, the reader is told immediately of the attitude of the coloured fruit-sellers and the policemen. Azure

reveals to the reader, "[The policemen] don't like us much" (2000: 1). Thus, Azure and his fellow homeless children are considered the insignificant others; in this way the stigmatisation and marginalisation are highlighted from the novel's outset. In addition, the fruit-sellers are not immune to displaying this dismissive attitude towards the homeless. The narrator tells the readers that "Most of [the coloured fruit-sellers] throw away fruit instead of giving it to [homeless and orphaned children]" (2000: 1). The coloured fruit-sellers and the policemen are mothers, fathers, sisters and aunts who are supposed to take care of the destitute young ones who roam the streets of Cape Town, hence the concept of 'the Mother City' and its irony which I mentioned earlier in the study. The reader learns from the novel that the dismissive attitude of the policemen and coloured fruit-sellers originates from the prejudice that street children are out on the streets because they are naughty (2000:1). This misconception breeds enmity between street children and the street vendors, and the policemen who perpetuate the stereotyping of homeless children. However, Azure argues his case, absolving himself in a moving soliloquy thus:

> It is easy for them to say that. I lost my parents three years ago. Papa was bad with money and got Mama in trouble. The day they killed them *I was at school*. I came back to our shack only to find them in a pool of blood. That was three years ago. That was *the last time I went to school* (2000: 2) (my emphasis).

The narrator, apparently twelve years old at the time of writing, poignantly reveals to the audience that his parents were killed in cold blood while he was aged nine, as he attempts to recollect and chronicle his early childhood experiences as an orphaned child on the streets of Cape Town.

Azure is depicted as a homeless yet ambitious character who is intent on transcending homelessness. Nevertheless, Duiker, through Azure proves how difficult it is to transcend street life. Following the demolition of the shacks under the bridge, probably under the M2 Highway, Azure goes back to the streets. He tells the audience that, "I go to Sea Point. It seems like a long walk" (2000: 153). The walking motif keeps surfacing and resurfacing throughout the text. Just then Azure tells the audience that, "I just keep walking" (2000: 154). Although seemingly aimless, this walking motif could be interpreted as some form of determination to transcend homelessness on the part of the protagonist Azure.

Furthermore, the reader learns about the pervasive alienation in the novel when Azure asserts, "I feel tired and *lost*" (2000: 153), and "I stand there *alone*" (2000: 153) my emphasis. Thus, the narrator expresses this alienation by continually referring to instances of being alone, and lonely. The loneliness that is described by the narrator further reinforces the discourse of displacement discussed above; whose tenets include erosion of dignity, a sense of self. In this instance, the author projects to the reader images of alienation through the character of Azure.

The emotional toll of the hardships of street life is represented in the novel by what Makiwane et al. find to be "more desperate coping strategies" among homeless people, which include "begging, *prostitution*, theft, robbery and *drug trafficking*" (Makiwane et al. 2010:41) my emphasis. Azure confesses that he is into drugs and compares himself with a fellow homeless character, Bafana who sniffs glue and smokes 'buttons' when he has money. He tells the audience that, "I don't like that stuff, it makes my head sore. But I like smoking ganja, quite a lot…" (2000: 2). In addition, his association with Allen and in particular Gerald who we are told "[does] drugs and everything"

(2000:58) and the instruction, “You must do like Gerald say” (sic) (2000: 67) implicate Azure as a drug trafficker, by association.

In both novels, the authors portray homeless characters in modalities that converge and diverge. The homeless characters in Mpe’s *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* reveal a poignant socio-economic plight in South Africa. Unlike Duiker who simply zooms in on Azure, Mpe navigates across the age bar up to old homeless people. The narrator tells Refentše that, “Further on, about fifty metres from the head of Kotze, you see some old people, about fifteen of them, sitting against a cream and brown wall” (2001:12). In addition, unlike Duiker who employs the first person stream-of-consciousness narration, Mpe makes use of visual imagery which communicates vividly to the readers the plight of homeless people, enabling the readers to decipher the state of helplessness and mood of resignation usually associated with homeless people. For fifteen old people to just sit against the wall is not only symptomatic of their alienation, but their dejection and helplessness. This gesture also symbolises their state of abject poverty and lack of purpose, as well as their lack of will to transcend the plight brought about by homelessness. The sitting, in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, can be juxtaposed with the walking motif in *Duiker’s Thirteen Cents* to highlight the stoic resignation on the part of homeless old people who appear to have simply decided to endure their suffering without offering much resistance. Azure repeats the walking motif over and over again. For instance, just after meeting Vincent, he says, “My feet are sore, they have walked too much” (2000: 46). Just after buying shoes from a shop called Second Time Around, Azure tells the lady who works at the shop, “I can walk forever in these shoes” (2000: 33). This could perhaps be a telltale sign of the effects of the length of time spent on the streets, for while Azure seems to be figuring out what to do about his situation, walking about Cape Town, the old homeless

characters seem to have reached an acceptance stage in which they are content to be homeless and believe they can do nothing about it. Thus, Mpe's novel portrays characters who are not only homeless but apathetic.

