Violent Crimes in Selected Post-2000 South African Novels

by

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of Master of Arts Degree in English

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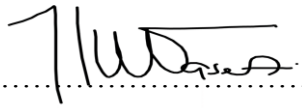
Declaration

I, Ditshego Masete, student number (14014300), declare that this research is my original work and has not been submitted for any degree at any other university or institution. It does not contain other persons' writing unless specifically acknowledged and referenced accordingly.

Signed (Student)……  Date: 25/01/2020

Abstract

Through an examination of Angela Makholwa's *Red Ink* (2007) and *Black Widow Society* (2013), Deon Meyer's *Blood Safari* (2009) and *Trackers* (2012), Margie Orford's *Daddy's Girl (2009),* and *Water Music* (2013), Sifizo Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2011) and finally Lazola Pambo's *The Path Which Shapes Us* (2012)-eight post-2000 South African crime novels, this study is positioned within major discourses about crime and violence in the country today. The study examined South African crime fiction by writers of different genders, race and social classes and from different literary generations. This enabled me to grapple with multiple current perceptions of violent crimes in South African from different backgrounds. Clearly, the background of these writers influences the way they depict violence, criminality, and the various fictitious ways they portray these uncomfortable realities. Through a post-colonial, feminism, Neo-Marxist lens and theories of space, the study explored the many ways South African crime writers narrate contemporary realities of violent crimes in the country today. The post-apartheid crime novel is a significant tool in helping the country understands its traumatic and violent criminal past which has spilled over into the post-apartheid period in many ways. The novels examined in this study showed that the crime novel can be appreciated both for its aesthetic quality and allegorical value. Furthermore, the post-2000 South African crime novel provides readers with a fictitious space where they see their deep-seated desires for justice fulfilled, law and order restored and maintained through the disruptive power and flexibility of the crime novel in creating a parallel universe of im/possibilities. The dissertation also notes that the burgeoning of crime fiction in South Africa today is an attempt by many writers to respond to the alarming levels of gender-based violence,

eco-crimes, spatial crimes and how the political instabilities of the post-apartheid continues to drive the masses into various forms of criminality and violence.

Key Words: crime, fiction, post-2000, post-apartheid, South Africa, violence

Dedication

For my family.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the following individuals who supported me during my study:

- Dr Isaac Ndlovu, my supervisor, who I admire, respect, revere and try to imitate. Thank you, firstly, for identifying in me the potential to venture into this project of mastering literature and harnessing my academic competence. Secondly, for going beyond the call of duty to teach me with kindness, generosity and respect. I have grown both academically and personally since the beginning of this project.
- Dr LMP Mulaudzi, the co-supervisor of this dissertation, for all the academic input you added into this project, your patience and all the means you invested in my academic life, especially for all the encouraging words and advice you shared with me.
- Dr T.J. Chari and Dr B. Dube, my mentors, who believed in me even when I did not believe in myself sometimes, I thank you.

- The entire English Department at UNIVEN and its students (Sheldon etc.) whom I have engaged with in one form or another concerning the progress of my study, I truly appreciate your support.

- Mercy Mujakachi, my friend of many years, thank you for the lunch. Thank you again for the laughter, the teary moments, the long walks to the library and its memories.

- Thank you to Mr(s) Ronewa Mukhwantheli (Vandros), Adolph Selane (Aarnesto), Boitumelo Kgabo (Seotledi), Ms(s) Pretty Mathaba (Khaleesi) and Precious Neva (Michelle) for your support.

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List of acronyms

PIA - Presidential Intelligence Agency

SAPS - South African Police Service

PI - Private Investigator

FTLRP - Fast-Track Land Reform Programme

GBV - Gender-Based Violence

ICU - Intensive Care Unit

CSVR - Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

BEE - Black Economic Empowerment

1. CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction and Theoretical framework

1.1.1 Defining crime fiction

Violent crimes remain major challenges for the government and individuals in post-apartheid South Africa and affect both urban and rural spaces. It is, therefore, no surprise that media reports are characterised by representations of chilling violent crimes. Although colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid violent crimes cannot be conflated, the fact that more and more South Africans continue to write about violence and crime even in the democratic era suggests that violent crimes remain a challenge in South Africa. In response to this phenomenon, the post-apartheid South African literary domain has witnessed an incredible growth in the production and readership of crime fiction with both black and white writers using this platform to participate in the literary scene. Although this platform has been previously dominated by white male writers, the post-2000 South African crime fiction domain has seen a remarkable growth in the production of crime fiction by black writers.

The popularity of this genre has led to growth in critical scholarly voices in this field. For example, Martin (2013) asks questions about the relationship between the burgeoning of crime fiction and the realities about crime in South Africa. This question is central to this study. Partly, my study seeks to understand the ubiquity of crime fiction in a country already plagued by some of the highest crime statistics in a post-colonial and post-apartheid context. Martin (2013: 5) asks if "the crime novel [is] merely slight trash? [or] is such fiction, on the contrary, increasingly more relevant to wider readerships than novels marketed as 'literary'?" Clearly, Martin asks the question "why

genre fiction" in a country with crime statistics which are out of proportion and seemingly deserve no fictionalisation. Comaroff and Comaroff (2006: 273) argue that, what they call "public obsession of criminality and disorder" which is observed in the excessive production and consumption of crime fiction, especially in South Africa and other post-colonies, serves to mediate the threat of crime and violence for the readers. The Comarrof's insights about criminality and violence shed light on Martin's (2013) critical question about the genre of crime fiction in South Africa today. These scholars maintain that "fictional detectives apprehend felons on the loose, iterating an order that remains distinctly fragile by day" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006: 20). This is partly true of the novels examined for this study. Notably, some of the novels in this study do not fit Comaroff and Comaroff's model of the reasons for the prevalence of crime fiction.

Evidently, South African critiques and writers view crime fiction as possessing the potential and flexibility to simultaneously talk about serious issues while entertaining the reader. For example, Martin (2013: 5) posits that "crime fiction has an important imaginative purchase both on South Africans' leisure reading habits and on their understanding of socio-political circumstances". Similarly, Orford (2013), a prominent writer of crime novels argue that crime fiction goes beyond listing facts and gets to an emotional truth about violence and crime because of its flexibility. As it shall be seen in the next chapters, the novels examined in this study show this proclivity. They are aesthetically pleasing while at the same time serving as commentaries for contemporary South African realities.

Worthington (2011: 1) defines crime fiction as a "narrative centred around the occurrence of a crime and its investigation". According to this view, the increase in the production, distribution and consumption of fiction about violent crimes is an attempt by writers and readers to make sense

of their painful reality. Orford (2013: 226), defines crime fiction as a medium that "offers a way of looking at violence, at violation, at death, and surviving, [and] some kind of solace, but it is one that is ethically fraught in its representation of violence". Again, the idea of a narrative of making sense of something is suggested in the phrase "way of looking". This suggests that different crime fiction writers take advantage of their positionality and locatedness to try and make sense of violent crimes. But as Orford further points out, it is an exercise that raises disturbing ethical questions, especially in a country that is already saturated with media images of real violent crimes.

Malmgren (2001: 115) states that crime fiction is a "story of the crime" and of "the investigation". The word "story" in Malmgren's definition gestures towards the idea of a narrative or an attempt to show a contextualised cause and effect of violent crimes. Over and above the shocking effects of violent crimes, media reports often lack context and nuances when it comes to the reporting of these crimes. It seems that this is the gap that crime fiction seeks to fill. No wonder then that each novel examined in this study narrates stories of violent crimes and contextualises them through believable characters who inhabit recognisable South African places and spaces. According to Malmgren (2001: 115), this enables the crime writer to actively engage the reader. This active participation in the investigation of crimes is often lacking in media reports. This is what differentiates crime fiction from factual accounts of crime and violence.

Orford's definition does not only capture crime novels as narratives about crime and its investigation but also as a way of looking at violators, survivors of crime and most importantly, the ethics of fictionalising the realities of crime as lived by most South Africans in the post-apartheid moment. This definition accounts for the growing interest in the crime novel's dual

function of entertaining the reader with its plot while commenting on various social, economic, and political issues affecting the post-apartheid South Africa.

Contemporary South African crime fiction is, in its broadest sense, to borrow from Knight (2004: 62), "a body of literature assembled to speculate about social disorder, threats to property and body, and to imagine responses to them". However, to assign the stature of crime fiction to any narrative which features crime as a theme would be to complicate this genre. The term "crime fiction" cannot be simply and loosely used to refer to any texts in which crime and violence feature as a theme, especially in the South African context where most fiction is engaged with colonial and apartheid violence. In this regard, Knight (2004: 62) notes:

> [It] would be especially impractical in the South African context [because] from a certain vantage point, the entire history of written South African literature, with its roots in colonialism and apartheid, might be seen to be the history of criminality or the response to it.

Therefore, Knight proposes that the status of crime fiction be used only to categorise narratives which have their roots in the late nineteenth century, the years in which crime fiction emerged. He claims that crime fiction emerged from social and economic anxieties of that period. Knight's definition is useful because it encourages a careful reflection of the writers' social, political and economic conditions which inform their creativity. Arguably, the novelists selected for this study have been shaped by their material conditions which are reflected in the way they depict crime and violence. This suggests that contemporary South African crime fiction also has its roots in the conditions of the post-apartheid moment.

Therefore, in this study, the designation crime fiction is an umbrella term for crime narratives that share many aspects but are not the same. The main consideration to be kept in mind is that novels examined in this study fall under various categories and subgenres of crime fiction. They are "whodunit" and "whydunit". Whodunits ask questions about who commits violent crimes in contemporary South Africa. These are questions asked mainly by the first generation of crime writers in the post-apartheid. The interest is in the "How?" and "Who?". In a whodunit, Asong (2012: 48) argues, the detective or investigator displays patience, "untiring watchfulness, an intuitive flair". Her or his job goes beyond the collection of evidence for whatever use. For example, Orford's novels are whodunits as the writer seems largely interested in the investigative work of who commits crimes against women and little girls in the city of Cape Town. Furthermore, Orford's novels take the mystery detective fiction mode but are fluid enough to depict elements of police procedural and forensic sciences/pathology.

On the other hand, Meyer's novels are hardboiled detective stories. The detective novel is seen by its plot which is defined less by the crime but rather the mysteries of violence and crime that unfold during the investigation process. Berges (2006: 216) argues that the detective novel narrates stories of more than "one criminal, but a myriad of wrongdoers and people indifferent to the evil surrounding them, all somehow caught up in the web of evil". Berges's definition captures the attitudes of the protagonists in Orford's and Meyer's novels.

The whydunits ask questions about why certain people commit violent crimes. Makholwa's, Mzobe's and Pambo's novels are concerned with "the why" - why the protagonists commit their crimes. The "why" question is a psycho-sociological question, mostly asked by black South African post-apartheid crime writers as this study illustrates. The novels try to provide reasons why

certain people commit violent crimes in South Africa today. The plot of a whydunit narrative, according to Asong (2012: 49), is "built principally around the psycho-sociological mainsprings of the crime" and its interest lies in the "why" – "why does a crime occur?". Whydunit novels explore why South Africa is such a violent place despite the official fall of the criminal apartheid regime. In these novels, writers focus on characters' psychological response to the socio-political and socioeconomic elements of the post-apartheid period. This allows a deeper interrogation of South Africa as a developing post-apartheid capitalist society.

Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood (2010),* Angela Makholwa's *Red Ink (2007)* and *The Black Widow Society (2013),* and Lazola Pambo's *The Path Which Shapes Us (2012)* can also be read as thrillers. In these novels, the violent crimes are indeed depicted graphically (Naidu (2013: 127). Naidu maintains that the South African crime thriller novel is formulaic, that is, fast-paced, plotdriven, contains more action than detection, is quite violent, and usually ends with a climactic chase or physical show-down. The thriller, Naidu (2013: 127) observes, "unsettles the reader less by the magnitude of the terrors it imagines than by the intensity of the experience it delivers". These elements are mostly seen in Mzobe's and Pambo's novels. The novels capture the reader by the images of violence and the lessons the reader draws from these narratives.

1.1.2 Mapping the emergence and development of crime fiction

Crime fiction emerged in the early 1920s, first produced and published as short stories in affordable pulp magazines such as "True Crime and Black Mask" in the United States of America. It was during this period that authors such as Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler and Edgar Allen Poe, who are today credited as fathers of this genre, began writing and popularising this genre. Their stories were urban-based with a lone male "tough-guy" protagonist. They reflected the urban

chaos of crime, corruption and violence of American cities at that period (Stanners, 2007). Stanners (2007: 65) further points out that, socially, this period was characterised by:

> Disillusionment, cynicism and social insecurity. Prohibition, economic and political instability had resulted in the growth of gangsterism, lawlessness and corruption. The crime fiction literary style, which peaked in the 1930s and 40s, mirrored this social malaise.

Stanner posits that crime fiction reflected real social conditions of American cities during its genesis. Although crime fiction cannot be equated to reality, it is nonetheless often inspired by real social and political events. Evidently today, its form and content still allow it to deal with these issues.

It was only after almost four decades, in 1959, that what is today regarded as the first English crime novel by a South African white writer, June Drummond, *The Black Unicorn* was published. According to Meyer (2011), Drummond who continued writing until 2007, largely used her first novel to depict and critique social conditions of South Africa during the height of the apartheid regime. Clearly, this suggests that Drummond adopted the form and content of the crime genre from American writers to deal with the social milieu, suggesting that it has always been difficult to separate the aesthetic and the political in crime fiction. The genre plays an integral function in the negotiation of social anxiety for both writers and readers. Attwell and Harlow (2000: 4) argue that "under apartheid, to separate the political and the aesthetic - to insist that the aesthetic had its own priorities and demands - was to risk political censure". Similarly, to separate the aesthetic from the social and the political in post-2000 South African crime fiction is to assume that the genre contemporarily exists in a mode the formalists assume is free, suggesting that creativity can

be divorced from material conditions of writers and larger society. However, the novels examined in this study illustrate otherwise. These novels exist in a dichotomous mode; they are aesthetically pleasing and politically charged.

Although Drummond is credited and cited in literary forums and scholarly debates on crime fiction as the first English crime writer, he was not the first to produce a work of crime fiction, rather he was the first to produce a complete crime novel in South Africa. The production of crime fiction, according to Le Roux (2013), dates back to the years before the 1940s, but it was in the 1940s when the first black South African writer, Arthur Mogale, like Hammett, Chandler and Poe, began producing short crime stories through local and affordable pulp magazines such as the "Drum". In his stories, Mogale introduced his reader to detective Chester O. Morena, a black, tough and loner detective, a "US-style private detective", revealing that his creativity is indebted to American crime fiction traditions (Le Roux, 2013: 142). This is indicative of South African writers having been largely influenced by American writers. Following Drummond's work in the late 1950s was Wessel Ebersohn with his first novel, *A Lonely Place to Die* in 1979. Ebersohn was active in the crime fiction literary scene until 2011 with his *The Centurion* (Le Roux, 2013: 144)[1] Ebersohn, like writers before him, both domestic and international, has been considered:

> Remarkable not only for the skill with which [his] detective fiction is woven into a complex account of apartheid society, but also for the perceptive psychological and sociological analysis to which that social order is subjected. (Davis, 2006: 195)

[1] I acknowledge tracing the origin of crime writing in South Africa as a very difficult task that needs its own research space, like in the study of Le Roux (2013). The fact that this study is not necessarily concerned with the origin and development of this genre may prove selective in discussing this genre's origins. I have only chosen to deal with works by prominent writers to give a summary of the origin and development of the genre.

Seemingly, the common denominator in all these South African crime writers and their international influencers is social commentary. These novelists carefully interweave social commentary in their crime novels, blurring possibilities of separating the social and political from the aesthetics. The difficulties of separating the aesthetic and political is succinctly captured by Berges (2006: 212) who maintains that "aesthetic appreciation is very rarely divorced from other concerns - moral, cultural, emotional, and so on, especially in the realm of crime fiction". Clearly, contemporary South African crime fiction is a notable example.

Naidu (2013) opines that the last decade, from 2003 to 2013, has witnessed a remarkable "accessibility, popularity, [and] commercial success"[2] of South African crime fiction which comes as a result of its artistic merit. Warnes (2012: 981) also describes the post-2000 period as marking the "explosion of crime fiction" in the country. Evidently, more writers of different races and genders have entered this literary scene joining, among others, Deon Meyer who is seen as the father of contemporary crime fiction. The increase in the production of crime fiction has been acknowledged in academia, with some post-graduate students researching in this field. Le Roux (2013: 141) also argues that "it is self-evidently true that more crime and detective fiction is now being published in South Africa than at any time in the past". Le Roux acknowledges that the burgeoning of crime fiction post-2000 does not mean that little or no crime fiction was produced during the 1990s.

[2] "The number of crime novels written in and about post-apartheid South Africa is starting to assume 'epidemic proportions' some believe characterise actual crime rates in the country. In the last decade, at least 40 novelists have published works that fall into the category, and most of these writers are continuing to produce new crime novels with regularity – unusual indeed in a country where the novel has been thought to have a dwindling readership. Immediate reasons for the popularity of this type of genre fiction are not hard to find. Globally, crime fiction is big business" (Warnes, 2012: 982).

Contemporary crime fiction, which in this study refers to post-2000, South African crime novels is forked. First, the novelist fictitiously documents crime in South Africa, and secondly, as suggested by Matzke and Mühleisen (2006: 5), the novelists document issues of "race, gender, and sociopolitical and historical formations" of the country. Because of this, this study takes a multiple approach in its examination, using different theories for each set of novels analysed. Each analytical chapter deals with two novels by one writer, except for Mzobe and Pambo who have only produced one crime novel each. Their novels are examined in one chapter because of their thematic convergence.

Clearly, in a country with some of the highest crime statistics in the world and trying to overcome violent crimes of the past which have their roots in colonialism and apartheid, the crime novel has the capacity to rewrite South African "subjectivities and to contribute to social renewal across established social and spatial boundaries" (Binder, 2017: 264). Given the present proportional levels of violent crimes which take various forms, from gender-based violence to car theft and gangsterism, crime fiction occupies a political position that needs critical scholarly attention. This explosion, as observed by Warnes (2017), leaves one wondering why factionalise crime in a country already plagued with high levels of violent crimes. The answer to this is complex. Nonetheless, De Kock (2017: 36), borrowing from Jameson (1981), has coined the phrase "political novel" to refer to contemporary South African crime fiction due to its aesthetic and social commentary qualities. Ascribing a political function to this genre speaks to its diversified themes as utilised by various writers to write all forms of violent crimes and a need to write themselves into understanding the violent nature of the country.