Additionally, Mpe's homeless characters are portrayed as unconcerned, helpless and somewhat nonentities of the Hillbrow neighbourhood. For instance, in Mpe's character who is said to "[look] very grimy. Out of [whose] mouth come strong whiffs of methylated spirits. And spittle drools down his dirty beard onto his bony chest" (2001:12), I observe helplessness, addiction to intoxicating substances and the deteriorating general state of health, both physically and spiritually. The character seems to be living in another world. As I pointed out elsewhere in the study, under no circumstances does Mpe's third person narrator ever mention a name of a homeless character. Mpe's homeless characters are simply "a young man", "street kids" and "some old people" (2001: 12). To a great extent, Mpe's description of the homeless characters ties in with Ashcroft et al.'s assertion that for these characters "[a] valid sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation..." (2002: 9).

I therefore argue that characters portrayed by both authors highlight the need for special care which may be effected through the application of transcultural theory, whose concern is understanding the needs of the homeless people and their circumstances, as already cited in this chapter.

Furthermore, *Thirteen Cents* portrays power 'structures' among the homeless themselves, where the strong prey on the weak. Gerald, portrayed as a notorious gangster, strikes terror into the hearts of the police. The Cape Town mainstream society and its structures seem to be indifferent to the

plight of the homeless, which is rather ironic given the choice of the setting, especially considering that Cape Town is popularly known as "the Mother City". In addition, the dismissive attitude of the fruit-sellers towards street children speaks volumes about the care for homeless people, or to be more precise, the lack of care for such people. The indifference shown by the coloured fruit-sellers is particularly shocking given that the fruit-sellers, being at the lower end of the social spectrum, are expected to empathise with the plight of the homeless children, themselves occupying the same end of the social spectrum. The fruit-sellers operate on the streets on account of the need to fend for their children and so one would think that children issues, and their plight, would be uppermost in their list of priorities. Yet their reaction to the plight of the homeless children is devoid of any sense of solidarity, as evidenced in Azure's description of their gesture that they would rather "…throw away fruit…" (2000: 1) instead of giving it to the homeless and needy children.

Both novels under discussion in this study seem to deal with themes that subscribe to the tenets of transcultural theory and the discourse of displacement as propounded by Ashcroft et al (2002), that "The dialectic of place and displacement is always a feature of post-colonial societies whether these have been created by a process of settlement, intervention, or a mixture of the two" (2009; 9). However, Duiker's *Thirteen Cents* tends to trace at a thematic yet micro level, other causes and effects of displacement, thus expanding the discourse of displacement to embrace what Raditlhalo has dubbed "a clear *subject of avoidance* for writers: the astonishing rate at which children are now victims of a (violent) society intent on turning a blind eye to the plight of its weakest members" (Raditlhalo 2005: 97-98) (my emphasis). For Azure, the case is made clear that his parents were killed in cold-blood, leaving him to learn to fend for himself at a very young age. Azure responds to the yelling of the coloured fruit sellers to the effect that children should go to

school thus: “The day they killed them I was away at school. I came back to our shack only to find them in a pool of blood” (2000: 2). On the other hand, Azure describes Bafana’s situation thus: “He’s a *lytie*, Bafana, only nine years old and he’s on the streets. And he is naughty. He has a *home* to go back to in Langa but *he chooses to roam the streets*” (2000: 2) (my emphasis). Looking at the two cases, that of Azure and Bafana, brings a new dimension into the intricacies and dynamics of how children and any other person become homeless and displaced. Bafana and Azure stand out as epitomes of the transcultural theory and discourse of displacement respectively. One is on the streets because of psychopathological influences, while the other is on the streets because he is a “victim of a violent society” and seemingly has no choice but to roam the streets.

Duiker’s novel further expands the effects of displacement by bringing into the narrative the character Oscar, the white vagabond who meets Azure in a cave on the mountain. The one mountain a reader is likely to think about is none other than the iconic Table Mountain. These kinds of visits or wanderings to the mountain carry with them religious significances of pilgrimage which for Azure may be a spiritual way of dealing with his plight. The appearance of Oscar at the entrance to the cave and the description Azure gives of him ties in with the tenets of transcultural theory and the discourse of displacement simultaneously in that the aimless wandering by Oscar in the mountain are a symptom of displacement, while his unkempt appearance relates to the tenets of transcultural theory as this attests to the fact that Oscar is not taken care of, by himself and others. Azure tells the audience that, “The first thing I see in the light is his long brown hair” (2000: 112). He describes his attire thus, “He is wearing sandals, shorts and a vest. He also carries a bag” (2000: 112). In this instance, Duiker problematises the theme of homelessness by bringing into focus a white homeless character who moves along with his paraphernalia and victuals in a bag. In the light of this exposition, it can be argued that homelessness is not a homogenous

phenomenon, but heterogeneous as it cuts across different races. This characterisation mirrors the reality of the many displaced people in South Africa and any other place. This brings into the analysis a dimension that tends to stand out from transcultural theory, which seems to be pathologically oriented. It is Azure, in this instance who the author portrays as an authentic homeless child, who is on the streets because he is a victim of circumstances. Azure's description of the circumstances around his parents' brutal killing is a plea to the audience, and arguably society, to hear out the cry of an orphaned homeless child who is faced with a bleak and uncertain future.

The indifference evidenced in the attitudes of mainstream society in the preceding paragraphs is not only an indictment on a society that is virtually given up on its own children, but it also shines the spotlight on the impact of homelessness on the victims, which in turn sheds light on how displacement affects the displaced parties on various levels.

Readers learn from the conversation between Vincent and Azure, alluded to in the preceding paragraphs, that both characters are from Mshenguville. It is Vincent who discloses this to the audience, that "[they] come from Mshenguville together" (2000: 35). This comes after Azure has told the audience that, "I know a guy called Vincent… He is also from Joburg" (2000: 33). Despite 'Joburg' being their place or origin, both Azure and Vincent are now on the streets of Cape Town. One may argue that the journey that both characters have undertaken from Johannesburg to Cape Town is quite considerable to warrant calling them Internally Displaced Persons, described elsewhere in the study.

Both Azure and Vincent have been displaced from Mshenguville to Cape Town. The readers know that Azure has been displaced as a result of generalised crime, but are not certain about the circumstances surrounding Vincent's displacement. However, for both characters the displacement has an impact on their physical and emotional well-being. This is compounded by the fact that this segment of society has been ignored as the displaced lot, to an extent that no one is concerned about catering for them, including Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), beyond the mere provision of shelter for the homeless. This is appropriately captured in de Benítes' observation that, "Traditional stereotypes of street children as 'victims' or 'delinquents' reflect public attitudes towards them, rather than any realistic representation of characteristics of children or their situations" (de Benítes 2011: 11). These stereotypes further compound the neglect of homeless children. In addition, it must be noted that seemingly, these shelters are considered inadequate, unattractive, stifling and confining by their intended beneficiaries, so much so that the latter would rather roam the streets.

From Mpe's depiction of the shelters for the homeless in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow,* the characters find, in simpler terms, these shelters unexciting and uninspiring, having nothing to offer in terms of lively activities, hence the stifling environment alluded to earlier. The narrator intimates that, "Further on, about fifty metres from the head of Kotze, you see some old people, about fifteen of them, sitting against a cream and brown wall" (2001:12). Although on the surface the shelters might look like a solution, or rather a partial solution for the homeless, it could also be interpreted as displacement or dislocation of characters. As I argued earlier in the chapter, the sitting is not merely about resting but symbolic of dejection and desperation as the characters are imprisoned

by their circumstances. The disposition of these characters in the shelters for the homeless tends to suggest that these old folks are so demotivated that they have resigned from active living.

In Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*, the two characters are affected by displacement at both physical and emotional levels as further to their displacement, the audience learn that Azure and Vincent have each been given a new name by Gerald, which is some form of enslaving and dispossession of character. The audience do not know Vincent's original name, but Azure who introduces himself as "Ah-zoo-ray" (2000: 1) in the beginning of the novel is given the name "Blue". The audience will remember that talking about his real name Azure claims, "My mother gave me that name. It's the only thing I have left from her" (2000: 1). The renaming of Azure to Blue, however, has the undesirable effects of further underlining his homelessness while also psychologically denying him his true identity and a sense of belonging. The phenomenon is reminiscent of the concept of lack of identity alluded to by Olufemi when he asserts that "… they [homeless people] lack basic needs (with no access to safe water and sanitation) and lack personal needs (self-determination, creativity, dignity, expression and voice)" (Olufemi 2000: 224). Thus Azure and Vincent are depicted as powerless before Gerald the gangster. This exposition carries with it the epitome of neo-colonial tendencies at a micro level, with Gerald depicted as a control freak. This brings to the fore unregulated power structures among the homeless, where the gangland thugs wield enormous amount of power at will. The beating, sawing at the cast and renaming, all of which have been cited in the study inevitably take an enormous emotional toll on the wellbeing of Azure, both consciously and subconsciously.