1.1.3 Selection of novels

The representation of violent crimes in post-2000 South African-authored crime narratives points to a crisis of violence and crime in the post-apartheid period. The crisis is evident in the selection of the novels for this study. Through an examination of eight post-2000 South African novels, this study explores the intricate fictional representation of contemporary violent crimes. There has been an increase in the production of this genre in South Africa since the post-transitional period. The novels examined in this study confirm Jameson's idea that fiction "reflects a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies about history and reality" (Jameson, 1989: 19). Indeed, the novels examined in this study reflect and refract the on-going post-apartheid conditions. The selected narratives are: Margie Orford's Clare Hart Series: *Daddy's Girl* (2009) and *Water Music* (2013), Angela Makholwa's *The Black Widow Society* (2013) and *Red Ink* (2007), Deon Meyer's *Blood Safari* (2009) and *Trackers* (2011), Sifiso Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2011) and, finally, Lazola Pambo's *The Path Which Shapes Us* (2012). An examination of a broad range of novels provided me with a scope to interrogate issues of gender and race in greater detail and depth by giving both established and new writers equal academic scrutiny. Furthermore, it allowed me to trace the writers' growth in the fictionalisation of crime and violent themes.

Orford is an established white middle-class female writer who is often referred to as the South African queen of crime fiction. She has written five crime novels in total which are commonly referred to as *The Clare Hart Series* because of the character Hart who is the protagonist in all the novels. Her novels have been translated into more than twenty languages worldwide proving the commercial success of South African crime fiction as a genre on global markets. Makholwa is a successful black middle-class female writer who to date has published four novels. Meyer, a white middle-class writer, is the "king" of contemporary South Africa crime fiction. He has written over

a dozen crime novels which have been translated into more than twenty-five international languages proving his prowess as a writer and his *Trackers,* which is examined in this study, has been turned into a television series. Notably, both his novels examined in this study are translations, having been originally written in Afrikaans. Mzobe and Pambo are the youngest of the selected writers. They are both black middle-class male writers. This selection of both black and white, male and female, established and newcomer writers speaks to the growing need for a fair engagement and treatment of literature produced by various writers, young and old in postapartheid South Africa for inclusive academic scrutiny.

The selected narratives demonstrate that crime fiction can be deployed to examine issues of law, order and disorder, social relations, spatiality and violent crimes. These narratives engage with the above issues because of their topicality in South Africa today. The novels narrate the victimisation of women by their husbands, husbands' victimisation by their wives and how different physical spaces, such as Cape Town in Orford's novels and Durban in Mzobe's novel, can be imagined, how people inhabit them and what that habitation means to them in the post-apartheid period. As rightly put by Amid and De Kock (2014: 60), crime writing affords both readers and writers the platform and opportunity to talk about "race and class, xenophobia, otherness, poverty, even service delivery, in a time when the instruments of modernity have failed the masses". As seen in these novels, contemporary complexities of violent crimes affect South Africans of different genders, races and classes differently and the crime novel affords writers space to engage with these issues in a manner that is both entertaining and engaging. Orford, Makholwa, Meyer, Mzobe and Pambo successfully create characters from various occupations to bear witness to the divergent society, exposing the juxtaposition and entanglement of race and class which all manifest in space and the role played by government policies in creating and maintaining these relations. This

fictionalisation of contemporary topical issues provides these writers with the opportunity to explore the possibilities and limits of the post-apartheid imaginary in redefining issues of social justice and crime.

Post-2000 South African crime fiction critically engages with the politics of modernity. Writers participating in the crime fiction literary scene use their work to engage and interpret the traumatic past of the country, attempt understanding the painful present and chart the way forward for the uncertain future. These novels help society to better understand itself. The fictionalisation of violent crime, legibility and the fictional control of violence and crime are in Comaroff and Comaroff's words "the public obsession with criminality and disorder" (2006: 273). Therefore, contemporary crime fiction extenuatingly functions to facilitate the negotiation of this disorder, which as seen in the novels, is violence and crime which have become synonymous with the postapartheid period. It comes as no surprise that the novels narrate contemporary common bodily threats of murder, rape and other physical and psychological bodily harm. Seemingly, beyond their fictitious thrill, suspense and chilling graphic representation of crime, these novels manage readers and writers' anxieties of violent crimes.

1.1.4 Undoing gender: feminism and the crime novel

Post-colonialism is a social, political and economic discourse concerned with deconstructing the various ways in which colonialism entrenched itself and impacted identities of both the coloniser and the colonised. The theory engages the possibilities of moving the colonised from the margins to the centre (Bressler, 2011). As such, post-apartheid social discourses including South African feminist crime fiction can and should be analysed from postcolonial theoretical position to engage with notions of gender identity, equality and the continuous fight against violent crime perpetuated

against women and girls. I use the postcolonial approach firstly as an emancipatory and secondly an oppositional response to the process of gendering and ungendering society as advocated by Butler (2004) and as a response to gender inequality and gender neutrality. Thus, I analyse gender and crime in post-2000 crime novels through a postcolonial lens because of its unambiguous reflection of the most developed understanding of freedom (social, economic and political) identity and its flexibility. Various strands of postcolonial theory also allow for a more nuanced engagement with gender and power in post-apartheid South Africa.

Women, like all oppressed and abused subjects, have been marginalised and seen as "suffering from natural defectiveness" (de Beauvoir, 1949:25). They have occupied the position of the Other, dominated, subdued and colonised by patriarchal systems. Seemingly, they share with the colonised societies an intimate experience of what Ashcroft *et al.* (1995: 249) call "the politics of oppression and repression". Therefore, postcolonial feminism, which is born from postcolonialism, and feminism discourses seek to neutralise the domination championed by masculine othering. Ashcroft *et al.* (1995: 249) note that postcolonial feminism seeks to invert "the structures of domination, substituting, for instance, a female tradition or traditions for a maledominated canon".

Considering these definitions and borrowing from Showalter's notion of Gynocriticism[3] and what Matzke and Mühleisen (2006: 5) call "postcolonial genre bending", I argue that contemporary South African female crime writers are feminist by gender and action. They are engaged in what Butler (2004) calls "doing gender". These female crime writers use their work to model society

[3] Gynocriticism is the study of women literature. First coined in 1979 by Elaine Showalter, the term advocates a critical framework for the analysis of women's literature as a notable canon. As a radical movement within the feminism discourses and politics, gynocriticism seeks to examine the marginalisation of women in the production of literature and characterisation by writers. According to Showalter (1979: 28), gynocritics seek "to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories".

towards a new thinking about gender, power and representation with the purpose of changing narratives which have been depicted in literature and normalised in the real world. While writing within a genre that has since its beginning marginalised them, they advance critical feminist discourses about gender in/equality which occupies larger debates in South Africa today.

Gender is socially constructed and reconstructed through what Deutsch (2007: 107) calls "normative conceptions" of what constitutes a man and or a woman. By normative conception Deutsch refers to the consciousness of individuals' acts, social performances which will either be deemed proper masculine or feminine behaviour or actions. If producing gender is an ongoing, continuous or circular process which requires constant reaffirmation as argued by Butler (1988: 519) who maintains that "doing gender" requires a continuous "stylized repetitions", then undoing gender requires an equal opposite force.

Due to the ongoing debates on gender equity and violence in South Africa, Makholwa's and Orford's novels can be read as postcolonial neo-Marxist feminist novels since they are engaged inthe processes of undoing gender. These novelists use the contemporary crime novels to elevate South African women and women elsewhere from positions of Otherness and subalternism to that of power and visibility. Gramsci (1971[1999]: 21) uses the term "subaltern" to refer to nonhegemonic groups or classes which in the sphere of crime writing refers to women because of their previous characterisation and limited participation in the crime writing scene. I borrow from Gramsci's critical insights to argue that through patriarchal social conditions, women have been marginalised by the male crime fiction canon and could not represent their own realities through this genre and demonstrate their own literary creativity. The reference to such marginalisation as subaltern suggests that the postcolonial feminist crime novel is a site of radical political rethinking of the concept of gender in contemporary urban South Africa as seen in the novels of Makholwa

and Orford. These novels posit this as an urgent task because traditional crime fiction entrenched its gendered notions by representing a patriarchal culture and depicted men as supreme, superior and women as inferior and powerless.

Therefore, the need to undo gender which has become pervasive in contemporary crime fiction is a radical response by feminist writers to the masculine-perpetuated idea that the system of gendering people through various means of oppressions is impervious to change. This is evident in the male canon within which writers such as Meyer operate. In Meyer's novels, *Blood Safari* and *Trackers*, the protagonist, Lemmer, is a male figure who is projected through a traditional masculine lens. He was a cabinet minister's bodyguard just after the fall of apartheid, suggesting his intense training in combat, he survived prison for two years and is extremely adventurous in a male chauvinistic way. Lemmer is constructed with qualities Deutsch (2007: 114) describes as manly, that is, "competence, leadership, physical strength, and autonomy". He is not built as a giant, or an exaggerated superhero, he is a normal man with a simple physique but the fact that he is a man seems to override everything, his weaknesses and lack of a masculine physiology included.

Essentially, because he is a man, he is fit for adventure and danger. His gender bares what Butler (1988: 520) calls "cultural meaning", suggesting that his manliness is grounded on what is generally and pervasively associated with masculinity. His masculinity or manliness has been conceived again through what Butler (1988: 521) refers to as "concrete and historically mediated expression in the world" and particularly in the masculine crime fiction canon of how a man must be depicted to achieve certain effects and how a female must be constructed to enforce and reinforce certain ideologies. His characteristics speak to his need for authority and dominance,

while female characters are portrayed through a feminine lens of weakness, suggesting they are to be subdued.

As a white male writer, Meyer's style is influenced by fathers of this genre who have always marginalised women, removing them from action, depicting them as the 'Other', and what Gramsci (1987) calls "subaltern". Therefore, through characterisation, Meyer assigns femininity to femaleness and uses it as a mechanism for the production of gender (Butler, 2004). In this way, his novels still perpetuate canonised phallocentricism. The masculine canon, its othering processes and phallocentric tendencies have since the beginning of crime fiction normalised the thinking that men and women have different natures. In her critic of toxic masculinity, de Beauvior (1949: 26) attempts silencing the masculine idea that the man is the "subject [and] she [woman] is the Other". By showing gender bias, male writers relegated females to the position of the Other. Butler (2004: 48) argues that gender or rather doing gender is in actual fact "a form of social power that produces the intelligible field of subjects, and an apparatus by which the gender binary is instituted". It is through these dichotomised relations that the second sex, the other and the subaltern emerge.

Othering women through characterisation has always fulfilled a machoistic agenda by male writers to ignore the link between social interaction and structural change. Therefore, women making forays into the genre is a radical attempt to shine a spotlight squarely on what Deutsch (2007: 107) sees as "the social processes that underlie resistance against conventional gender relations". Female writers such as Makholwa and Orford's participation in the crime literary sphere radically illustrates that change in gender equity and power dynamics between men and women can be accomplished. They move away from theorising change and making a change illustrating in

Butler's words that even though social terms decide society's being, it does not decide them once and for all. In this way, Butler (2004) alludes to possible change to gender relations.

Arguably, Makholwa and Orford understand that the terms by which they are recognised as women writers make life unliveable. Since they understand their oppression and marginalisation, a feminist vision and critique of the crime genre emerges in the novels of these two writers to oppose all forms of misrepresentations and underrepresentation. Butler (2004: 4) argues:

> [Gender] critique is understood as an interrogation of the terms by which life is constrained in order to open up the possibility of different modes of living to establish more inclusive conditions for sheltering and maintaining life that resists models of assimilation.

Makholwa and Orford are active drivers of a critical discourse aimed at altering ideology and culture by turning the genre on its head. These novelists seek to neutralise the current masculine canon to ungender it so that it does not reflect the dominance of one by the other but becomes a neutral zone for the representation of contemporary topical issues affecting both men and women. They are, in Munt's words, "revis[ing] the canon" (Munt, 1994: 7).

Seemingly, their writing moves feminism from the spaces of theory to practice by shifting the focus from talking about gender in/equality to demonstrating how women can undo gender through fictional characterisation of their heroines. The representation of similar feminist traits in Orford, a first-generation white post-apartheid crime writer and Makholwa, a black first-generation post-apartheid female writer speaks of the continuing feminist battles across different races and classes in contemporary South Africa. This representation dovetails larger feminist discourses and politics of freeing women from patriarchal oppressions through a process of de-gendering society by de-

gendering the crime fiction canon. Arguably, both Makholwa and Orford illustrate through characterisation that gender, as articulated by Butler (1988: 522), is a "performative identity" accomplished through social sanctions and taboos which dictate what and how a woman or man must act or perform, suggesting that being a woman is a "historical idea and not a natural" phenomenon. The success of creating female protagonists who are successful even though met with various rejections and challenges at the centre of a plot that is masculine is a subversive method which Munt (1994: 4) calls the "feminisation" of the crime genre.

Makholwa and Orford transgress the gender and genre norms by subverting its content but preserving its form and using the crime novel as a transformational space for the negotiation of gender. It becomes a site for writing back and, in Munt's words, allows for the projection of "fantasy images of independence and strength to counteract the prevailing fictional construct of woman-as-adjunct-to-man" (Munt, 1994: 193). Orford's creation of Hart does not only liberate women in fiction but seeks to encourage more women to enter fields which are deemed masculine to decode and ungender them. She uses the crime novel as a field of resistance against masculine hegemonies which have subordinated women and elevated men through characterisation and practice.

The feminist crime novel is therefore used to encourage a collective transformation of the conscious and unconscious readers to ultimately transform institutions which determine power, gender and authority. If such actions by women writers are continuous, then an ungendered genre and ultimately an ungendered world may be created. Butler (1988: 527) notes that "gender reality is performative which means that it is real only to the extent that it is performed". This suggests that an ungendered society can only be achieved through constant intensification of contestation

by women writers for a more gender-neutral society. Arguably, crime fiction readers have come to know crime fiction as a masculine genre through both characterisation and authorship which perpetuated masculine codes by male writers and their characters. Therefore, to oppose such pervasive hegemony requires new characterisation by male writers who are feminist at heart and in writing and female writers who are clear radical feminist writers such as Makholwa and Orford.

Essentially, feminist crime fiction like the larger feminist movement presupposes sexual difference as a necessary and invariant theoretical point of departure. The genre critically builds upon and improves radical discourses which seek to conflate universal masculine hegemonies and appropriate all masculine culture to create a new ungendered culture. The new canon seeks to illustrate that there is no "binary gender system that is given", rather gender is done and therefore can be undone. Clearly, the participation of female writers in the genre of crime fiction, the new female canon is to (un)gender the genre and contemporary society (Butler, 2004: 41). Since feminism debates occupy contemporary South African society that is battling with a violent past and charting a future in a violent continuous present, the feminist crime novel can be read as a "reactionary genre for reactionary times" (Munt, 1994: 26). To borrow from Ashcroft *et al.* (1998), these writers are writing back to the epicentre of oppressive patriarchy. These writers do not only aim at critiquing masculinist representations but also to influence a change in thinking about women both in literature and in the real.

Orford's and Makholwa's work can be viewed through a neo-Marxism lens as dealing with the material conditions of women in contemporary society through a genre that is easily accessible and enjoyable. Neo-Marxists critics see "art, literature, and life as inseparable" (Bressler, 2011: 155). These theorists view "reading, writing, and publishing [literature] as facets of material

reality". They further maintain that literature is part of a whole, a culture, and therefore, "how a female is depicted in literature directly affects how women will be treated in real life" (Bressler, 2011: 155). Therefore, the representations of women in literary works and their fictitious exploitations in early male crime fiction canon borrowed largely from patriarchal realities to represent femaleness and reinforced the gender dichotomy as it exists today.

Therefore, crime fiction should be seen, especially the female corpus, as the apparatus by and through which these consciously and subconsciously normalised notions are, in Butler's words, "deconstructed and denaturalized" (Buttler, 2004: 41). Furthermore, Butler (2004: 41) argues that an "apparatus that seeks to install the norm also works to undermine that very installation". This means that in the same way gender in engendered should be the very way it gets undone. Crime fiction as a cultural production informed by its material conditions of what gender is, can then work to genderise society and to (un)gender it.

1.1.5 Education, the township and the Bildungsroman in Mzobe's and Pambo's novels

Mzobe's and Pambo's novels textually, thematically and linguistically narrate a country once dominated by the pains of colonialism and apartheid and is now recording what Boehmer (2018: 91-92) calls a related "set of injuries both physical and [psychological], and hardly less severe in their effects". The two novels are largely influenced by their situations in the post-apartheid moment which are mediated through the material conditions they exist in and the social, political, economic, class and race ideologies. Mzobe and Pambo were born in the last years of the apartheid regime and their lives, like most South Africans', have been largely shaped by the material conditions of both these periods. Interestingly, neo-Marxists maintain that all human relations and

existence are "situated historically and socially" and people's social and historical contexts determine their lives (Selden *et al.*, 2005: 644). Clearly, to appreciate Mzobe's and Pambo's novels require an understanding of the material conditions of the apartheid and post-apartheid moments. The post-apartheid period is uncertain since its democratic foundations seem to have failed the masses driving them to violence and crime to accumulate desired material goods and achieve envied higher economic statuses.

The novels are fictitious accounts of the gloomy and pessimistic contemporary South Africa. Both novelists assert their townshipness, specifically by referencing what might be regarded as typical features of contemporary township life in South Africa. The novels illustrate township life today as somewhat different from that of the apartheid and colonial period, yet similar to these periods in several ways. This does not suggest in any way that these are replica periods but the fact that the post-apartheid was born from the apartheid, and the post-colonialism was born from the colonialism, speaks of the leftover characteristics of the apartheid in the post-apartheid and those of the colonialism in the post-colonialism. This suggests a disturbing entanglement of the past, present and future. This indicates that these writers are consciously and unconsciously shaped by apartheid and post-apartheid material conditions in their literary depictions. Boehmer (2018: 90) notes that "many of the divisions and tribulations of the apartheid era not only remain entrenched, but in some cases grew more extreme".

Both novelists juxtapose the moral, legal and the immoral and illegal practices by township young males in their coming of age. While narrating issues of crime, the novelists carefully foreground education as the best and only moral and legal means to material accumulation and desired upward economic mobilities. Their writing is largely entrenched in their historical and present existence in which South African youth is faced with a crisis of choosing between crime, which is perceived

as quickly affording a life of conspicuous consumption on the one hand, and on the other hand, formal education which is posited as a slow method of material accumulation. Notably, both novelists make a living through formal education, with Mzobe as a journalist and Pambo as a creative writer. Their view of society is informed by the dominant ideology of education as the best and moral way for young boys in the post-apartheid township to accumulate material goods and achieve legitimate social mobility.

Pambo and Mzobe depict acquiring formal education as a universal good, foregrounding education as a legitimate method to accumulate material wealth and move up the social hierarchy. Gramsci (1971: 669) is of the opinion that man or individuals must be conceived through what he calls "a series of active relationships, a process in which individuality, though perhaps the most important, is not, however, the only element to be taken into account". He maintains that the "humanity reflected in each individuality is composed of various elements; the individual, other men [and] the natural world" (Gramsci, 1971:669). Gramsci is of the idea that man's life is not freely determined by his own free will but also by his relationship with his world and the people around him. It is this relationship that determines Sipho's, the protagonist in Mzobe's *Young Blood* (2010), and Cliff's, in Pambo's *The Path Which Shapes Us* (2012), material conditions and influence how their lives turn out. Arguably, because these novelists make a living through their intellectual labour, they appear unconscious or repressive of the fact that the capitalist society of post-apartheid South Africa provides for other alternative legal and moral methods to accumulate material goods without one having to excel in formal education. Although the novels do not narrate any other method a township teenage boy can adopt to accumulate material goods and move up the social leader, their silence on these issues speaks to the ideology of these writers in depicting political, economic and social conditions of their time.

According to Neo-Marxists, an ideology is "a dominant system of [thoughts] accepted as a common-sense view of things by the dominated classes and thus [securing] the interests of the dominant class" (Selden *et al.*, 2005: 98). While depicting education as a key to success for the previously marginalised working class or proletariat in the townships, both novels do not reveal how those in the suburbs; spaces which are associated with whites and the newly consecrated postapartheid black middle class, accumulate their wealth and maintain their economic statuses. Through the representation of education as the best, legal and moral way to access materialism, these writers demonstrate how they have unconsciously "enter[ed] into [a] definite relation that is indispensable and independent of their will" (Eagleton, 1983:4), suggesting that their consciousness as further noted by Eagleton 1(983:4), does not "determine their being, but on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness". Granted, Mzobe and Pambo do not seem to write to influence their material conditions, rather, their creative imaginations are informed by their social realities. They both narrate an era in which the politics of modernity have compromised the rights and freedom promised by democracy in favour of global homogeneous ideologies of a fit-all approach to problems and challenges of a society that is heterogeneous.

Seemingly, these novelists' thinking about formal education as a tool for overcoming economic oppressions and class difference is reflected in the 2016 Fees Must Fall movement in South Africa. During this period, young South Africans, the majority from poor and economically disadvantaged families, brought the higher education sector in the country to a halt as they demanded free higher education. This dramatically shows how most South Africans have bought into the ideology of education as the best method to improve their material conditions. Althusser (1998: 700) notes that an ideologised subject behaves in such and such a way, adopts such and such a practical attitude,

and, what is more, participates in certain regular practices which are those of the ideological apparatus on which "depend" the ideas which he has in all consciousness freely chosen as a subject.

This implies that most black South Africans, like Mzobe and Pambo, subscribe to the ideology of education as the most suitable way to access desired material goods and enter a higher economic class. *Young Blood* and *The Path Which Shapes Us* achieve a certain quality of expressing a degree of social consciousness of the writer by depicting believable social conditions and feelings of society in the post-apartheid period. These novels, according to neo-Marxists, possess a "progressive outlook", glimpsing at the possibilities of future developments from its present and paving a path for a sense of "ideal possibilities of social development from the point of view of the mass of working people" (Selden *et al.*, 2005: 85). To contemporary working-classes, education, as foregrounded in the two novels, is given as the only morally acceptable and legal means to accumulate material goods and attain a higher economic class and social status. In this way, the novels are not just literary forms or modes but are an "essential epistemological categor[ies]" of post-apartheid conditions (Selden *et al*, 2005: 106). The novels vividly capture the conditions of the post-apartheid period.

1.1.6 Space in crime fiction

Orford, Mzobe and Pambo's novels foreground space not just as what Martin (2013: 68) refers to as "abstract space" but rather as a meaningful site with a continuous history. Umlazi, in Mzobe's novel, and Evansdale in Pambo's, are more than just a backdrop or setting of plots. The same is true of the Cape Flats in Orford's novels. They are all meaningful sites with cultural, political and economic histories and ongoing social conditions. The novelists' use of spaces is suggestive of a period the novelist wants to critique. To understand a period, one needs to understand its social

conditions and to study the social conditions of a given period is to think everyday life through Marxist thinking.

Mzobe's understanding of space is determined and greatly influenced by his experiences of the place he depicts in the novel. To a certain extent, Pambo, because he writes about a South Africa he knows as an insider, even though he does not depict a real place, allows him to deal with space in an informed manner. Mzobe was born and raised in Umlazi, his line of duty in journalism means that he frequently encountered crime and violence in the township. This indicates that although his work is first and foremost fiction, the plotline is influenced by the history and the post-apartheid conditions of this township. The "geographical true-to-lifeness" of Umlazi in the novel represents an opportunity to explore contemporary social issues in South Africa (Martin, 2013: 11).

Mzobe and Pambo's novels depict place as relational space by exploring the correlations between home, street, township and suburb spaces. In Martin's words, Mzobe and Pambo's novels "interrogate spatial patterns in terms of adjacencies and disjuncture, rather than merely offering descriptively-laden representations for the sake of credibility" (Martin, 2013: 11). These novelists link all these spaces and the unique crimes committed in them for various economic reasons through plot lines and character development and socio-political trajectories of gender and race. These novelists' thinking about space as not abstract, but an active site is captured in Lefebvre's insight that space is socially produced. Lefebvre (1991: 26) has been seminal in thinking about space, its formation and habitation and points out that "in addition to being a means of production [space] is also a means of control, and hence of domination". Seemingly, the racialised spatial planning of places in these novels provides an example of spatial issues in South Africa today and how such contribute to issues of violent crimes.

Similarly, Orford's *Daddy's Girl* and *Water Music* are set in real spaces and time in the post-apartheid and are used to explore the deep-seated relationship of spatiality, temporality and crime. The novels invoke the socio-cultural, economic, political and specific geographical characteristics rooted in the history of Cape Town as well as its present. Evidently, Orford's representations of Cape Town, Maitland Cemetery Squatter settlements, the Cape Flats, Table Mountain and Sea Point allow the reader to see the contemporary social realities of these spaces. Martin (2013), referring to the Clare Hart Series in general, argues that these novels refer to the actual time and space in relation to crime in South Africa today.

Orford's depiction of the congestion of the Cape Flats as existing in an entanglement relationship with its adjacent upper-class residential space equates the flats to a ghetto. Wacqaunt (2007: 50) sees the ghetto as an essential socio-spatial device which enables what he calls a "dominant status group in an urban setting simultaneously to ostracize and exploit a subordinate group endowed with negative symbolic capital" (2007: 50). Wacqaunt sees space through the same frame as Lefebvre. To both scholars, space is created through its inheritance and the practice of everyday life. They both see the ghetto as social, political and economic prisons that cut off an individual from the possibilities of a standard life. The ghetto, according to Wacqaunt (2007: 51), "operates as an ethno-racial prison", because of its socio-political conditions the ghetto space "encages a dishonoured category and severely curtails the life chances of its members". Wacquant's theorisation is illustrated in the way characters in the Cape Flats relate to one another and most importantly by how they create, relate and maintain their spaces through various means which include crime and violence in Orford's novels.

For Wacquant, a jail or penitentiary is in effect a "reserved space which serves to forcibly confine a legally denigrated population" (2007: 51). Wacquant equates the township, a space he refers to as the 'ghetto' to a prison. He argues that the ghetto and prison are controlled through initialised authority legitimised by coercion to maintain power and hierarchies. Arguably, the Cape Flats, as a ghetto, can be viewed as a structure of authority that is "saddled with inherently dubious or problematic legitimacy whose maintenance is ensured by intermittent recourse to external force" (Wacquant, 2007: 51-52). In *Daddy's Girl*, for example, if a child goes missing in the Cape Flats, one does not call the police, rather they are told what to do by the 27-prison gang leader, Vitljoe Ahrend. Evidently, equating the Cape Flats with the prison as argued by Wacquant, is persuasive because the Cape Flats gangs and their disciples maintain their own order through violence. Furthermore, a prison does not afford its residents space and individual freedom. Prisoners are confined to think and behave in a predetermined manner. Similarly, the Cape Flats as depicted in Orford's novel, does not allow its residents the opportunity to determine their own existence but rather to conform and embrace precarious life forms.

1.1.7 Chapter outline

Chapter 2 of this dissertation discusses Meyer's *Blood Safari*, and *Trackers*, and positions these novels within larger discourses about crime and violence through postcolonial and post-apartheid lenses. First, these novels are selected for their thematic convergence. They narrate eco-crimes and allow a critical literary reflection of crime against nature as dealt with through literary imaginations. Furthermore, there is a decade between the production of these novels allowing me to see the writer's thinking about eco-crime and issues of gender as represented in *Blood Safari* and his growth in the representation of these issues in the latter novel,

Trackers. The fact that *Trackers* can be read as a sequel to *Blood Safari* is seen in the writer's rigorous representation of crime against nature, and how these crimes are connected to race and space and the recurrence of the protagonist Lemmer. Furthermore, the fact that his representation of gender and genre in *Trackers* is revised speaks to Meyer's awareness of the ongoing feminist discourses in South Africa. Meyer is considered the "father" of crime fiction in post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter 3 discusses Orford's *Daddy's Girl*, and *Water Music.* Orford has been fondly nicknamed the "mother" or "queen" of urban crime fiction and she is one of the most prolific female writers in the genre. Her novels belong to the first generation of post-apartheid white feminist writers who have challenged the chauvinistic representation of gender in the masculine canon. The two novels examined in this study, *Daddy's Girl* and *Water Music* are from a series of five reverting crime novels called the Clare Hart series because of the character of Clare Hart who is a protagonist of the series. The foregrounding of a female protagonist in a genre that has always been thought to be masculine shines a spotlight on her radical feminist actions.

Daddy's Girl and *Water Music* are analysed tin the same chapter because of the way they deal with violence against women and children. In *Daddy Girl,* the second novel in the series but read as the first, the writer deals mainly with violence against little girls, a subject hardly represented in post-apartheid crime fiction despite the on-going debates about the abuse of little girls in the country. In *Water Music*, Orford narrates the growing need to talk about the victimisation of teenage girls and how the spaces they inhabit through residence and other practices of their everyday life does not only offer opportunities but expose them to various kinds of crime and violence at the hands of men. Clearly, Orford's setting of the novel in Cape Town speaks to race, class and crime in the

post-apartheid moment and allows her to ask and provide insights about crime in the post-apartheid moment.

Chapter 4 discusses Makholwa's two novels, namely, *Red Ink* and *Black Widow Society* and shows how Makholwa, as one of the first generation of black urban female crime writers in the post-apartheid period, positions herself and the voices of black women in larger feminist discourses through crime novels. Because *Red Ink* (2007) and Orford's *Blood Rose* (2006), the first novel in the Clare Hart series were published just one year apart, the two writers can be viewed as publishing contemporaries. Both are concerned with South African urban violent crimes against or by women in different racial spaces, with the former focusing on Johannesburg and the latter on Cape Town. Their racial difference and the spatial settings of their novels speak to a different position and lens through which they see and understand crime and violence. Makholwa focuses on the effects of crime on the black population in the post-apartheid period. Her novels are deeply concerned with the motives, asking "why" the protagonist and the other characters in the novels commit crimes. This makes these whydunit[4] narratives.

Red Ink advances a feminist agenda that has several blind spots as it shall be illustrated in the chapter. This reflects Makholwa's induction into the literary scene and participation in literary feminist discourses. On the other hand, the radicalism with which her female protagonist is depicted in *Black Widow Society* demonstrates a shift in her thinking and dealing with violent crimes. Therefore, this novel can be read as a sequel to *Red Ink. Black Widow Society* inspires a new thinking about issues of gender-based violence imagining a society where women use the

[4] Discussed at length in the next chapter.

tools of the master to dismantle his house, that is, women's use of violence and crime against their male abusers.

Chapter 5 examines Mzobe's and Pambo's bildungsroman crime novels. The two are read as the second wave or generation of post-apartheid urban South African crime fiction writers. They are young black males whose novels are set in the post-apartheid township. They provide a fresh postapartheid perspective of the township by insiders. The two writers ask what it means to be born in the post-apartheid period and critique the many ways in which the conditions of the apartheid period, although not mentioned in the novels, seem to have spilled over into the post-apartheid space creating an environment that does not favour growth and forging of positive masculinities in the black townships.

Chapter 6 concludes the study, showing how the chapters are weaved together to develop one coherent argument about the depiction of violent crimes in post-apartheid South Africa. The chapter also shows how the crime novel can be appreciated, first, for its aesthetic qualities and, secondly, be deployed as a socio-political tool to comment on the post-apartheid conditions.

2 CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Ecocriticism, justice, gender, race and violent crimes in Deon Meyer's novels

2.1.1 Introduction

Deon Meyer's two hard-boiled detective novels, *Blood Safari* (2009), *Trackers* (2011) converge thematically. This thematic convergence allows a reading of *Trackers* as a sequel to *Blood Safari.* It further allows for a reading of the writer's growth and or regression in dealing with and depicting various issues in the post-apartheid period. Meyer uses these novels to critique and expose the rising levels of gender-based violence, the failures of the government to implement laws to control crime and violence which are often entangled with crime against nature, commonly referred to as ecological crime.

Both novels are narrated by the protagonist, an anti-social male character called Martin Fitzroy Lemmer but is subsequently referred to as Lemmer. He is an ex-convict who served four years in prison for manslaughter and is a former bodyguard of apartheid government cabinet ministers. He assumes the role of detective in the novels. In *BS*, Lemmer is hired by a rich Afrikaner woman, Emma le Roux, to travel with her from Cape Town to the Lowveld region in Limpopo in search of her supposedly dead brother, Jacobus le Roux who is also known as Cobie de Villiers, also referred to as Cobie. He was declared dead while doing his army duties with the Environmental Unit of the apartheid government military in the Kruger National Park, one of the largest nature conservation parks in the world. The bulk of the novel's action takes place in the Lowveld, in and around the

park. This setting allows the writer to make various comments on the people residing around the park and their abilities and inabilities to conserve the environment and other eco-crimes.

Similarly, *Trackers* has a riveting and mesmerising plot. Subsequently, the book has been turned into a television series. The novel is also partly set in the Lowveld although most of the action takes place in Cape Town. A small part of the action takes place in Johannesburg. The novel develops a complex plot that is divided into four books which are loosely knitted together to form a single thrilling story. The story follows Lemmer's trip from Loxton, Northern Cape, to the northern region of the Limpopo province near Beit Bridge, traversing the border into the Chizarira National Park in Zimbabwe and travelling back to Cape Town via the city of Johannesburg in a private plane.

The first book entitled *Milla (Conspiracy)* advocates the liberation and independence of a woman who suffers from abuse from her husband and teenage son. Milla, whom the book is named after, is a forty-year-old abused housewife, who sets out to redefine her existence by leaving both her abusive husband and son to start a new life of her own. The second book *Lemmer (The Black Swan)* connects *BS* and *Trackers* through thematic convergence and the recurrence of the protagonist in a similar ecocritical setting. He is on an "adventure" to smuggle a pair of endangered black rhinos from Zimbabwe into South Africa. The third book, *Milla (A Theory of Chaos)* features Milla at the centre of the plot again reclaiming her dignity but totally oblivious to the fact that her agency for freedom borders on violence and crime as she gets mixed up with an artefact smuggler, Lucas Becker. The last book, *Mat Joubert (Form 92)* is about a former South African Police force member Mat Joubert who has just joined the private sector as a private investigator (PI) whose first case is a "fifty-five" (police slang for a missing person) in search for one Danie Flint, a bus coordinator who has disappeared without trace. Through a post-colonial-ecocritical lens, and

theories of race and gender, the chapter explores Meyer's representation of eco-crimes, racial relations, conceptions of il/legality, law and order and gender in the post-apartheid moment.

2.1.2 Troubling conceptions of law, order, justice and crime

The fact that *Blood Safari* is narrated by an ex-convict who is still on parole after serving four years of a sixyear sentence for manslaughter makes it a pulsating and riveting read. The novel depicts Lemmer's operation within a quasi-legal framework where he becomes law unto himself and metes out justice which is not and cannot be sanctioned by the state. He is a figure that is used by the writer to inspire the reader to think about the problem of violence, crime and justice outside their legal parameters in contemporary South Africa. His depiction allows the reader to see what Mack (2012: 129) refers to as the disruptive ability of literature in shaping society. Mack maintains:

> We are accustomed to thinking of literature as mimetic, as a representation of reality such as it exists, while literature is in fact, a disruptive force, breaking up our fictions about the world we live in and showing us new possibilities for the future.