When one observes Azure for instance, one sees a child who has gone through much emotional and physical pain. His is a journey into the dark places and "underbelly" of Cape Town. The effects of poverty, hunger and pain have a tremendous impact on his life. His clothes, "…dry in the sun from all the walking [he does]" (2000: 12). He has one pair of clothing. He washes, dresses and walks in the sun. In this instance, Duiker is pointing out poverty and its effects on the character Azure. To compound his situation, Cape Town, with its unpredictable climate can subject a character such as Azure to unfriendly weather conditions which can even trigger certain ailments.

Despite the hardships highlighted in the preceding paragraph, Azure reveals to the audience that "[he knows] where to find food that hasn't seen too many ants and flies in Camps Bay or Clifton" (2000:1). This may be the author's way of commenting on the wastage that happens in rich suburban areas where good food is thrown away, while there are people who are starving. It is in essence an indictment on mainstream society's uncaring attitude. This episode also alludes to the widening gap between the rich and the poor in the South African social formation. However, it should be emphasised that Azure only does this while there are no policemen patrolling the streets. While witnessing the death of his parents who he finds lying in a pool of blood could be the zenith of his emotional pain, Azure undergoes intolerable torture which leaves him an emotional wreck. Some of the things he has seen and experienced are not fit for the child his age to witness. For instance, Azure reveals to the audience that, "[He's] seen a woman being raped by a policeman at night near the station" (2000: 142). Further to that, the novel is replete with episodes of Azure's emotional as well as physical torture, most of which are suffered at the hands of Gerald and his lackeys, discussed elsewhere in the study.

The depiction of unregulated power structures among the homeless, which McLukie refers to as "human power structures that govern life" (1993: 429), culminates in the renaming and dispossession that the audience witnesses in the relationship between Gerald, Azure and 'Vincent'; the latter is rather named 'Vincent' because his real identity remains obscure to the readers. Azure tells 'Vincent', "And he gave me a name too. Blue" (2000: 64). 'Vincent' reciprocated, "He gave me Vincent" (2000:64). The status Gerald assumes is reminiscent of the neo-colonial tendencies of dispossession and 'othering'. Through this act of subjugation, the identity and dignity of the victims get relatively eroded. This act of renaming is not dissimilar to that depicted in the poem "My Name" by Magoleng wa selepe in which the persona suffers the effects, and indignity, of the colonial tendency of renaming and othering for the convenience of the master. The persona bemoans this cultural and personal denigration in the last four lines of the free verse:

> He gives me a name
> Convenient enough to answer his whim…..
> I end up being
> Maria
> ('*My Name',* Magoleng wa Selepe,)

This tendency brings about a sense of eroding personal self-worth and induces an inferiority complex on the victim.

In the main, Duiker depicts homeless characters who are vulnerable but survivors in one way or another, while on the other hand Mpe's homeless characters are vulnerable and helpless. In Duiker's *Thirteen Cents,* Azure is depicted as a survivor, hence the comment by one of the two white boys who come across Azure with Bafana that, "You guys are like cats, urban cats. Survivors, man" (2000: 22). Azure takes to the streets of Cape Town and engages in prostitution, rummaging dust bins for food as the reader is told, parking and washing cars as well as establishing associations with gangsters in order to survive street life. The survival strategy takes various forms

as Azure asserts that, “All I want is a decent pair of shoes, to make up with Gerald and a Malawi stop to make me think I’m flying” (2000: 21). Thus, Azure needs to tone down on the essentials and make do with the bare necessities in order to avoid raising Geralds’ envy and ire towards him. To this end, he settles for a modest pair of shoes that will not threaten the megalomaniac Gerald, and further resorts to being high on drugs, which may be arguably intended to numb the pain he is constantly exposed to. Furthermore, Vincent’s parting words to Azure, when he is leaving for Port Elizabeth, go thus, “No one’s going to kill you. You’re with Gerald remember?” (2000: 97). In addition, Vincent gives Azure another tip for surviving on the streets, he advises him, “Just remember, if you’re ever in trouble, always go towards the light. Okay? (2000: 97). Azure also demonstrates, in his own words, that street life is for survivors. Although he claims out of shame and guilt that “…during the day I help park cars in Cape Town” (2000:3), he reveals much earlier in the text that “[he] [walks] further along the beach till he [comes] to the *moffie* part of the beach. [He sits] on a bench and [waits] for a trick” (2000:8).