Lemmer can be read metaphorically as a state where violence is sanctioned in dealing with violent crimes. He represents retributive justice. His depiction allows the writer to break away from the constitutionally sanctioned conceptions of law and order in the post-apartheid period by opening a new way of thinking about violent crimes, law, order and justice. Through Lemmer, the writer breaks away from the mimetic notions and thinking about justice in South Africa today. He is used by the writer to disrupt the reader's norms about law, order and justice by imagining new possibilities of fighting the prevalence of crime and violence in the post-apartheid period. The fact that Lemmer is used to imagine new conceptions of law and order, speaks of a chaotic legal and

justice system in South Africa. In such a state, Knight (2004: 287) suggests that the detective must "create his own concept of morality and justice". In both *BS* and *Trackers,* the depiction of Lemmer as an agent of retributive justice in a society that has a weak and untrustworthy justice system forces the reader to reassess his or her lived realities.

In *Blood Safari*, Lemmer only commits murder after being extremely provoked by three young men while driving and going on about his business in Cape Town. This suggests that he would have not responded violently if he had not been confronted with violence. Through this strategy, Meyer makes his tainted hero likeable to the reader and continues to sanction retributive justice as a way of dealing with violence and crime. Moreover, Lemmer has had a difficult childhood. His mother was recklessly promiscuous, and his father was an emasculated husband who vented out his anger by violently abusing Lemmer. These events are presented as foundational traumas that explain why he develops extremely violent tendencies as an adult. He is consistently depicted as resorting to violence only when he is extremely provoked. This allows the writer to foreground his vision of how retributive justice should be sanctioned and deployed.

For example, in *Trackers*, Lemmer goes after Inkunzi Shabangu, who is also known as The Bull, to avenge his mistreatment. This is after Lemmer is violently beaten, a gun shoved down his throat and his ribs broken by Inkunzi and his cronies for no apparent reason. Thinking of his mission of vengeance, Lemmer says, "I would go and find [Nkunzi]. Make him kneel with a glock against the back of his head. Strip him of his self-respect as he had done to Louren" (137). Through Lemmer, Meyer shows his lack of faith in the post-apartheid justice system, given the privilege he writes from and has enjoyed in the apartheid era where order was maintained through sanctioned violence by the apartheid regime. He seems to be thinking of the post-apartheid environment as having

fallen into a state of chaos because of its soft ideological approaches to violence, criminality, law and order.

Lemmer is a figure who represents the plight of many South Africans who share the author's view about the justice system that it often does not administer adequate punishment on criminals hence their regression to crime even after many years of imprisonment. He represents what Horsely (2006: 70) regards as a "metaphorical figure of justice and judgement". Lemmer is a critical tool for Meyer in his reflection and comment on the culture of violence in South Africa today. For example, when he goes after Shabangu, and ultimately kills him in a violent confrontation, he does not only redeem himself but indirectly helps the President Intelligent Agency (PIA) to administer justice the government was apparently unable to perform, and in the process, rids society of a violent criminal. Even though Shabangu's killing is illegal, the reader is left with the impression that a criminal has been taken off the streets and some balance of power and safety restored for all those who may have been victimised by him. Although not employed by the police or law and order agencies, Lemmer's actions and the way he is depicted by the writer, can be likened to the South African Minister of Police, Mr Bheki Cele's radical attitude towards the fight against crime. In his inaugural speech as police commissioner in 2009, Cele said "police must shoot to kill and worry later". He said this in response to the rising figures[5] of crime and violence in South Africa (Goldstone, 2009). According to this view, retributive justice could be viewed as a possible solution to South Africa's high levels of violent crime.

[5] In 2009, there was an in increase in reported crime statistics from the previous year by 0,7% with a daily average of at least 43 murders making South Africa one of the highest murder rates country globally during this period (Gould *et al.,* 2012). Currently, there are about 58 reported murders in a day in South Africa (Writer, 2020).

In the Lowveld, Lemmer and Emma are ambushed, and Emma is subsequently hospitalised and comatosed from a sniper rifle shooting. The fact that Lemmer does not go to the police, allows the reader to see the kind of justice he, and probably the writer, subscribes to. The writer's lack of faith in the country's justice system is also revealed through Lemmer's decision. Taking matters into his hands, Lemmer tells the reader that he wanted to administer his brand of justice once and for all. He says, "I wanted to stop the injustice. For once I wanted to gallop on the white horse of righteousness" (311). Ironically, although still on parole for his culpable homicide conviction, he imagines himself to be a righteous crusader of justice against violent criminals. His decision, coupled with the fact that he is an ex-convict, reveals Meyer's troubling conceptions of law and order by showing how retributive justice can be abused to achieve selfish goals and desires and how it may border on extra-judicial conduct.

Through Lemmer's attitude towards justice and the way he achieves it, Meyer seems to suggest that those who use violence against citizens do not deserve any protracted legal wrangling. Rather, instant retribution from a para-legal entity is the antidote to the scourge of violent crime. The writer's representation of justice and violent crimes in the novel raises critical questions about these issues in a postcolonial context. Lemmer's attitude towards crime and justice is succinctly captured by Warnes (2012: 986) who argues that "the figure of the detective is an antidote to disorder, violence, and uncertainty". Interestingly, Lemmer goes beyond this role by becoming also the judge and the executioner of those he pronounces guilty. However, his being a solo jury forces the reader to reflect on instances where he may be wrong in pronouncing death or whatever poetic justice he sees fit. Yet, due to his seemingly galloping on the white horse of righteousness in the way he goes about his missions of revenge, he gains the readers' sympathy for his cause and becomes a likeable hero despite his murderous actions. Meyer provides him as an alternative to

the faltering policing and detective skills within the present South African police department. Therefore, while seemingly sanctioning retributive justice through Lemmer's characterisation and actions, Meyer is also provoking the reader to imagine innovative and even radical solutions to the prevalent problem of violent crimes in South Africa. However, in a postcolonial context, the writer's envisioned notion of justice is riddled with several ambiguities.

Lemmer's depiction as a justified violent character makes him a lovable figure. In Berges' (2006: 218) opinion, the protagonist who is often the private eye in crime novels has an "indignation with crime, and passion for justice" that makes him a lovable character. Even though Lemmer's murderous past taints him, in the novel, he is depicted as a figure who cares deeply about justice. This is demonstrated by his willingness to do everything possible to avenge Emma. To the readers, Lemmer represents the unfailing justice that the marginalised and vulnerable yearn for. In *BS*, he is on a mission to get justice for Emma, and her family who apparently suffered because of an apartheid government conspiracy and cover-up which led to the death of former Mozambican president, Samora Machel, eco-crimes and arms dealings. Lemmer fits what Scaggs (2010) calls a figure of the private investigator in hard-boiled detective fiction who fights for justice through actions which may not always be within the moral and legal parameters of the law. This passion for justice on the part of the private investigator explains why, even though Lemmer's methods of fighting violent crimes are themselves criminal, his intentions are not; and this makes the reader warm up towards him, appreciate his actions and forgive his criminal past and his violent tendencies.

Ironically, Lemmer's past also buys him both sympathy and empathy from the reader and enables the reader to further see and understand where his violence stems from. He is a psychologically

and emotionally scarred character. He was abused by his father as a child and was raised in poverty. Even his doing time for culpable homicide is depicted in a positive light as an unpremeditated action caused by extreme provocation. The reader is made to believe that Lemmer is generally a good person whose violence is a result of circumstances beyond his control. This is captured in his slogan, "Lemmer doesn't go looking for trouble, trouble finds him" (490). Therefore, he can be read as a metaphor for how the marginalised and brutalised black South Africans continue to resort to violence in order to achieve political, economic and social justice the government often fails to give them. This suggests a pattern of violence entrenched into the national psyche of the postapartheid state in ways that are evidently difficult to deal with and eliminate implying that the violent past of the country has spilled over into the present. This is captured in Lemmer's words when he says, "the trouble with violence is that it begets more violence. In people, in communities, in countries" (174). This suggests that contemporary high levels of violent crimes are spectres of South Africa's violent past.

Seemingly, Meyer's thinking about the permeability of colonialism and apartheid pasts in the present is captured in Assiba's thinking about post-colonialism. It appears that existing in the postcolonial and post-apartheid period in South Africa is a fundamental entrapment by the colonial and apartheid systems. Assiba (2003: 25) sees these terms and periods as "lock[ing] us in the everpresent dynamics of colonization [and apartheid] which become a kind of maximum-security prison from which it seems impossible to escape". This speaks of some of the violence and criminal cultures of the violent past which have found a way into the present as seen in Lemmer's observation that violence begets more violence. Similarly, Boehmer (2018) iterates that, cultures of the past, are being not only instigated in the present but are also being aggravated for political, social and economic benefits in South Africa today.

Interestingly, righteous violence is depicted as being therapeutic for Lemmer because it allows him to vent out his childhood traumas which are posited as having largely contributed to who he is. He admits that inflicting pain on others frees him and enables him to feel truly human. Given how the writer uses him as an agent of retributive justice, this is problematic because he does not seem to be fully aware of his criminality and violence as he sees his actions as therapeutic. Lemmer describes the pleasure he draws from inflicting pain when he says:

> Those minutes when I released myself, when I could kick and hit, could inflict hurt, could break and *bliksem* … I felt one with the world … and so terribly sweet … I found satisfaction in [violence]. And enjoyment. Because I am a product of violence. It lives in me. (181)

Clearly, Meyer uses Lemmer to ask fundamental questions about childhood trauma, how it shapes the individual's sense of morality and justice and how violence easily begets more violence. In Symons' (1985: 163) words, Lemmer's characterisation "question[s] some aspect of law, justice or the way society is run". The way Meyer constructs Lemmer allows the reader to question established notions of justice and its conceptions of morality and whether the rule of law should exclude the need for retributive and restorative justice. Moreover, Lemmer's therapeutic violence can be read metaphorically as asking questions of whether contemporary violence against races which benefited from racial crimes of the past can be viewed as illegal but justifiable.

2.1.3 Contemporary eco-terrorism

Lemmer's ability to move within and outside the borders of South Africa allows readers to see South Africa and Zimbabwe's post-colonial conditions through his eyes. As already mentioned, in

Blood Safari, he is hired as a personal bodyguard for Emma le Roux and travels to the Limpopo Province where Emma hopes to find her brother or at least get answers about what happened to him. Since the Kruger National Park is in this region, the author is then able to use the journey motif to comment on the contemporary issues about the conservation of flora and fauna.

Moreover, Meyer constructs several characters through whom he speaks about conservation from different perspectives. Among these characters, for example, is Donnie Branca who appears in *Blood Safari*. Branca is truly passionate about conservation and is used by the writer to sensitise the reader about the need for humans to foster a symbiotic relationship with the environment. He works for the Mogale Rehabilitation Centre in the Lowveld region. Meyer's intentions in foster "eco-consciousness". Mishra (2016: 168) sees eco-consciousness as being aware of the fact that humans and the wilderness share the biosphere. This eco-consciousness of the writer is captured in Branca's presentation at the Mogale Rehabilitation Centre where he laments the crimes committed against wild animals. These crimes also translate into crimes against the country's heritage and ultimately people. About vultures, he says:

> If we poison them, if Eskom's power cables kill them when they dive into them, if the farmers shoot them or take away their breeding ground, the ticking of God's clock will stop. Not only for them, ladies and gentlemen, but also for all nature ... food chains get broken, the delicate balance is disturbed, and the whole system comes crushing down. (65)

Branca represents individuals who unhypocritically care about ecological issues. This is the reason why Branca ends up being killed by those who are opposed to such genuine efforts at preservation. In the above speech, Branca shows his broad understanding that ecological conservation demands

the participation of all stakeholders and not just the halting of poisoning vultures by desperate black people. Branca argues that a relationship that determines the cycle of life should be preserved.

Clearly, Branca sees eco-crime not as a racial issue, but a problem whose resolutions has a direct impact on the entire human species. However, as the title of the novel *Blood Safari* suggests, not only does Lemmer's journey into the Lowveld lead to the loss of many lives, the narrator indicates that both during and after the apartheid period, conservation has always led to loss of lives. First, as already noted, Emma's brother's disappearance is itself linked to issues of conservation. Cobie had joined the South African army because he was passionate about the conservation of animals. However, he soon realised that some top government officials of the apartheid government were involved in illegal poaching. This led to him going into exile, living like a fugitive fleeing from these government officials. The subsequent murder of his parents by these officials exposes the reader to the capitalist mentalities of post-colonial authorities who are ready to kill to protect their criminal ways of making money.

However, *Blood Safari* shows that the decimation of natural resources in the Limpopo has a much older history than the inception of the racist apartheid government. Meyer uses the flashback method to recall how local black people were violently displaced by the white colonial governments either to make way for the park or to give white people farms in fertile areas belonging to indigenous people. The narrative shows that the Sibashwa people remain impoverished in the post-apartheid period precisely because of the violent way they lost fertile lands which now form part of the park or are now farms owned mainly by white people. To make a living, the Sibashwa people engage in activities that are now viewed as criminal. However, *BS* shows that the Sibashwa people and others living within the vicinity of the Kruger National Park

are not criminals at all but are involved in acts of survival when they poach within the boundaries of the park to feed themselves and their families. Through flash back, Meyer positions post-colonial eco-crime issues parallel to colonial crimes for a clearer critique and understanding.

Inspector Phatudi, a Sibashwa tribesman and a member of the Violent Crime Unit of the Tzaneen South Africa Police Service (SAPS), is used by the author to speak about the colonial injustices that lead to local people being accused of not caring about issues of conservation. While Lemmer may be viewed as the protagonist of the entire narrative, in the section that is set in Limpopo, Phatudi is presented as an antagonist and a spokesperson of the marginalised black communities that are accused by white people of not caring for the natural environment. In a heated exchange with Emma and Lemmer, Phatudi says to them, "today my people are poor. The problems are socio-economic. We need jobs for the people, then they will leave the vultures alone" (116). Phatudi insists that what may appear to be callousness against animals are issues that should be viewed through the prism of political and social injustices of the colonialist regimes which have been perpetuated under the black post-apartheid government. Interestingly, Walton and Walton (2018: 5) argue that "profit-driven environmental violence" is usually committed by marginalised communities primarily for survival. The Sibashwas are depicted by the writer as engaged in such a socioeconomic activity of poaching to provide for their families. As a spokesperson of the marginalised black communities, Phatudi condemns both the previous white racist government and the corrupt black post-apartheid government which have failed to improve the people's economic lives leading to their resorting to desperate means such as the wanton poisoning of vultures.

Furthermore, in rage and bitterness, Phatudi explains to Emma how the apartheid beneficiaries made their fortunes without caring about animals becoming extinct. He reveals the hypocrisy of whites who made money through illegal means and are now condemning black people's means of economic survival. He says:

> Tell me madam who killed the animals in this country? Who hunted the quagga until not one was left? And the Knysna elephant? The black people? … why did the Boers make Kruger Park? Because they, the whites, had killed nearly everything and they wanted to save the last few. Same with the elephants. Because the Boers were poor and ivory was good money, so they shot them … But that is OK because they were white and it was a hundred years ago. (116)

Through Phatudi, Meyer shows the economic failures of the post-apartheid regime which borders on the social and political failures as they are unable to persuade marginalised black communities to enthusiastically participate in conservation efforts. Phatudi's observations suggest that although contemporary conservation attempts should be supported, it is important to historicise the invention of the idea of national parks. He makes it clear that parks such as the Kruger National Park are closely linked to the colonial capitalist project. In other words, the indigenous black populations around these areas are double losers. First, they lost their lands and other natural resources to the colonisers. Secondly, after colonialism and the oppressive apartheid regime, they discover that they are still not allowed to benefit from their natural resources without being criminalised. This view is expressed by Warnes (2014) who argues that Meyer's fiction exposes numerous injustices, documenting reality while simultaneously influencing the reader to begin to read the world they live in differently. In *BS*, especially in the section set in the Limpopo, Meyer's narrative fits Warnes' above observations.

Considering the above, the sections of *Blood Safari* set in Limpopo largely explore the post-apartheid government's failure to provide and improve economic opportunities for the previously marginalised groups. The novel shows that people commit crimes against nature as a desperate means of survival. In this regard, Meyer can be commended for being attentive to the differences between conservation crimes of greed committed by the already affluent apartheid and postapartheid elites, and the crimes of survival that are carried out by the impoverished communities who live along the borders of the park. Meyer is of the view that it is the responsibility of all those who come from the cultural group that perpetuated violence against the black people to understand that South Africa's violent crimes linked to conservation challenges are not only a result of greed but of the still impoverished economic and social lives of the indigenous populations. *Blood Safari* can therefore be read as blaming the economic, social and political failures of the current South African government as directly related to the violent crimes involving conservation challenges. Comaroff and Comaroff (2006) capture the grim state of affairs in postcolonies which often lead to violent crimes when they write of the:

> Rapidly changing social and economic conditions; to the shock effect of mass joblessness and the unfulfilled promise of a new age of prosperity; to a perceived failure of the regulatory state; to a view of the police as inefficient and easily corruptible; to the bipolarization of crime into, on the one hand, petty felonies committed by drab misérables driven by necessity. (276)

The Comaroffs clearly characterise the postcolonies in unflattering terms which helps the reader appreciate Meyer's depictions of ecological crimes. In writing the part set in the Limpopo, Meyer is motivated by the desire not only to expose conservation crimes but also the need to show the

connection between these crimes and the failures of consecutive governments to uplift the lives of the people who are supposed to directly benefit from the natural resources found in their vicinity.

Significantly, Meyer suggests that white people's duplicitous ways when it comes to issues ofconservation continue in the post-apartheid period. In *Trackers*, there is a rich white character called Oom Diederik who is represented humorously and uses dubious and even illegal ways of getting the most out of concerns about conservation. Oom Diederik is a disingenuous character Meyer uses to comment on the capitalist system and all its agents who feel the need to assuage their consciences of their ill-gotten wealth. For example, when he hears of the two black rhinos that are at the risk of being killed by poachers due to the political turmoil and economic collapse of Zimbabwe in the post-2000 period, he convinces Lemmer that he cares for animals and he wants to save these rhinos at all costs. However, the novel reveals that in actual fact, he is interested in the financial benefits because he knows the animals would attract tourists to his farm at Loxton and he will have some of the last few species of the black rhino to sell to private parks or conservation centres for a lucrative profit. Meyer uses Oom Diederik to comment on the greedy capitalist tendencies of the rich to commit conservation crimes while pretending to be public benefactors. Metaphorically, this can also be read as the writer's thinking about how capitalist individuals pose as helping people while they are in actual fact financially benefiting themselves in the post-apartheid period.