As he begins to give an account of his life as a street child, episodes unfold in which Azure takes the audience through an elaborate explanation of what happens when he engages in prostitution and the meager income he gets out of it. At the end of it, his client says, “You did good” (2000:10) and hands him a twenty-rand note which Azure acknowledges as peanuts. The highest amount ever paid to him is a hundred rand note as the readers are given to know. “He gives me a hundred bucks and lets me out of his flat” (2000: 95). The hundred rand is paid to Azure by Mr. Lebowitz, the investment banker cited elsewhere in the study. Throughout the novel, Azure takes the audience through a chronicle of encounters with male clients who pay him for sex. These and other eerily similar episodes affirm Nkomo and Olufemi’s conclusion already cited in the study that one of the

coping strategies for street children is prostitution. It is however unprecedented to find that even small boys engage in prostitution. It calls for the audience's attention to a reality that seemed far-fetched, but can no longer be avoided.

Apart from his suffering on account of his operations as a sex worker, Azure endures beatings from the seemingly benevolent Joyce after she has milked him an undisclosed amount of money which she had been usurping from him under the pretext of "banking" it for him. Azure proclaims, "She slaps me across the face again. *Hard*. My nose starts bleeding" (2000: 75) my emphasis. Referring to the relationship between his parents, Azure reveals to the audience that, "[His mother] cried only when Papa beat her until she bled" (2000: 24). Coupled with the bleeding from his mother's beatings, the use of the adjective "Hard" may symbolically indicate Azure's gut-wrenching hardship explicitly detailed throughout the novel; a plight to which the author draws the reader's attention as a way of appealing to society to stop the 'bleeding'.

Gerald orders one of his lackeys, Sealy, to beat Azure for wearing the orange colour, which, ridiculously, he had been strictly warned not to wear. Evidence that Sealy is Gerald's lackey is encapsulated in the statement which he makes as he metes out brutal punishment to Azure, "Sorry, I have to do this…he is watching" (2000:38). The reader is told that in this incident, Azure sustains serious injuries to an extent that he has to be taken to a hospital. His ribs are broken (2000:38), two of his teeth fall out (39) and his leg is fractured (2000:40). The events in this episode attest to the objectionable presence of unregulated power structures among the homeless where one individual or certain individuals assume positions of power and wield that power to satisfy their whims, all of which compound the homeless' plight.

Compared to Duiker's *Thirteen Cents*, Mpe's homeless characters in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* are depicted as helpless and vulnerable; the difference however is that there are no indications of someone exerting or exercising unrestrained control over them to a point where we see them suffering intolerably at their hands. One homeless character is singled out to interact with Refentše and ultimately referred to as 'his friend' by the narrator. It is the character who always shouts "*Aibo!*" when Refentše passes through the homeless shelter to the University of the Witwatersrand where the latter works as a lecturer. The narrator who addresses the deceased Refentše recounts, "On your way home to Vickers, at the cream and brown wall of [Usindiso City Shelter], you again respond to the old man's *Aibo!* Again he thanks you for your generosity" (2001: 14-15). This recurring gesture of Refentse's giving the old man money implies that the relationship has grown to an extent where Refentše is the old man's benefactor. The reader is given to know that, "[Refentse is] persuaded to search [his] trouser pockets for a cent or two…" (2001: 15).

The reader gets to learn about the homeless' helplessness and vulnerability however, when the narrator reminds Refentše that, "It was during your second month as a lecturer that you saw your friend from the shelter being wheeled away in a wheelbarrow, in the direction of Hillbrow Hospital in Klein Street" (2001:16). This episode is a comment on the quality of life of the homeless people. The least that could be done could have been to get the patient on an ambulance to the hospital as argued earlier. Mpe's depiction of this episode suggests his quest to highlight the plight of the homeless people, particularly how these people are marginalised and treated with utter disdain. It can be argued that not only are Mpe's characters helpless, but dehumanised. That a human being should be wheeled in a wheelbarrow to the hospital is a sharp indictment of the government given

that the state does have emergency medical services vehicles that are ready to ferry critically ill people to health centres. To a great extent, the neglect meted out to this old man mocks our Ministry of Health in particular.

Both authors depict homeless characters as vulnerable people, yet they differ in that Mpe's homeless characters tend to stoically endure their suffering, while Duiker's show some sense of urgency and a desire to transcend their plight. However, the characters' coping strategies are relatively similar. Characters such as a young man who sniffs glue and Azure who likes dagga, depend on intoxicating substances to numb their senses. Research has shown, as observed by Nkomo and Olufemi that the coping strategies include taking drugs and prostitution; this is confirmed in both novels. In Duiker's depiction of homelessness, the audience notices shacks that these homeless characters build as makeshift homes and Spaza shops that homeless people establish to survive. On the day of his beating, Azure tells the readers, "Ma Zakes' is open" (2000: 38). This may be a reference to the blasting noise coming out of Ma Zakes Spaza shop, as it may be conjectured that the Spaza may be selling beer, among other things. On the other hand, Mpe's characters are portrayed as simply "smoking dagga and dealing glue some severe blows" (2001: 12) which can be viewed as one of their desperate coping strategies.

When Azure tells the reader that, "The streets of Sea Point are my home" (2000: 1), it may be Duiker's way of highlighting acutely the plight of homelessness and its impact on the young child Azure. Duiker chooses language that implies meaning although he juggles between implicit and explicit meaning making. At the same time, Duiker employs pun by using the name "Sea Point"

and the phrase “See Point” (2000: 65) which, while poetic, subverts Standard English language, yet conveys the intended meaning which is, “consider the point”.

In Duiker’s *Thirteen Cents*, there are Biblical allegories that the author alludes to through the narrator. One that stands out is reference to streets as “roads to hell, made of tar” (2000:66). This may be the author’s way of suggesting the bleak future that street children face. This is further aggravated by the heat that the tar reflects, which may be a strong reference to the effects of the plight of homelessness which manifest in the form of pain, confusion and alienation. The dark colour of the tar may well symbolise hell as it is common understanding that hell is a dark and very hot place, hence the heat reflected by the tarred road.

The appreciation of beauty, as evidenced in the language with which, simultaneously Duiker abhors evil, may be a way to make an ironic representation of the conditions under which the homeless live. This may also be the author’s way of contrasting setting with characters, setting in the sense that, as already argued elsewhere that Cape Town is commonly known as the Mother City, homelessness in such a city is an incredible sight.

A peculiarity that stands out in Duiker’s work is the use of Afrikaans without an index or footnotes to explain what is said. For instance, the fruit sellers yell, “*Julle fokken mannetjies moet skool toe gaan*?” (2000:2). This kind of diction further deepens the alienation felt by the homeless street children, more so because there seems to be no place of welcome for them. It can further be argued that the use of Afrikaans in the text without an index or some form of translation is symbolic of the residual effects of the Apartheid past, where the language was imposed as a medium of

instruction. This is also a symbol of dominance by those in power; the neo-colonial tendencies of the present times. The audience will also note that the use of Afrikaans in *Thirteen Cents* is proportionally considerable, taking into account that the novel is an English text.

The diction that Duiker employs in *Thirteen Cents* is replete with vulgar language. One could say it is befittingly so since it depicts the vulgarities of underbelly Cape Town. There seems to be no restraint in the manner in which characters use language, no euphemism where one may think it is required. For Azure to explicitly say, "I shit in a toilet bowl they left in the room for me" (2000: 46), sounds quite crude to the audience and confirms (Grace Kim 2009)'s observation that *Thirteen Cents* "…is one of those books that will make you feel dirty if you say that you enjoyed it". Kim makes another crucial observation about *Thirteen Cents* that "…just like a broken mirror provides warped, but fascinatingly alternative perspective of something you thought you knew and were familiar with [it] does the same with Cape Town's homeless, insignificant, and forsaken" (Kim 2009). The most shocking of the statements that Azure makes is, "I have been fucked by enough bastards and they've come on me with enough come to fill the swimming pool in Sea Point" (2000: 142).

Another aspect of language use in Duiker's novel is that it reveals the intolerance of street vendors towards street children and tends to fit in with mainstream society's dismissive attitude towards the homeless, described earlier in this chapter. The yelling attests to the nuisance that street children have become to vendors. The manner in which the vendors address the street children reveals the dismissive if not indifferent relationship between them, confirming my observation that lines are drawn between the homeless and mainstream society, hence the resulting alienation.

Through the third person narrator, Mpe in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* enumerates categories of homeless, nameless people as those who live in a "dog kennel", those who live in "shelters" and "dirty" children of the streets of Braamfotein, who revel in sniffing glue.

While the old homeless people of Mpe's *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* sit against the cream and brown wall of Usindiso City Shelter, Duiker's Azure walks. Azure tells the reader, "I walk… to the *moffie* part of the beach" (2000: 8), "…they dry in the sun from all the walking I do" (2000: 12) and "I walk back to Sea Point" (2000: 20). This walking motif that Duiker portrays is seemingly aimless wandering in the streets of Cape Town, most particularly to "…walk back…" (2000: 20). This constant wandering on the part of Azure signifies restlessness which is the epitome of displacement; the hallmark of homeless people in South Africa and any other place.