In persuading Lemmer to help him in transporting the rhinos, Oom Diederik says: "Everything is official Lemmer, you don't have to worry about anything" (92). The reality is that the documents that Oom Diederik uses to transport the animals are in fact forged and the animals are smuggled into the country. Moreover, he gives Lemmer a MAG-7, a handgun the narrator describes as an official state artillery which "civilians don't get licences for" (96). Significantly, although Lemmer

wants the reader to believe that he innocently participates in this illegal transaction, the fact that he is willing to carry an illegal gun while on parole shows otherwise.

Similarly, in *Blood Safari*, the writer depicts another character, Steff Moller who is also modelled like Oom Diederik. Moller is also a deceitful character who wants to assuage his conscience by appearing to be concerned by people's violation of the environment. He buys many farms with mysterious funds purportedly for purposes of rehabilitation and subsequently introduces wildlife in them without any commercial gain for himself. He manages to fool many, including Cobie, into believing that he genuinely and selflessly cares about conservation. For example, Cobie describes him as "this amazing person that just wants to heal the land so nature can balance" (*Blood Safari*, 101). However, his hypocrisy is exposed when the narrator reveals how he made his money.

Interestingly, the reader is made aware of how during the height of the apartheid regime, in the nineteen-seventies and eighties, Moller worked for the apartheid government auditing companies and was responsible for laundering illegal proceeds acquired through poaching and smuggling ivory by the government. Moller is read as a metaphoric post-colonial figure who benefits at the cost of others and gives back a little to their communities to clear his conscience like most politicians and beneficiaries of the controversial and failed Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) system today. Through Moller, Meyer condemns greedy capitalist tendencies were politicians steal from the government and then pretend to give back through charity activities.

Furthermore, *Blood Safari* explores contemporary racial crimes against black people which are masked in conservation efforts. The novel exposes white racists who hide their hatred against blacks by pretending to be only concerned about nature conservation. For example, Cobie de Villier murders four black men who include a sangoma after suspecting that they poison vultures

and sell their heads for muthi and other commercial gain. This is captured in Branca's words when he says: "the market for vulture parts has skyrocketed in the past few years with one vulture head selling at 10 000 Rands" (*Blood Safari*, 63). Warchol (2017: 77) argues that the complexities of environmental violence are "driven by a myriad of influences that are the product of historical developments [and] opportunities" which in the post-apartheid period seem to be both economic and social. Clearly then, Cobie's extra-judicial killings indicate that without assessing the historical conditions of the black people as shaped by both colonialism and the apartheid regime, white people rush into accusing and labelling blacks as ecological criminals. This poses fundamental moral questions about the il/legal, im/moral and the criminal in the post-apartheid period.

Trackers also depicts a vivid relationship between crime against humans and nature. The novel shows how crime against nature is entangled with other criminal activities. The section of the novel titled "Lemmer (*The Black Swan*)" illustrates how crime against nature is connected to other organised crimes which are committed by top state officials through ordinary people as foot soldiers. Johnson Chitepo's and Flea's business relationship best illustrates this. Chitepo was the Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe's acquaintance and Chief of Joint Operations Command before the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy. While Flea is a free white female agent who uses her extensive animal tracking knowledge to pose as a veterinary doctor in order to accumulate illgotten wealth obtained through smuggling animals and diamonds for Chitepo and company.

Chitepo's relationship with Mugabe once again exposes the participation of top government officials in the plundering of their countries' natural resources. It further shows how neocolonialism and neo-capitalism have become new forms of governance in most postcolonies. The narrator describes Chitepo as "the man with whose blessing almost any crime can be

committed with impunity" in Zimbabwe (*Trackers*, 186). Chitepo's representation shows the accuracy of Comaroff and Comaroff's description of postcolonies as kleptocratic regimes. The Comaroffs argue that in most postcolonies, including South Africa and Zimbabwe as depicted in the novel, "kleptocracy is now an accepted adjective of the state" (2006: 13) where ruling regimes and organised crimes are dissolving into one another. Chitepo represents many capitalist politicians in South Africa and the rest of Africa who are self-interested.

Evidently, it is through Chitepo's political influence that he facilitates the transportation of the rhinos illegally from Chizarira to the Beit Bridge border post by briefing the smuggling team on possible police roadblocks. Although not in the poaching and ivory trade, he uses this as an opportunity to smuggle his and Mugabe's diamonds into South Africa for sale through Flea. Chitepo's crimes are used by the writer to expose post-colonial African leaders who lament crime in public while using the very same crime to accumulate personal wealth.

2.1.4 Faultlines in Meyer's depiction of racial relations

In his depiction of conservation challenges, Meyer consistently shows bias against black people. For example, in *Blood Safari*, a frustrated white character, Frank Wolhuter bitterly criticises the failure of the black post-apartheid government to effectively facilitate the land redistribution process. Wolhuter states that there is lack of accountability from those who acquired land translating into the ineffective use of these lands by black farmers. Wolhuter says: "Just go and see what the blacks have done with the farms they got here in the Lowveld. I am not racist, I'm talking facts … it's a wasteland, the people are dying of hunger" (*Blood Safari*, 74). Although Wolhuter's observations are factually correct, his tone suggests that blacks are incapable of excelling in agriculture without the aid of the white farmers. He is also inconsiderate of the traumatic violence

black people endured when their land was violently seized. This shows that he is not simply concerned about the non-utilisation of land by black farmers but the white people's loss of economic privilege in the post-apartheid period as land is being seized from them and returned to the indigenous people.

Therefore, Wolhuter's remarks, especially his saying that he is not racist, is an attempt to buy the sympathy of the reader, so that the reader may condemn the repossession of land from white farmers for the benefit of previously marginalised black people as a disingenuous move by the government. He wants the reader to forget the initial colonial violence through which white people criminally and violently acquired the land from black people. He therefore commits the error of deliberate omission by forcing the reader to only look at the point where black people have failed. This shows how the colonial binary of us/them, competence/incompetence is legitimised. Furthermore, he also ignores the legitimate processes through which the post-apartheid government facilitates land redistribution which at least unlike the colonial and apartheid land seizures rests on democratic processes which aim at benefiting all citizens.

To Meyer's credit, he uses Phatudi to counteract Wolhuter' biased assessment of the situation. Phatudi points out: "In 1889 we were driven out. My people lived there for a thousand years and the whites came and said you have to go" (*Blood Safari*, 114). There was no such thing as compensation for the land occupied by the whites then, it was a forceful removal. He further says: "In 1889 there was no such thing, just guns at our people's heads, and they said move or we shoot you" (114). Through Phatudi, Meyer highlights the colonial injustice associated with land seizures.

However, when it comes to issues of eco-crime, Meyer seems to think that white people are better positioned to deal with this scourge. The fact that the 'Cobie case' is solved by Lemmer, a white man who has never been in the police force and knows nothing about policing shows that Meyer

shares some of the biases of some of his characters such as Wolhouter. By suggesting that blacks are incompetent, the novel succumbs to "ethnic chauvinism" (Selden et.al, 2005: 231) which glorifies whites while denigrating black people without historicising the matter in order to take into account the many years black people were obstructed from fully participating in the running of the state. Although Lemmer has limited resources, manpower and time, he speedily and successfully solves the Cobie case. By contrast, Phatudi has state resources at his disposal but miserably fails to solve the matter. Lemmer easily infiltrates the gang that was after Cobie, killing some and subsequently getting to Cobie and learning the truth about what happened twenty years ago and arriving at the conclusion that he is indeed Emma's brother.

Additionally, Meyer's negative attitude towards the post-apartheid police's failure to effectively deal with crime and violence is captured in *Trackers* by Mrs Gusti Flint. Flint's mother is used to compare the state of affairs in post-apartheid South Africa with the apartheid system. Gusti Flint is Donie Flint's mother whose death Mat Joubert, a white private investigator, is hired to investigate by his wife after he went missing for over three months with the SAPS failing to solve the case. Mrs Gusti's thinking on and about the South African democracy is a comment on the failures of the post-apartheid black-led government to control violence and criminality. She says: "How hopeless the South African Police Service is since they had taken over" (406). She further says: "I'm not saying we should go back to apartheid, but there are those of them who say, themselves, things were better then" (*Trackers*, 408). She attributes her own racist sentiments to the previously oppressed to appear as if she is not racist. Mrs Gusti conveniently forgets that the apartheid regime was effective in dealing with crime through its sustained violence and crime against black people.

In both *Blood Safari* and *Trackers*, Meyer uses similar narrative strategies to get the reader to dismiss some of the crimes committed by white characters as punishable criminal offences. For example, Lemmer solves the 'Cobie case' through criminal means but the reader is made to sympathise with his criminality because he represents justice. Similarly, in *Trackers*, Meyer uses humour as a narrative strategy to soften the crimes committed by Oom Diederik. Diederik is a criminal of note who cheats people, smuggles artillery, money, assets and furniture but the reader is not invited to condemn his actions because he is presented as a humorously harmless character.

Evidently, during the collapse of the Zimbabwean economy which resulted from the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) which seized commercial lands from white farmers, Diederik was a key player in helping most famers smuggle their properties into South Africa. In this way, he is depicted as protecting white people from the rapaciousness and caprices of the black-led government. Diederik helped these farmers smuggle "furniture, livestock, machinery, cars, tractors, trailers, implements, [and] dollars" (177). He even had a crate of MAG-7 shotguns, weapons the narrator describes as official state artillery smuggled into Zimbabwe with food and medical supplies (*Trackers*, 178). This is clearly criminal. However, in Loxton, he is depicted as a legend with everyone laughing at the mention of his name making the reader focus on the lighter side rather than on his crimes. White characters then become effective in helping read Meyer's depiction of the binary of race in contemporary South Africa.

While Oom Diederik is presented with benign humour in *Trackers*, the Sibashwa people in *BS* are harshly scolded for their crimes against animals. The narrator is sharp and reprimanding when expressing his feelings of anger and hatred of crimes against animals that are carried out by black characters. Branca represents this thinking when he tells a terrifying and horrific story to tourists at the Mogale Rehabilitation Centre of the poisoning of vultures. He says:

> *They* [black people] poison them. *They* set out a carcass laced with a deadly poison and *they* kill hundred or two hundred birds at once, but *they* can only carry often ten or twenty, so the others are just left to rot. (63). [*Emphasis added*]

The repetition of the noun "they" four times in just two sentences emphasises Branca's utter hatred of these anonymous black poachers who are presented as not only greedy but barbaric as well. The fact that they kill up to two hundred vultures at a time but only carry away twenty, serves a hyperbolic effect that makes Branca's audience develop the same kind of abhorrence that he has for these apparently senseless poachers. Branca's sympathy lies with the birds. The greed, irresponsibility and carelessness of the black poachers are presented as mixed up with ignorance and senseless violence. Branca's speech depicts black poachers in an unsympathetic tone. They greedily and senselessly destroy the South African heritage of fauna and flora. Their "anthropocentric" beliefs that humans are superior to the environment is presented for the reader's censure (Murphy 2009: 93). Branca condemns their position as criminal since it justifies human's wanton crimes and cruelty against animals.

Also, in *Blood Safari*, Lemmer relates how after his release from prison he sold his flat in Cape Town and relocated to a small and predominantly white village of Loxton in the Northern Cape. Lemmer feels that he committed his crime because things had changed in Cape Town. In a racially charged tone, he highlights that people have become less courteous on the roads. Thus, had he remained in Cape Town, he would have committed another murder. Upon his arrival in Loxton, Lemmer notices the difference between the city and the countryside. The countryside gives him a community he never enjoyed in the city. He says he is warmly welcomed in Loxton; the community

was interested in him as a person, they wanted him to be part of them unlike in the city where he was isolated and lonely. Lemmer says:

> In Loxton the people are different. They knock on your door and say, we've come for coffee … in Loxton, somebody saw me … but in the city we are nothing to each other. It's everyone for himself. (167-172)

It is important, however, to highlight that this is largely an Afrikaans white rural community that Lemmer describes here. He indicates that in Loxton, people have a sense of community, a sense that they are one family and therefore need each other. This is seen in how the younger ones with respect address the older ones in Afrikaans as Tannie (aunt) and Oom (uncle).

Unfortunately, as already noted, Loxton is predominantly an Afrikaner village and Meyer fails to provide an equivalent village occupied by black people. Both *Blood Safari* and *Trackers* say nothing about the strong social fabrics of the black communities in the Limpopo Province where both these novels are partly set. Rather, the region is depicted as hopelessly destitute, with people living in hunger and abject poverty. For example, *Blood Safari* describes dilapidated mud houses, hungry children and generally poverty-stricken villagers (116). Similarly, the houses that the reader sees through

Lemmer's eyes on his trip to and from smuggling the rhinos along the road from Musina in *Trackers* are said to be dark, suggesting that there is no electricity (117). This speaks to the degrading human conditions in these black spaces as compared to Loxton. Clearly, in representing two rural spaces, Meyer depicts one occupied by white Afrikaners as well-developed and peaceful while the Limpopo spaces which are predominantly occupied by black people are presented as lacking in modern infrastructure and afflicted by poverty and crime. The novelist does not show

deep sympathy for the economic marginalisation that black people continue to suffer in the postapartheid period.

Moreover, Meyer does not see anything good from the black government that has been in power in South Africa for the past 25 years. As already noted, in *Blood Safari*, things start falling apart in South Africa shortly after 1994 when viewed from Lemmer's point of view. For example, Lemmer says that after his release from prison he is confronted with uncontrollable crime and violence in Cape Town which has a bearing in his decision to relocate to Loxton. He says: "The biggest surprise was the new urban aggression … the absence of chivalrous, the charitable the community spirit. Lawlessness too, as though there were no rules anymore" (182). Seemingly, he believes the apartheid regime controlled urban violence better. This shifts the reader's mind from the fact that the apartheid and post-apartheid governments are ideologically divergent, grounded on different principles and using different policies to maintain order.

Clearly, the post-apartheid government has adopted policies which aim at approaching all issues from a non-violent way. On the other hand, the apartheid government used violence as the main tool for oppressing and controlling black people. Lemmer ignores the fact that the apartheid government was built on violence. He criticises the governance pillars of the post-apartheid government which he describes as "legislation on criminal procedures, founded on modern humanitarian and internationally acceptable human rights principles" (67, *Trackers*). The implication of Lemmer's words is that the black post-apartheid government has plunged urban South Africa into chaos through its democratic approaches to issues of illegality and violence. A similar view is held by Comaroff and Comaroff who argue that "postcolonies are excessively, distinctively disorderly [and] are sinking even further into chaos" (2006: 134).

In *Trackers* Meyer posits this state of chaos, criminality and the polarisation of democracy as described above by Lemmer as what led to the rise and prevalence of the private security sector as an alternative method of security. The novel reveals that competent white police officers such as Jack Fischer and Mat Joubert resigned from the police service. Similarly, Jeneat Louw and Lemmer retired from their state security jobs to join the private security industry. Lemmer says he left the government bodyguard service "in 1998 when they had to increase the number of black bodyguards" (*Blood Safari*, 181). This demonstrates the lack of enthusiasm by white security officers to work with or to be led by black people. This has resulted in the rise of the private security sector led primarily by white individuals who have retired either from the army or police out of frustration from working with black people. This is suggestive of the difficulties of effective racial integration in post-apartheid South Africa. This allows Meyer to ask critical questions about the notion of the rainbow nation.

However, the fact that these companies are white owned reveals a desperate attempt by white people to cling on to the control of the "law" like it has always been during the apartheid era. Mbembe talks about the rise of private indirect governance and asks a critical question about governance, economy and criminality saying: "Who is to be protected, by whom, against what and whom, and at what price?" (2001:67). The increase in the private security firms owned by white people suggests their lack of trust in the security provided by the black-led government. These private security companies blur the boundary between law and order by assuming government's position in controlling societal conduct such as crime and violence with or without legal means. For example, when Jeneat Louw gives Lemmer the filed pistol to go after the people who attacked him and Emma, she directly takes the law into her own hands and administers retributive justice.

She says to Lemmer: "the Glock's numbers have been filed off" (206), indicating that it was acquired illegally. Therefore, these private security firms ignore legislative processes which seek to promote law and order with respect for human life. This shows the desperate attempts by white people in the post-apartheid period to maintain order through criminal means and further shows how crimes of the past are increasingly finding ways into the post-apartheid time.

Considering the above, Meyer does not acknowledge that transitions ushered by democracy which often result in regimes that are "stationary, dynamic, chaotic, [and] even catastrophic" (Mbembe, (2001: 66). Rather than attributing the increase in criminality to challenges generally associated with moments of political, economic and social transition, the novelist seems to blame the new black South African leaders for the chaos. This is captured in the PIA report compiled by Milla in *Trackers* which states:

> Infighting, frustration, obstruction, and politicization contributed to the SAPS taking its eye off the ball of organized crime … to a large degree, crime intelligence collapsed as a result of this, and had to be rebuilt from the ground up. The result was a window of opportunity for organized crime, which was utilized fully. (66-67)

Whilst the above description may be accurate, the novelist fails to acknowledge the challenges faced by the new black government in a country that was and still is characterised by racial polarisation. Meyer seems to conflate the privileges enjoyed predominantly by white people during the apartheid rule with good governance without acknowledging the difficulties that bordered on government criminality against black people.

2.1.5 Violent crimes and the question of gender

The fact that in *Blood Safari* Emma hires a male bodyguard to accompany her on her mission exposes her vulnerability as a single white woman travelling for the first time into what is considered a predominantly black province. This reflects Meyer's interest in female characters in crime fiction and the way in which they have been depicted through a "subaltern" lens (Gramsci, 1971[1999]: 21). Notably, as the plot of the novel develops, Emma grows into a strong independent woman. This is seen in the part of the plot in *Blood Safari* set in Limpopo when she confronts the likes of inspector Jack Phatudi and Frank Wolhuter. For example, by contesting being called Emmantjie, "little Emma", by Wolhuter, she rejects the diminutive linguistic markers which render her little and vulnerable. Through her strong stance, she rejects condescending masculine protection and care. Her growth represents Meyer's attempt to move women from the periphery to the centre in gender discussions both in fiction and in the real sense.