The street children of Braamfotein and Azure are a barometer of family stability. They tell the reader that the families from which they were raised were not stable enough to produce responsible citizens.

Except for the old man who shouts "*Aibo*!" (2001: 12) as a way of greeting Refentse and a young man who creeps out of a dog kennel singing melodiously, Mpe's homeless characters are voiceless, confirming Olufemi's assertion that they lack " [a] voice" (2000: 224). Of Mpe's characters we only hear the narrator telling the audience what they are doing, never what they are thinking or contemplating. Thus, the narrator takes snapshot descriptions of the characters who are either seated or merely watching people as they pass by. In other words, they are watching hours, days,

weeks, months and years as they pass by. We see in them absolutely no attempt to transcend their plight.

On the other hand, Duiker's protagonist Azure, through the stream-of-consciousness narration, tells the audience about his experiences in Cape Town as an orphaned, homeless child. The reader sees Cape Town, "the other Cape Town" through the eyes of Azure. The reader also comes to know of all the characters through Azure. He tells the reader about gangsters, pimps, the crooks and the vagabonds of Cape Town. The narrator also describes the beauty of Cape Town, alluded to earlier in this chapter, the sea and the trees; the gymnosperms that line the foot of the Table Mountain that he calls "the Lebowitz" trees after Mr Lebowitz the investment banker who buys sex from Azure.

5.6 Conclusion

Language usage and style in Duiker and Mpe portray setting and characterisation like a mirror. Although both stories are narrated in the first and third person respectively, the authors' views are shadowed in the narrators and the characters.

Chapter Six

Concluding remarks and recommendations

6.1 Concluding remarks

The presence of homelessness and poverty are a monumental legacy left by many years of dispossession and Apartheid in South Africa. Despite the many efforts and promises made by the government to end this plight, the system continues to breed a homeless subculture which is epitomised, as already argued, by shanty towns and slums that are spatially located at the peripheries of conventional townships and plush suburbs, which further highlight the alienation of this cultural group. This impact is further compounded by evidence of homeless entities in and around the major cities of South Africa who move about like scavengers, rummaging rubbish bins in search of food left-overs.

Apart from the dangers that homeless people in general, and street children in particular are exposed to, they are also a threat to social security because of their vulnerable state. They are prone to criminal activities which may yield fast cash that may be used to feed their addictive habits.

The study reveals that the chief cause of homelessness is poverty. Crane *et al.* (2005) cite Lee, Price-Spratlen, and Kenan, 2003; Main, 1998; Rossi, 1989; Sullivan, Burnam, and Koegel, 2000 as agreeing that "…homelessness is a result of interacting structural and individual factors …occurring when people experience negative or major life events and lack the ability to cope or the resources to compete in the housing and employment markets" (in Crane et. al. 2005: S153 – S154). In light of this, one cannot imagine other resources except for money and requisite

qualifications that can get one a job in the labour market, because unemployed persons do not have the strength to acquire money, buy property and build a house, and so their prospects will continue to look bleak.

Nkomo and Olufemi add that, "Education offers poor homeless children hope and enhances their life chances" (2001: 354). They go on to assert that, "[W]ithout education there is poverty, gloom, and destitution" (2001:354). Thus, homelessness ensues from poverty, and this lends credence to my hypothesis that homelessness is caused by poverty.

It is significant to note that almost all homeless children have little or no education at all. Azure, a thirteen-year-old boy who dropped out of school three years ago, when he was ten, was probably in Grade Five then. Furthermore, inferring from the family condition which he has already revealed to the reader, and on the evidence of his slow progression, it is probable that having been deprived the opportunity to develop himself, he will never transcend homelessness.

It is clear that without education, the chances for homeless children, like Azure, of ever developing into responsible adults are virtually non-existent, let alone their potential to transcend homelessness.

Both Duiker and Mpe depict homelessness in South Africa against the background of its adverse socio-economic conditions which are characterised by unemployment, poverty and landlessness, which have resulted in the creation of a subculture of homeless people, and that cannot be divorced from the South African social formation. Makiwane et al. make similar conclusions in their study

thus: “The social challenge of homelessness cannot be isolated from the broader context of massive unemployment and widespread poverty that characterises our society today” (Makiwane et al. 2010: 48). Therefore, poverty is the direct cause of homelessness. All homeless characters ranging from those who live in shacks to those who might be referred to as the absolute homeless; those without shelter at all, live in abject poverty and unemployment.