Emma's growth is however cut short when she is hospitalised after she is shot off a moving train with a sniper rifle illustrating the writer's limitation of what seemed to be a radical thinking about gender. Her hospitalisation removes her from the bulk of the plot which is packed with extreme violence and masculine action where Lemmer, as a one-man army, kills their attackers and learns the truth about Cobie de Villers. Lemmer fulfils the conventions of the detective novel as outlined by Merivale (1996: 694) that the private investigator or detective in hard-boiled crime novel is usually "a male loner". The emphasis of the detective as a male in crime fiction as seen with Lemmer, illustrates Meyer's continuation of the genre's chauvinism. Similarly, Seago (2017) notes that the lone detective figure in crime novel is a glorification of masculinity which has always pervaded the genre. It is his macho masculinity which overshadows Emma, further making her

look more vulnerable since she is in comatose for most part of the novel. This complicates Meyer's representation of men and women in his fiction and illustrates how he continues "doing gender" as prescribed by the male canon (Butler, 1988: 519).

To his credit, in *Trackers*, Meyer suggests a different vision when it comes to the relationship between gender and violent crimes. The use of a female protagonist, Milla, seems to be a compensation on the novelist's unsatisfactory representation of Emma in *Blood Safari* as a vulnerable woman. In his construction of Milla, Meyer seems to be looking at gender issues through a postcolonial lens, using crime fiction to ungenderise society. *Trackers* opens with Milla as a violated housewife completely dependent financially on her philandering husband and cut out from the rest of the world. Like Emma, she grows with the narrative from a naïve housewife in the first book to an independent PIA employee in the third book and subsequently gets entangled in the macho criminal world in the last book. Notably, her resolute decision to be independent allows her to leave her husband and the abusive environment of her home. She eventually gets a job and love although she is a middle-aged woman who was told is out of touch with the world by her friend and advised to stay in the marriage (*Trackers*, 20). For Milla to leave her husband and start a violent free life by herself represents her refusal to find "comfort and security" under the shadow of her husband (de Beauvoir, 1945:1) and it is a clear enabling feminist vision on the part of the novelist.

Evidently, the fact that Milla is not overshadowed or rescued by anyone, especially a man, from her violent domestication, represents a clear feminist thinking and growth on the part of the writer. Unlike Emma, she grows and develops with the plot, illustrating the writer's evolution in thinking and representation of gender in *Trackers.* Milla becomes a beacon of hope for the thousands of

women who are battered, sexually and psychologically abused to resist female domesticity which often borders on violent crimes.

Moreover, the fact that she does not accept anything from her husband Christo, after their divorce, represents a clear feminist stance. It is an attempt by her to free and empower herself by living independently of male patronage. Milla says: "Taking money from him would be an acknowledgement of dependence. And submissiveness. Weakness. I am not weak" (34). In these words, she emerges as a strong woman who comes to understand that her independence and happiness are not tied to her husband and his material wealth. Her depiction is an attempt by the author to create a literary environment where victimised and violated women could begin to peacefully negotiate their independence with dignity by walking out of their victimisers to start new lives of their own. Hill (2017) claims that female characters who are plot drivers in crime fiction help women reassert themselves in society and in the negotiation of gender power. Through Milla, Meyer is clearly engaged in radical thinking about gender issues and domestic abuse in South Africa today. Simultaneously, the writer attempts removing women from the margins and placing them in the centre.

Notably, *Trackers* opens with Milla in a violent confrontation with her son. This shows Meyer's intention of dealing with gender issues and reform the masculine chauvinism of the crime genre. Her representation helps the writer reject the idea that a "woman does not think herself without man. And she is nothing other than what man decides" (de Beauvoir, 1949: 26). The fact that she gets a job and falls in love again shows that women are never too old to start afresh if they find themselves in violently abusive relationships. Milla enables Meyer not just to depict crime and violence against women but to also reject the use of biological factors such as age and femininity

to "put women in their own place", commodify and objectify their bodies while rejecting their existence as complete and able beings independent of men (Selden *et al*, 2005: 121).

Furthermore, Milla allows Meyer to critique the "unquestioning celebration of women's idealised roles as wives, girlfriends and mothers" (Murray, 2017: 17), a patriarchal tradition which borders on many forms of violence against women in their homes. Although she had a beautiful and expensive home, it represented confinement, isolation and psychological torture. This is seen in the narrator's mixed emotional tone describing the fortification of her house. Undoubtedly, it kept her from external harm but not against her husband and son's victimisation. The narrator says:

> She had been locked away in the prison, the fort of Durbanville, behind walls and alarms, a pseudo world built on ignorance, denial and enclosure, by huddling together with others who helped preserve the phantom of prosperity and security. (319)

Clearly, Milla's home was a place of torture and psychological imprisonment. Milla is an instrument through which Meyer exposes domestic violence which often goes unpunished and unrecognised because it does not leave physical bruises and therefore cannot be seen by the others.

Shortly after leaving her abusive environment, Milla begins to write a novel she had always wanted to, and to take dancing lessons as a way of reclaiming her own agency. Although she is not a good dancer, one evening the narrator says: "She moved without thinking, the music took control of her" (*Trackers*, 247). This suggests that once she had begun to completely take her life away from the abuse by her husband and son, she began feeling a sense of freedom. According to Laura and Gold (1998: 15), "women have used myriad forms of creative activity historically and crossculturally to connect to themselves and each other". Milla as a violated individual turns to the

healing power of artistic and creative imagination of writing and dancing instead of physically confronting the evil which she was subjected to in her own home. Therefore, the journals she kept since she got married could also be read as archives in which she stores away her pain and anguish and help her start a new life.

Milla's involvement with Lucas Becker, a man suspected to be an artefact smuggler and a kidnapper because of her longing for his adventurous life shows the gap in the depiction of female characters in *Blood Safari* and *Trackers.* As seen in *Blood Safari*, Emma is conveniently removed from the macho violent action of the plot. Contrary to this representation, Milla, in *Trackers*, is at the centre of the crime adventure where she is shot at by Muslim extremists and is involved in a car chase by the PIA because of her association with Becker. Clearly, Meyer is thinking differently in *Trackers* about gender and female abilities. Notably, Milla outlives Becker who is shot dead when the robbery he orchestrated goes wrong.

Additionally, in *Trackers*, Flea also survives in the criminal underworld of game and diamond smuggling, crimes often associated with men. Clearly, through these female characters, the novelist foregrounds crime committed by females showing that women do not need to subject themselves to oppressive and often violent male protection. Meyer uses this to explore the many ways in which a traditionally masculine genre like crime fiction can, in Orford's (2013:225) words, be "bent" out of its conservative shape to articulate feminist agendas. He depicts women who strive and eventually succeed in taking charge of their lives and gaining independence from abusive male characters.

2.1.6 Conclusion

Through the selected novels, Meyer destabilises the reader's dogmatic thinking about law, order and violent crimes in the post-apartheid period. The novels blur the reader's sense of im/morality and il/legality by forcing him or her to think about alternative means to fight the violent crimes which have become synonymous with the post-apartheid state. In *Blood Safari*, Meyer shows that some of the violence and crime in the post-apartheid period have their roots in the politics of the past which have spilled over into the new South Africa. *Blood Safari* illustrates that eco-crimes predominantly associated with black people have their roots in the colonial and the apartheid pasts of the country. While commentating on the need for humans to foster a symbiotic relationship with the fauna and flora in order to preserve natural resources which are also seen as the country's heritage, the novel also highlights some of the democratic government's failures in dissolving class boundaries which contribute to violent crimes. Furthermore, in *Trackers*, Meyer shows that black crimes are not comparable to the crimes of greed committed by government's elite and other rich individuals. The novel also shows that eco-crime is not a racial phenomenon, rather it is a part of larger capitalist tendencies of most postcolonial states. Therefore, while entertaining the reader with the twist and turns of violence and crime detection, the novels also assume a socio-economic commentary, illustrating the difficulties of separating the aesthetic and the political in contemporary South African crime fiction. Notably, when *Trackers* is read as a sequel to *Blood Safari*, it becomes clear that Meyer's views on gender, race and violent crimes have been evolving to encompass a liberating view of woman.

3. CHAPTER THREE

3.1 Violent crimes in Margie Orford's selected novels: Negotiating space and race and the transgression of genre and gender boundaries

3.1.1 Introduction

Margie Orford's Clare Hart series is made up of five riveting and chilling detective novels, *Like Clockwork* (2006), *Blood Rose* (2007), *Daddy's Girl* (2009), *Gallows Hill* (2011), and *Water Music* (2013). The series is set in contemporary Cape Town, exuding realism. The novels are largely set in the affluent suburbs of Sea Point and poverty-stricken and gang-ridden Maitland Squatter camp areas and the Cape Flats. According to Jacobson (1988: 20), "a work [of creative imagination] may be called realistic if I, the person judging it perceive it as true to life". Orford's representation of crime and violence in these novels exhibits a realism. Vincent and Naidu (2013) argue that while offering hope and consolation to the reader, fictionalised representations of crime are steeped in a realist mode which convinces the reader that the narrative has its basis in real-life crimes.

Narrated through a third person omniscient narrator, the novels are an account of women traversing and transgressing post-apartheid spatialities in the Cape Town metropolis. Through this strategy, Orford foregrounds her radical feminist agenda in all her novels. The novels expose the many ways in which the various spaces of Cape Town are inhabited, juxtaposed, entangled, and how these determine life opportunities and choices for its inhabitants.

The series is closely knit by a female protagonist, detective Dr Clare Hart, an embodiment of female excellence and a character who is used to challenge many stereotypes about what women can and cannot do. Hart is a journalist-cum-criminal profiler, detective, femicide specialist,

television producer and a patron of gender-based violence (GBV) organisations. Orford's placement of an active and independent female character at the centre of these novels can be read as her attempt to transverse genre and gender norms through depicting a female detective who allows her to relentlessly advance a feminist agenda.

This chapter examines only two of Orford's novels, namely, *Daddy's Girl* (2009) and *Water Music* (2013). *Daddy's Girl* is the third novel in the series but is read as a prequel to *Blood Rose* chronologically making it the first narrative in the series. *Water Music* is to date the last novel in the series. The novel allows the tracing of Orford's development as a writer and her stance on feminism, and socio-political concerns which have become synonymous with contemporary South Africa. Given the sequence of *Blood Rose* and *Daddy's Girl,* my discussion will also slightly use evidence from *Blood Rose*.

Daddy's Girl is an emotionally-charged narrative of resilience and survival with a plot that takes place within seventy-two hours, and the first twenty-four are critical in the search for a missing child. It narrates stories of hope, resilience and survival for Captain Reidwan Faizal's daughter, Yasmin Faizal, and Pearl who is the daughter of a notorious 28 prison gang leader, Graveyard de Wet. Yasmin is kidnapped on a Friday afternoon outside her ballet school. It is the responsibility of her father, a man known for his brilliance in criminal detection by his colleagues and community to find her within twenty-four hours before she could be declared dead as it is common for children who go missing for over twenty-four hours. Pearl De Wet is an anti-rape activist who lives in the shadows, and on the run from her father after she testified against him in court where he was sentenced to three life sentences in prison for multiple crimes, but subsequently broke out and is now out for revenge.

Similarly, *Water Music* is a tragic story of love, resilience, trust and an exploration of some of the most heinous crimes committed against women. In this novel, a toddler is found on Table Mountain strapped to a tree. Shortly after, a dead body is exhumed nearby and identified as her mother through DNA fingerprinting. It is the responsibility of Hart who is contracted by the SAPS through Section 28, a department that deals with crime against children, to understand what happened to the little child and her mother. While investigating this case, Clare is approached by a Mr Wegner to help find his missing granddaughter, Rosiland Wegner (Rosa). Rosa is a troubled teenage girl who has been sexually abused by her stepfather. On a scholarship to study music at an elite academy in Cape Town, Rosa gets mixed up with the wrong crowd trying to raise money to buy her ill grandfather cancer medication. During these endeavours, she becomes a victim of sexual abuse again at the hands of a crime tycoon, Milan Savic, who pays her to film a gang rape pornographic tape. Seeking comfort and sanctuary, Rosa is lured into a trap of horror by a religious charlatan, Noah Stern, who incarcerates her in a dungeon, and then rapes and maims her. Upon noticing that Rosa is a troubled young woman Stern lures her into his home under the pretence that he will offer her a sanctuary.

Through a postcolonial feminist lens, the chapter examines how Orford tries to go beyond the form and content of a traditional crime novel through her presentation of what one may call a radical feminist project. She transgresses and destabilises the content of the genre while maintaining the form. Orford exposes the vulnerabilities of girls and women in Cape Town due to criminal violence in general and the endemic fatal violence that characterises the life of many, especially the poor. Orford also encounters challenges as she tries to craft her radical feminist vision in relation to violent crimes, gender, race and the genre of crime fiction. Orford's depiction of Cape Town

reveals unsettling apartheid spatial planning and eugenics project which continue to have devastating effects on social, economic and political relations in the post-apartheid state.

3.1.2 Spatiality, violent crimes and women traversing the city

Daddy's Girl and *Water Music* are set in real spaces and time in the post-apartheid Cape Town and explore the deepseated relationship of spatiality, temporality and crime. The novels invoke the socio-cultural, economic and political and specific geographical characteristics rooted in the history of Cape Town as well as its present. Orford's representations of Cape Town, Maitland Cemetery Squatters, the Cape Flats, Table Mountain and Sea Point allow the reader to see the contemporary social and economic realities of these spaces. Martin (2013), highlighting the realist mode of these novels, suggests that the Clare Hart series in general refers to the actual time and space in relation to violent crimes in Cape Town today.

Detective Hart is theoretically free to traverse different spaces of the city of Cape Town, but the fear of crime constrains her actual movements. Her situation mirrors that of all other female characters depicted in the novels. This indicates that the political freedom brought about by the dismantling of the apartheid state apparatus did not necessarily result in feelings of physical security for many citizens, especially women. In traversing these spatialities, Hart represents the metamorphosis of the figure of the sleuth into a "flaneur" whom De Kock (2016:40) refers to as "an entrapped citizen". This allows her the opportunity to be a "searcher, digging into urban spaces to find clues beneath the appearance of the metropolitan exterior" to solve her cases (Pezzotti 2012: 1). While carrying out criminal detection, Hart allows the reader to see the Cape Town spatial arrangements through her eyes. Also, Martin (2013: 69) emphasises that "the locatedness of the occurrence of crime [and] its investigation often necessitates a greater examination of not only

individuals and events but particularly of the spaces in which crime typically occurs" (2013: 69). In this regard, although the whole of urban Cape Town is depicted as a dangerous place for women and girls, the poorer coloured neighbourhoods are portrayed as being even more toxic and deadly.

Although Hart is a journalist and has quasi-SAPS officio status suggesting a sense of ease to walk the streets and the city, her safety in this regard is constrained by her being a woman. For example, through Hart's trip into the Cape Flats as she goes to answer a call by a Mrs Adams whose daughter, Chanel, has gone missing, the reader is made to see the dangers that await any woman who presumes traversing the poor coloured suburbs with impunity. When she arrives in the Cape Flats, Hart looks for a street without a name and sees a gang graffiti of a "freshly painted hammer and sickle" (*Daddy's Girl*, 13), an insignia of the notorious Afghan street gang. This place is so dangerous that the narrator says women are regularly told: "keep your legs open and your mouth shut" (261). This indicates the prevalence of unchecked sexual violence that women are subjected to in this neighbourhood. The narrator shows that Hart can easily become a victim despite her status as a renowned crime profiler and investigator. Her quasi-legal status allows the reader to ask fundamental questions about the safety of ordinary women in this space as they get on with their everyday lives.

What intensifies Hart's vulnerability while in the Cape Flats is not just the fact that it is not her territory, but it is because she is white, and she is a woman in a coloured and gang-ridden space. This shows that she is doubly endangered; by being a woman and white. The fear that assails Hart as she waits for her escort in the Cape Flats, shows how dangerous the place is for her and exposes her actions as foolish heroism. With a spine-chilling tone, the narrator says:

> A boy detached himself from a wall, sauntered over, jeans slung, Clare was in his territory, and he knew it, knew that she knew it. Smiled. Her pulse quickened as she keyed in the text she had been instructed to send. (13)

This chilling and brief negotiation of power between Lemmentjie, Mrs Adams' son, who is also Hart's escort, takes place simultaneously at different realms. First, it takes place at the realm of her being a woman. The narrator states that Hart had learnt that men hurt women and little girls in this country, they "hunt them, play with them, listen to them cry, kill them" (225). Her vulnerability is laid bare by this encounter. Secondly, her being white and an outsider in a coloured space increases the dangers that may befall her. However, by allowing Hart to go into this space and safely making it out, Orford gives the reader, especially her female readers a glimpse of the dangers that awaits them and how they are doubly endangered and disadvantaged in different postapartheid spaces.

In contrasts to Hart's feelings of paralysing fear when she is alone in the Cape Flats, De Wet although walking from prison, seems to dominate the space sowing fear among those he encounters. His only fear is detection by the law enforcement agents. During this trip, he easily blends into the space but is clearly in charge of it, showing the difference in the "freedom" men and women have in their occupation of different spaces. Contrasted with De Wet's complete control of space despite his escaped-prisoner status, is a woman whom the reader sees through De Wet's eyes as she walks home presumably after work. She realises that she is prey and she "stopped. She listened … and she walked on. Uncertain" (*Daddy's Girl*, 4). Although she does see her stalker, she senses that she is being watched. About De Wet, her dangerous watcher, the narrator says: "The man watched her at ease. Prison erases the smell of a man, teaches him the art of absence" (4). Although De Wet does not harm this woman, the fear she feels and the freedom

he enjoys as they walk the city, exposes the reader to some of the realities about gender and spatiality in the country today.

The difference in the way De Wet, Hart and the unnamed woman feel as they walk the seedy parts of the city can be read through Schmid's seminal work on spatial freedom and gender. Schmid states: (2012: 16):

> [It] is imperative to remember the simple and brutal fact that women's experience of public space is undeniably different from that of men, because of the ways in which women's mobility and behaviour in that space is constantly regulated, or even prohibited, by violence and harassment.