The two authors’ depiction of the plight of homelessness is a challenge to the government to put mechanisms in place that could eradicate poverty. One can therefore state with a degree of certainty that the two authors condemn the existence of homeless shelters. This stance would appear to be aligned to the Solidarity Helping Hand report for Mr. Jacob Zuma on white poverty in South Africa which acknowledges that social problems such as child molesting, alcohol and drug abuse are common in shelters, while unwanted pregnancies are also common (Solidarity Helping Hand 2008). This kind of scenario tends to reinforce my argument that homeless shelters are not a solution to the plight of the homeless.

To have one of the elderly wheeled from the shelter to the hospital in a wheelbarrow may be the author’s way of highlighting some of the anomalies of the government of the day (2001: 16). It may also be a way of depicting homeless shelters as dumping sites for homeless people as already argued.

Another aspect that both authors highlight is the attitude of the police towards the homeless. Drawing from Mpe’s lack of interest in Hillbrow Police Station, and Duiker’s portrayal of the attitude of the police towards street children, I observe that the police force is lagging behind in

terms of fulfilling its fiduciary duties to society, which leaves much to be desired of such an important organ of state. In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Cousin's attitude towards homeless people is quite dismissive. Cousin is a policeman. In *Thirteen Cents*, Azure says that "The police do not like [them] much" (2000: 1). The relationship between the police and street people is also elucidated in Jonathan Morgan's *Finding Mr Madini* (1999). In some of his tips to survive on the streets, Sipho Madini writes, "We might as well also be careful of the cops. Some of them suffer from Rodney King Syndrome" (Morgan, 1999:3). The police should be educated in as far as treatment of homeless people is concerned.

The incident of an Indian doctor who believes the fabricated story that Azure was found stealing in a shop, whereas he has actually been beaten severely by Sealy, elevates the discourse on the neglect of the tenets of pertinent documents that spell out the rights of children including "The South African Children's Charter" (1992). Gerald tells the doctor, "They caught him stealing at a shop" (2000:42). In response, the doctor says, "With the trouble he's been causing I have a good mind not to use local anaesthetic" (2000: 43). This incident happens after the severe beating which was cited elsewhere in the study.

The present study finds the depiction of homelessness in both literary works gloomy for the South African society. The two authors depict a bleak picture with regards to homeless people's hope of ever transcending homelessness. Both novels draw towards the end with no sign of an end to the plight of the homeless anywhere in sight. Having stayed in the shacks for a little while, Azure is always seen returning to the streets, attesting to my argument that this phenomenon tends to be a vicious cycle as also evident in the main characters' constant wandering in *Boesman and Lena*

(1973) cited elsewhere in this study. In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Mpe emphasises the severity and impact of homelessness in a scene which features one of the characters "being wheeled away in a wheelbarrow, in the direction of Hillbrow Hospital in Klein Street" (2001: 16). Perhaps it would be proper to note and reiterate Mpe's use of understatements in this episode, as he only suggests that the old man is critically ill, without explicitly saying so. The culmination in death on the streets symbolises lost hope for the homeless lot. Dying in the shelter also serves as a sounding board to highlight the enormity of this plight. It sends a message that you live and die there, with no hope of ever transcending homelessness and integration into mainstream society.

6.2 Recommendations

The poignant issues raised in the two novels discussed in the study reveal that there is a need to grapple with this pertinent question, "How do we eradicate poverty among the people of South Africa and even beyond?" In light of the foregoing study, it is my assertion that the government has been distinctly vocal regarding the plight of homeless people and has pledged allegiance to the homeless people, yet the impression for many citizens, which I share, is that not enough has been done to address the situation. It is therefore, my considered view that it is time that the government acts on its promises that are contained in a number of documents, some of which have been cited in this study. It would be appreciated if the government were to move beyond the mere lip service tendencies and do something tangible in addressing this plight.

Almost all State of the Nation addresses entail the discourse of poverty, unemployment and homelessness in South Africa. It has got to a stage where the addresses now resemble a song which

every President must sing in Parliament; however, progress made on the issue is rather inconsequential. The National Programme of Action for Children in South Africa states in its introduction that "…it committed South Africa to implement the principle of a 'first call for children' whereby the needs of children are considered paramount throughout the government's programmes, services and development strategies" (National Programme of Action Steering Committee, 1996). If the needs of homeless children are indeed paramount, it should be a chilling site to be greeted by the glaring presence of half-naked, glue sniffing and dirty children on the streets of South Africa.

It is common knowledge that each State of the Nation Address tackles the issues of poverty alleviation and job creation, year after year, however, delivery on the issues is negligible. In light of this, I strongly recommend that the government revisits its archives with the view to track some of the important promises it made to its citizens in order to embark on meaningful efforts to fulfill them. This can be done through the Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Unit, created in the Office of the President, making homelessness a priority issue in Parliament.

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