The novel's opening with the traversing of space by De Wet, Hart and the unnamed woman, allows the reader to see the precarity of women's mobility in certain public spaces of Cape Town. This reveals Orford's agency in grappling with gender, spatiality and the fear of violent crime in postapartheid spaces.

Notably, Orford shows that not only are South African women unsafe in public spaces, they also face fatal danger in their intimate and private domestic spaces. For example, for Pearl, both the public space and her own apartment are unsafe. In public, she hides away from unwarranted violence from males having already been a victim and sees her home as being safer from this violence. Unfortunately for her, it is in her apartment that her father, De Wet, rapes and maims her again shortly after escaping prison. The narrator describes their encounter in Pearl's home ridiculing the illusion of the home as a haven, a safe space. The narrator says:

> [De Wet] was now inside, bringing in the cold with him. The door was open onto the sandy patch of the yard, where the washing hung forlornly on a line. Outside.

> The illusion of safety. All outside was a place from which you'd be dragged inside. (*Daddy's Girl*, 294).

This incident shows that there is no space that is safe for a woman in South Africa today. The narrator further says: "[De Wet's] hand a vice on her arm. The knife on the right. He had time to work on her. With a knife in his hand he always got what he wanted" (*Daddy's Girl*, 296). He raped her and left her for dead on the floor until she was discovered the next morning by Hart barely breathing and taken to ICU. This shows as Hart had demonstrated earlier that women are often required to open their legs and close their mouths and that no space is safe for a woman.

Pearl's encounter with her cold-hearted father shows that a woman is disadvantaged both in the streets and in her home. For Pearl, home becomes a space of horror. The house which should at least keep her safe, increases her chances of being victimised as she is unable to run away from her father after she went in and locked the door. Secondly, she is victimised by her own father, suggesting that either way she is already endangered. Her depiction allows the reader to see the dangers which await South African women. Therefore, rather than her home being what Moss (2006: 19) calls "a refuge", a place of safety and comfort, the home for Pearl, like many women in the post-apartheid South Africa becomes a space of entrapment and violation. Wiley and Barnes (1996: xv) accurately observe, a "home is not always a comfortable place to be [it could be] a safe haven or imprisonment or [a] site of violence". For many women depicted in the novel, the home turns out to be a place of both violence and death.

Moreover, in *Water Music*, Orford shows that even in spaces that are considered elite and privileged, girls still suffer violence and abuse. An extremely talented cello player, Rosa, is offered

a bursary to study music at the Cape College of Classical Music located in the inner part of Cape Town.

However, what seemed to be an opportunity, turns out to be sexual violence facilitated by her very sponsors who are regarded as respectable members of society. In a graphic and heart-rending description, Katarina, a fellow student at the music college tells Hart that "someone was fucking [Rosa]. A lot of people were fucking her. I couldn't see their faces, men. Big men. They stood around her, their legs were like a forest. It was horrible" (*Water Music*, 209). Katarina's emphasis of Rosa's vulnerability is captured by the phrase "big man", which suggests Rosa was little and fragile compared to these men. Also, the horror with which this is depicted is seen in Hart's reaction as she leaves the college where she was questioning Katarina. Hart feels "dirty and panicked" (*Water Music,* 210). What unhinges her is the sudden realisation that there are no safe spaces for a girl child in Cape Town and possibly the rest of the country.

Evidently, Hart's trip to the Cape Flats is used to show how Cape Town's spatial planning is entangled with the way violent crimes are distributed in the city. As she drives from the Cape Flats towards the upmarket suburbs, this is what the reader is made to see:

> As she [Hart] got closer to town, the pavements became less cracked, then they sprouted trees, and the houses were set further and further back from the roads. There were walls instead of wire fences, and soon she was back in the oak-lined avenue of the suburbs that sheltered in the grey skirts of the Table Mountain … [She] opened the sliding doors that led onto the balcony overlooking the sea Promenade. (*Daddy's Girl,* 17)

This representation reveals an entangled relationship of post-apartheid spaces, class and race. Nuttall (2009: 1) defines entanglement "as a condition of being twisted together or entwined, involved with; it speaks of an intimacy gained, even if it was resisted, or ignored or uninvited".

The novel shows that post-apartheid Cape Town is divided in terms of class and not geographic distance. The geographies juxtaposed are both temporally and spatially entangled. They exist in the same temporality and spatiality yet remain divided through class. In her own words, Orford (2010: 187) says her style as a writer "parachutes [her] …into a dramatic moment in the present" allowing her to explore the socio-economic issues in their contemporaneity as they already are or in the processes of becoming.

Interestingly, Martin (2013: 83) refers to Orford's writing style as a representation of "spatial truth", suggesting that Orford's representation of space is in a realist mode and truthful to life. Regarding Cape Town as an entangled space, Lemanski (2004:103) writes:

> The Post-apartheid Cape Town continues to exhibit ruthless spatial polarization, dominated by the juxtaposition of centrally located affluent suburbs and economic centres alongside poverty-stricken and overcrowded settlements on the city edges.

The reader sees this ruthless spatial polarization through De Wet's eyes. After his escape from prison, he tries to persuade the reader that his criminal conduct is a result of the unjust Cape Town spatial planning. He persuades the reader to see crime as a "political-historical construction" (Pillay, 2012: 1). Although right to a certain degree, the fact that he had been in prison for a long time makes his observation of the changes in Cape Town acute. The narrator says Graveyard de Wet saw the new housing developments which he calls "villas hiding behind security booms". In contrast, as he moved further into the city's periphery, he sees "government-built boxes for the

people" (5). These government-built boxes are the violence-infested Cape Flats. De Wet concludes that since the dawn of democracy, "things had changed for the rich [but] nothing had changed for the poor" (5-6). Although his racial tone may gain him the sympathy of the reader, he remains a tainted figure due to his gruesome crimes. However, through him, Orford illustrates as Patrick (2000) argues that the wave of change which came with the transition from apartheid to democracy continues to be economically blurry for marginalised groups.

The difference in spatial arrangements of Cape Town as seen through De Wet's eyes, allows Orford as a white woman to show that crime has no race, it affects everyone. However, the previously marginalised populations, especially non-white women, are more prone to violent crimes because of the spaces they occupy in the post-apartheid period.

3.1.3 Transgressing gender and genre: Radical feminism in Orford's crime fiction

The fact that these novels are narrated by a woman and have a female protagonist show the writer's radical feminist agency. Since traditional crime fiction usually has a male hero, by centring a heroine in all her narratives, Orford signals her intention of transgressing the gender boundaries of the genre as she appropriates it for her feminist agenda. Through these novels, Orford is engaged in what Matzke and Mühleisen (2006: 5) sees as a "post-colonial genre bending". In Orford's case, the bending of this genre is a feminist attempt to advocate for the voices of women who have been marginalised in the traditional canon. Through Hart's characterisation, Orford does gender and also moves women from the margins to the centre. Her use of a female protagonist who embodies her (the writer's) own character in the real world, allows her to narrate an emotional truth which is difficult to narrate through journalistic crime accounts. She uses Hart to depict both herself and

the plight of women in the post-apartheid environment. Seemingly, Orford as a writer narrates others and "is narrated as well" (Bhabha, 1990: 301). Through this, she takes a radical feminist stance and gets the sympathy of the reader as she shares the emotional truth of violent crimes against women and girls in South Africa.

The narrator indicates that Hart has a personal motivation in fighting crime and getting justice for girls and women. Her own twin sister, Constance, bears marks of violence both physically and emotionally and Hart herself is almost raped in *Daddy's Girl*. Orford argues that the body of a female victim of violent crime is "simply the page onto which [violent] language in scripted" (2013: 227). This is true of Constance who was raped when she was in her late teens. The narrator describes her mutilation:

> [Constance's] thighs and breasts carried the knife emblems of the gang that had used her to initiate two new members. On her back, illegible now, were brutal signatures where they had carved their initials. Her left cheekbone was curved as sharply as a starling's wing, the other had been reconstructed out of the shattered mess left by a hammer blow that had glanced off her skull and spared her life. (*Blood Rose*, 38).

The scars on her body mark the power the criminals exercised over her and her powerlessness as they violated her. However, Orford's narrative is an attempt to wrestle that power away from Constance's abuser by showing that she survived. Hart's relentless pursuit of justice for female victims of violence is another way in which the author tries to empower the female victims of violence. Butler (2004: 48) argues that the violence women suffer at the hands of men is "a form of social power that produces the intelligible field of subjects, and an apparatus by which the

gender binary is instituted". Therefore, Orford's representation of this violation through the eyes of a female is an attempt to empower female victims of violence and abuse to own the narrative of their victimisation so as to psychologically reclaim their power from their victimisers.

Hart's familiarity with pain recalls Scarry's assertion that pain is not a distant phenomenon but something intimate. Scarry (1985: 4) says:

> Physical pain happens, of course, not several miles below our feet or many miles above our heads but within the bodies of persons who inhabit the world through which we each day make our way, and who may at any moment be separated from us by only a space of several inches.

Hart's interest in understanding pain is inspired by her proximity to trauma and violent crimes. The vivid depiction of Constance's scars mirrors those of Pearl and influences Hart's response to violent crimes against women. In pursuing justice for violated women, Hart is trying to find closure for herself. As illustrated above, the fact that Pearl claims the stories of her victimisation as hers when she calls them "my story", allows her to own it and claim agency by discarding victimhood. This allows her to reclaim her own power, being and agency as a woman which were taken away when she was raped and maimed. Scarry (1985: 12) claims that "pain and power are intertwined". Pearl derives power from her ability to narrate her pain and frame it in her own way. Pearl says: "This is where my story is written … on my body … my name is Pearl. Pearl de Wet. My father is a general in the 27s" (*Daddy's Girl,* 35). Then the narrator says: "[Pearl] peeled her clothes, revealing the script that bore witness to her secret. Tattoos, scars, cut marks-the slander white line on her thighs … a daughter of violence, made lean and sinewy by her refusal to die" (*Daddy's Girl,* 35).

The repetitive depiction of the horrors women suffer at the hands of men in post-apartheid South Africa as depicted in *Daddy's Girl*, is a narrative strategy by the writer to reject the "cultural meaning" associated with the victimisation of women at the hands of men (Butler, 1988: 520). Butler (1988: 519) further argues that what she calls the "stylized repetitions" of violence narrated by an empowered female protagonist moves women from the position of conquered and silenced victims allowing them to reclaim their agency and recover from their victimisations. Therefore, narrating this violence through a female voice allows the writer to transgress gender and genre norms as seen in Meyer's novels.

Orford uses Pearl to transverse genre norms and realities, to represent what Orford calls the after aftermath of violence which is "unspeakable and unrepresentable" (2013: 223). She argues that women who survive the obliterating pain of violent crimes get to own the grammar of the violence that was inflicted on their bodies. In so doing, such individuals could, in Orford's words:

> Turn the obliterating experience of rape into a narrative – their own – would heal much faster, would reclaim their lost agency, their assaulted self, far more quickly. And they would be able to move on: they would be the same person, but also a profoundly different one. (2013:223)

Clearly, Pearl's survival makes her a new person, stronger and more aware of the dangers and vulnerabilities associated with being a woman in Cape Town. She survives a mutilation that was meant to not only physically and psychologically disempower her but kill as well. She survives and narrates her story, reclaiming her own power and agency. Although her comments are dismissive, they carry in them Pearl's power to win both the attention and emotions of the audience

of the Hope television programme influencing the way viewers and the reader view survivors of violent crime. For Pearl, talking about her pains has a therapeutic effect.

Also, Hart is traumatised by the cases of victimised and violated children that she must solve. To soothe her nerves, she turns to music. The narrator says: "[she] put on the Beethoven piano concerto, the sound as familiar as her own breathing, closed her eyes, willing the music to slow the crescendo of the headache" (89). Also, as she was driving to attend to a case of one Chanel Adams who was found dead at a dump site, to deal with the knot in her stomach she "pushed in a CD, turning up the volume. Moby. The music so loud it drowned her sorrows" (37).

After losing both her parents, Rosa also tries to deal with her loss through music (*Water Music* 39). Furthermore, to try and help Rosa deal with her abuse, her grandfather, Mr Wegner, teaches her to make music by imitating the sound of water from the sea and the lagoon nearby with a cello. The title of Orford's novel, *Water Music*, derives from this event. Orford uses Rosa's story to demonstrate the power of art in making sense of life. Laura and Gold (1998: 15) argue that "women have used myriad forms of creative activity historically and cross-culturally to connect to themselves". Interestingly, Mr Wegner tells the reader that he taught Rosa to make meaning of her life with music. He says: "I taught her how to make music from what she heard from the sea, the lagoon. I taught her how music could be her sanctuary" (201). Rosa herself reveals the power of music in helping her cope with trauma and pain after she is rescued by Hart from Noah's dungeon and reunited with her grandfather. She says: "I am human today because of my music and the music of the water in the dark place" (*Water Music*, 341). Orford's portrayal of Hart and Rosa in turning to art to calm their emotions suggest that the author herself devised the Hart novel series as one way of dealing with the trauma of real violent crimes that characterise the lives of many South African women today.

Orford suggests that the intention of the male abuser is not only to dehumanise their female victims but to make sure that their existence is permanently forgotten. For example, during her incarceration, Noah tells Hart that he is going to erase her from the face of the earth, for her to be forgotten and to forget her own life. He says:

> [Your] name carries with it your history, your memory-your past and future. None of which exist for you anymore, for those who love you, who might search for you for a while, the name will be a burden, we will change it, lessen the heaviness within you. (*Water Music*, 305)

To this, Hart responds with a tone of victory and conviction to show Noah that he has failed by telling him that Esther Pravin whom he had victimised through the same sadistic methods lives through her daughter. Therefore, Esther, Esther Pravin, Rosa and Hart's survival of Noah's mutilations, allows Orford to write the resilience of women who are victimised by men but survive and live on. Evidently, Orford is engaged in what Butler (2004: 41) calls the "deconstruct[ion] and denaturaliza[tion]" of violence as a means to erase women's existence from what seems to be a patriarchal society built on misogyny and sexism. In this way, Orford's novel achieves what Munt calls the dual function of crime fiction. Munt maintains that radical feminist crime fiction operates dually as "a political gesture of making visible abuse in a non-sensationalist way, and reassuring readers and victims of abuse that resolution and recovery is possible" (1994: 149). This is seen in the fact that Esther Pravin's ashes are subsequently scattered across the ocean by her children, as a way of giving her a dignified send-off despite Noah's attempt to bury her in a shallow anonymous grave on the mountain.

Orford uses Hart to disrupt gender and genre norms which is often accompanied by toxic masculinities the crime fiction genre. She makes use of her female character to ungender society, influencing the way people think about gender. She employs the apparatus (crime novels) used by male writers to undermine the canon's masculine ideologies, showing that gender is a divisive social construct (Buttler, 2004).

Evidently Orford uses Hart to achieve what Horsely (2005: 254) regards as "disrupt[ing] masculine authority and expos[ing] gender stereotyping" in crime fiction. Hart flexibility and comfortability as a protagonist allow the writer to deal with issues of content and form from a female's perspective. Orford is among a handful female crime writers such as Sally Andrews, Lauren Beukes, Karin Brynard and others in South Africa and globally who traverse genre norms through a radical stance of creating female protagonists for detective and crime novels. Hart's depiction is a rejection of the glorification of violence against females who are often portrayed as victims in the male canon. Orford's use of the crime novel can be read as a critical strategy in the on-going discussions about gender stereotyping. This is because female crime fiction reacts to the dominant misrepresentation and underrepresentation of the masculine canon. Indeed, both *Daddy's Girl* and *Water M*usic reflect Klein's (1988: 201) assertion that the liberal feminist movement "rejects the glorification of violence" against women.

Orford represents Hart and her female colleagues in the SAPS, Major Inna Brits and Rita Mkhize, as self-assertive individuals, capable, independent, self-aware, and self-knowledgeable women. These fictional representations of female independence and strength counteract what Munt (1994: 193) sees as "the prevailing fictional construct of woman-as adjunct-to-man". Orford uses her novels to resist the misrepresentation of gender in the masculine canon and subsequently influence

a new way of thinking and reading gender to neutralise the canon and society. Hart's equality to her male counterpart, and investigative partner Faizal, is vividly captured in Rita Mkhize who is also Faizal's new partner in the SAPS when she recommends that Faizal asks for help from Hart to search for his missing daughter, Yasmin. Mkhize describes Hart as a "profiler and journalist" and goes on to tell Faizal: "She [Hart] knows how to investigate. She's got connections you don't have. She has brains" (*Daddy's Girl,* 71). The repetition of the pronoun 'she' in Mkhize's words emphatically captures the readers' attention by emphasising Hart's competency as a female detective. Furthermore, by telling Faizal that Hart has brains, Mkhize's speech illustrates that the binary of competent/incompetence is socially constructed to marginalise and oppress women. She does not only praise Hart, she makes her an equal to Faizal or even appears better than him.

Furthermore, Faizal's needy and pleading tone when he finally asks for help from Hart compliments what Mkhize revealed to the reader about Hart. The fact that when Faizal and Hart first met, he dismissed her because she is a woman in a masculine environment shows the toxic gender discrimination that still characterises the South African society and the SAPS. Therefore, Orford's uncompromising feminist agenda is seen when Faizal is forced to acknowledge Hart's skills and capabilities as a detective. This is captured in his words to Hart: "I've seen your work … you've got connections I don't have" (80). Faizal acknowledges that Hart is a competent detective, even more connected than he is in the world of crime detection. He is forced to see Hart not just as an equal but as someone much more superior. This is quite a shift in attitude for previously he had shown no respect for Hart and her ability to investigate criminal cases simply because she is a woman. When Mkhize first recommended Hart to him, he had dismissively said: "I might as well go to a fortune teller" instead of going to Hart for help (71), suggesting that he did not believe that a woman could be a detective.

Significantly, although placed at the heart of a plot that is traditionally masculine, Hart is not simply depicted as a female version of a male detective. She retains her feminine traits and qualities while doing an excellent job of solving the violent crimes that involve female victims. The fact that she is not moulded as a man allows the writer to use her as a tool to do and undo gender. Orford works with and against the demands of detective fiction to comment on issues affecting women in South Africa today. About this, Martin (2013: 17) says:

> [Orford] works with and against the demands of the genre: she is able to turn an entertaining literary form to subtly serious account, in particular to suit her (and evidently her readers) interest in exploring South African femaleness as both relevant narrative subject matter and as the generative, investigative agent of local crime.

While working with the form of the genre Orford disrupts its contents by using a female protagonist. Orford (2013) acknowledges that she consciously uses the detective novel to narrate issues affecting South African women. The misogyny and dangers which awaits women is seen on De Wet's breast tattoo, which reads, "vrou is gif", Afrikaans for "woman is poison". Orford uses Hart to illustrate that man is in fact poison. In a conversation with Hart, Charlie Wang (Hart's technology wizard) says: "It'll be unusual if it isn't the father … you know that. This country of yours, it almost always is. Father, stepfather, uncle, brother, cousin. A kind of family free-for-all, most of the time" (144). This suggests that crime and maleness are intertwined, indicating that men, and especially close relatives, are more likely to abuse women and girls in post-apartheid Cape Town. The case of Pearl and Rosa are illustrative in this regard.

Orford's radicalism is also captured by the title of her novel, *Daddy's Girl* which is very ironic given the relationships displayed in the novel. The title is suggestive of the content of the novel and the kind of relationships the reader will encounter in the novel. "Daddy's girl" is a phrase often used to describe a girl child who shares a deeply intimate relationship with her father. Such a girl trusts and loves her father and the love and trust are reciprocated by the father. Given that South Africa is a dangerous society for little girls as captured by Powers (2015: 30) who says: "South Africa is known for its violent crimes", the word "girl" and the picture of a little girl on the cover of a crime novel captures the attention of the reader by suggesting vulnerability and the girl's need for fatherly protection. Interestingly, on the jacket of *Daddy's Girl* there is an emotive picture of a pair of ballet shoes belonging to a little girl, Yasmin, which is suggestive of the danger she might be in once she is declared missing.

Moreover, there are two girls in *Daddy's Girl* whose respective intimate relationships with their fathers are both positively and negatively appealing to the reader. On the one hand, Yasmin is the daughter of the decorated SAPS captain, Faizal, who would do anything to keep his daughter safe from harm. This is seen when he humbles himself and asks for help from Hart to find his kidnapped daughter despite having previously dismissed Hart and her success in the Hope project. Hart's project aims at "looking for missing girls" (15), "finding [them], helping them heal, [and] returning them to their mothers" (39). Once Yasmin is found, Faizal allows her mother to relocate with her to Canada where the mother had just been offered a job because he believes Canada would be a safer environment for his daughter. Notably, this is a great sacrifice for Faizal because he had previously refused signing her over to her mother, wanting always to be close to his daughter, even though he and Yasmin's mother had divorced. His subsequently allowing his daughter to be so far away from him illustrates his selflessness as a father in trying to keep her safe.

Faizal's decision is admirable and persuades the reader to compare Canada and South Africa. The former is thought of as a safe space for girls and the latter dangerous. This may be read as a perpetuation of stereotypes by the writer that postcolonial Africa is a dangerous place. Comaroff and Comaroff (2006: vii) observe that "postcolonies are especially, excessively, distinctively violent and disorderly". The scholars maintain that "Yes, they [postcolonial states] are sinking ever further into a mire of conflict, coercion, and chaos" (2006: vii). This comparison on a postcolonial context ignores the fact that the chaos in these post-colonies is partly a result of western colonialism and neo-colonial interference which are a fundamental spilling of the colonial into the postcolonial moment.

On the other hand, opposed to the caring protective and possessive relationship Faizal shares with his daughter is Pearl's and her father's toxic and violent relationship. Pearl de Wet shares a lethal relationship with her father Graveyard a notorious leader of the 28-prison gang. Ironically, Pearl is also a "daddy's girl" but in a completely different and painful way. She was conceived through violence after De Wet raped her mother. In a tragic turn of events, some fifteen years later, Pearl wanted to meet him, and he rapes her the same day, conceiving a child whom she names Hope. Showing how dangerous De Wet is, she is forced to give her daughter away for adoption fearing that he would also violate her. Therefore, Pearl is an abused daddy's girl; she is desperate for her father's love and protection, but she finds violence in her father's arms instead. Evidently, the title of the novel introduces the reader to this complex father-daughter relationship and how men, and fathers in particular, participate in violating and victimising their daughters, making domestic spaces unsafe. Contrastingly, where Faizal is a hero in fighting crime and violence, De Wet has notoriety in the criminal underworld. He is a fierce gang leader who abuses, maims and kills even his own progeny.

Notably, both *Daddy's Girl* and *Water Music* have positive denouements which satisfy the reader's need for justice as the perpetrators of violence are ultimately killed. Klein (1998: 201) notes that "feminist detective fiction restores order to a disordered world by investigating [crime and] serving justice". Although the justice Orford serves is not judicial, the novels allow the reader to think of the possibilities of using violence to punish perpetrators of violent crimes. Interestingly, Orford and Meyer seem to share similar views about extra-judicial justice when it comes to violent criminals. Their views seem to be influenced by the fact that the post-apartheid South African criminal justice system often fails the victim of violent crimes. In light of this, Comaroff and Comaroff's argument that fictional detectives serve to iterate an order that proves fragile in postcolonies become noteworthy (2006: 20). In this way, Orford is iterating the post-apartheid order for her readers by eventually allowing violent criminals to be killed.

Therefore, Orford's novels show her sympathetic attitude towards the plight of women in contemporary South Africa. The fact that the main victims in both novels survive indicates that indeed these are stories of survival and hope. For example, in *Daddy's Girl*, Yasmin Faizal is found alive by Hart and returned to her parents without sustaining serious physical injuries. Similarly, in *Water Music*, Rosa Wegner and Esther, the little girl who was found on the mountain, all survive their horrific ordeals. Although the psychological injuries sustained by these girls cannot be ignored, the relatively happy outcome of their tragic stories inspires hope especially to female readers who may have felt like helpless victims of violence and crime. The ending of these novels fulfils what Naicker (2017: 7) sees as "a generic contract between writer and readership", suggesting that readers are drawn to the genre because of its positive ending in the solution of crime. Naicker echoes Plain (2001: 3) who argues that crime fiction, and especially "detective fiction, confronts and tames monsters the reader is afraid of in the actual world". Clearly, the

positive ending of *Daddy's Girl* has some therapeutic effect on Orford's readers as they feel that some form of justice has been served.

The girls who are rescued from crime and violence are like resurrected individuals because they were all at points of death but survived because of Hart's indefatigable efforts. Through them, Orford captures women's resilience and their ability to survive mutilations. Their second chance at life is captured in Hart's speech during her Persephone fund raising event for her Hope Project when she emotively asks her audience: "What does it feel like to come back from the dead?" (64). This provocative rhetorical question does not only capture the emotions of the reader but also validates Hart's credibility as a competent female detective in finding missing girls and bringing them back to their families. Hart's depiction is a disruption of normative conceptions of gender in criminal detection in the masculine crime fiction canon.

Water Music which to date is the last novel in the Clare Hart Series, depicts an intensified, robust feminist agenda. In this novel, Orford intensifies her feminist agenda by advocating the rights of little girls who are often unable to tell their own stories. Clearly, *Water Music* illustrates a significant shift in Orford's literary vision of representing crime and violence in contemporary South Africa.

3.1.4 Fault-lines in destabilising crime fiction and slippages in the radical feminist project

As already highlighted, creating a female protagonist for a genre that is inherently masculine is a clear political agenda on Orford's part. However, Orford faces several challenges in her postapartheid genre bending project of appropriating this masculine genre to advance a feminist project. Knight (2004: 163) points out that it is difficult to appropriate a masculine genre to advance

a feminist agenda especially "for writers speaking as women, and usually as feminists, in a form which is deeply implicated with masculinism". In both *Daddy's Girl* and *Water Music*, Orford's radical feminist project is characterised by several fault-lines which indicate that inserting a female protagonist in a violent plot is challenging and does not necessarily mean the genre has been ungendered.

Hart is disadvantaged by both biology and masculine bureaucracy. She is doubly disadvantaged, first by being a woman, and second by the masculine nature of the SAPS which results in bureaucracy which slows down her investigative productivity. *Water Music* opens with Section 28 of the Gang Unit under threat of closure from a male political stooge, Jakes Cwele, who is deployed as the new SAPS director in Cape Town. Major Brits remarks that "Cwele doesn't give a fuck about children", he wants to destroy the Gang Unit because it has made a number of people above him uncomfortable (8). Orford exposes the de-professionalisation of the SAPS through the politicisation of the institution and shows how women in the SAPS are not treated as equal to their male counterparts. The fact that the SAPS with its male detective and resources is depicted as failing to solve cases involving the victimisation of women in Cape Town while a female detective who is not a police officer is able to, illustrates that association of competence with a certain gender is a socially constructed method of doing gender, aimed at depicting females as "suffering from natural defectiveness" (de Beauvior, 1949:25). Orford exposes the SAPS as a masculine and patriarchal institution that patronises women officers.

Hart also constantly worries about how getting pregnant, as she eventually does in the *Water Music*, would impede her investigative work. Orford is therefore aware of some of the biological givens that slow down women's activity when it comes to the physically intensive rescue work in which Hart regularly engages. This is a major unavoidable pitfall to the writer's feminist agenda. The fact

that Hart would be unable to effectively carry out the physically strenuous aspects of her duties when pregnant becomes a constant reflective point for the writer and limits her vision of a radical feminist agenda. For example, the narrator reveals that after several sexual encounters with her investigative partner Faizal who she subsequently shares a romantic relationship with, Hart used a pregnancy home test kit which confirmed the nausea she had been feeling for the past two weeks.

The test kit had a "blue line bisecting her life, just as it bisected the narrow plastic in her hand" (*Water Music*, 6-7). The blue line indicating her pregnancy also metaphorically marks a division of her own being into two; a mother and a detective. This suggests that indeed at some point, she would be unable to carry out her work as effectively as she used to as her attention would be divided between two worlds motherhood and detective work.

This confirmation of impending motherhood reinforces Hart's femininity and vulnerability as a woman. This is ironic because Orford says her intention was to construct a female protagonist who is sharp, independent thinking and has a strong character. A female protagonist who is "expunged of all the disgraced outward signs of femininity: softness, fear, vulnerability, dependency, domesticity and passivity" (Orford, 2013: 59). Envisioned this way, Hart would fulfil the requirements of a traditional masculinised detective fiction. This is a tradition of "valorised physical strength, toughness, solitary, alienated [male] investigators" (Naidu, 2014: 71). However, even though she is strong and tough, pregnancy and the impeding motherhood prevent Hart from fulfilling all the conventions of a hard-boiled detective fiction tradition. Orford is aware that this limits the extent to which Hart can be used to achieve all aspects of a radical feminist agenda through a detective novel.

Interestingly, to compensate for this glaring fault-line in her feminist project, Orford constructs the character of a male detective that compliments Hart. Detective Faizal is brought up by an uncompromising widowed mother. Apparently, according to the logic of the narrative, this enables Faizal to develop a soft spot for women. His thoroughness and astuteness as he works with little girls who have been victimised, shows how he is also emotionally drawn into the need to make Cape Town a safe place for little girls. This explains why Orford thinks that the reader would find it unproblematic for Hart to be paired with him and eventually rescued by Faizal at the end of both *Daddy's Girl* and *Water Music*.

Orford further suggests that the pairing of Hart and Faizal is unproblematic to her feminist project by depicting them admiring and being respectful towards each other as equals unlike in traditional crime fiction where Hart would have likely been Faizal's sidekick. The narrator observes: "Clare admired his [Faizal's] thoroughness, his astuteness, and his compassion for his helpless little patients" (27). She admires and respects him in their line of work as much as Faizal respects Hart as indicated by his asking for her help to find Yasmin. Orford makes it apparent that it is their respect for each other that makes them a lovable team and subsequently a good romantic couple. By making the two equal, Orford forces the reader to accept Faizal's helping Hart, unaware that it compromises her chances of writing a radical feminist agenda through crime fiction

Notably, putting a male and female together in equal positions of authority and in a genre that is masculine is indicative of Orford's attempt to engage in genre transgression and eventually transformation. Orford tries what Plain (2008: 14) calls "genre contamination" which is the destabilisation of the content of the detective novel. However, the fact that Hart is a protagonist but shares the spotlight with her male investigative partner and subsequently boyfriend, exposes a major slippage in Orford's feminist project. This gender pairing suggests that Hart is incomplete

and needs a male complement to negotiate a dangerous criminal space. Hart is therefore, only slightly elevated from the position of the Other, but not completely exonerated of the marginalisation women continue to suffer.

Furthermore, the fact that Hart does not fight crime in general but specific gender crimes seems to be an indictment of women detective skills. She is constructed so that she only fights crimes against women ignoring other crimes that are prevalent in the city of Cape Town. The fight against the proliferation of drugs and the attendant violent crimes is left to Faizal, a man. This limits Hart's influence on the traditional domestic fear of crime while Faizal is free to venture out into the masculine world of organised crime. This is a limitation in Orford's radical feminist project in the Hart novel series.

Moreover, the main weakness with Hart's efforts is that she deals with symptoms and not the root of the problem. She largely deals with the victims of crime and not criminals by trying to heal and integrate the victims back into a criminal infested society. For example, in *Daddy's Girl*, Pearl is victimised by her father. Calvaleen Van Ransberg, the daughter of SAPS's captain Van Ransburg who orchestrated Yasmin's kidnapping, is violated by her gangster boyfriend and the other girls who go missing are also violated by individuals who are connected to the trade of drugs or the consumption of drugs. If Hart was constructed by the writer to deal with crime in general, she would stand a better chance of understanding the roots of crime and how to cut them if she could also deal with drug trafficking. The narrator says Calvaleen's gangster boyfriend "took her out, wined her, dined her, gave her some tik to smoke. Said she might as well give him what he was going to take anyway. Fucked her in the car, just like that, they call it date rape in the magazine" (261). While Calvaleen seeks help in the end for her drug addiction and is on the way to recovery by the end of the novel, there is no indication of any consequences against those who perpetrated

violence against her. Similarly, Pearl, who Hart helped heal, again falls victim to her father's monstrous violence when he escapes from prison and rapes her again and seriously maims her. Although, De Wet is subsequently killed, the fact that he can escape from prison and cause a lot of harm, shows the limitations of Hart's project of trying to protect her female victims against senseless male violence.

Another challenge with Orford's project is Hart's quasi-police status. Although she is contracted by the police, she does not have police powers to arrest criminals. Hart cannot arrest and ensure prosecution of the perpetrators of crime. She can only investigate and handover her proof to the police. This is seen at the end of *Daddy's Girl* where she calls the police to come and deal with the criminals who kidnapped Yasmin. Similarly, in *Water Music*, she is rescued by a police detective, Faizal, who deals with the heart of the problem by arresting criminals and ensuring their prosecution. The narrator says: "[Reidwan] had quite a reputation, a series of high-profile arrests. An apparent obsession with bringing in the hard man who stalked the Cape Flats, the senior gang members". Therefore, the fact that Hart is rescued by a male police officer, does not determine the fate of the perpetrators and cannot deal with "the hard man who stalked the Cape Flats" (*Daddy's Girl*, 109) destabilises Orford's apparent feminist radicalism as a writer.

Faizal allows the writer to achieve actions she cannot achieve through Hart suggesting as already argued that Hart is limited by her femininity. Furthermore, as already mentioned, Hart is not a police officer, but contracted to the SAPS as an independent police consultant to profile crime against women and children in the city of Cape Town. Her limited police jurisdiction means she has a quasi-SAPS-official status for as long as she is with Section 28 and taking orders from SAPS bosses such as Cwele. This quasi-SAPS-official status limits her ability to solve crimes. This is

vividly captured in Cwele's cold voice when he dismisses her, making it plain that she is not a SAPS detective and secondly, she is a woman. In a misogynistic and patriarchal tone, Cwele says: "You're a woman, you're out of your depth. You just tell me when you need advice. About being a cop" (30). Cwele goes on to say: "This is not a place for a lady, and you're not a cop" (31). This is troubling for Orford's attempts to transgress the genre conventions of crime fiction. Cwele's words reveal the challenges which await women as they move into masculine spaces in an attempt to undo gender. Klein (1995: 200) captures this complication when he maintains that the "appropriation of traditionally male space for women … is more complex than simply replacing a male protagonist with a female one". Both *Daddy's Girl* and *Water Music* show Orford's challenges when she is forced to complement Hart's effort with those of a male protagonist.

3.1.5 Conclusion

Orford's novels show that Cape Town's spatial planning is closely intertwined with the convoluted violent crimes that continue to plague the city in the post-apartheid moment. The violence that blights the Cape Flats spills-over beyond the poor neighbourhood and infests the entire city in insidiously complex ways. In *Daddy's Girl* and *Water Music*, Orford's intention is to go beyond the traditional structure of crime fiction mainly by placing a female character at the centre of investigating and solving violent crimes against girls and women. Through this strategy, she presents a radical literary feminist project. Orford largely succeeds in sympathetically and empathetically exposing both the domestic and public spaces of Cape Town as inhospitable and dangerous for most women. However, although her project is largely successful and admirable, she experiences several impediments that impair her radical feminist vision. On several occasions,

she is forced to fall back on masculinist traditional crime fiction strategies which her work tries to subvert.

4. CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Possibilities and limits of a radical feminist agenda in Angela Makholwa's crime fiction

4.1.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Angela Makholwa's two crime novels, *Red Ink* ([2007] 2013) and *Black Widow Society* (2013), with a specific focus on how the author positions herself in larger feminist discourses through crime fiction. Both novels foreground female characters with the intention of subverting stereotypes associated with femininity. I read both novels with a gynocriticism perspective and use them to examine the various ways the writer responds to issues affecting women in the post-colonial and post-apartheid moment through crime fiction. These novels are also examined through a post-colonial feminism lens to see how Makholwa participates in "women's conscious struggle to resist patriarchy" (Selden et al., 2005: 115). By exploring the various subjective positions occupied by black South African women in the post-apartheid era, Makholwa is in Butler's words "doing gender" (1988: 519) and effectively participating in larger postcolonial "politics of oppression, repression [and emancipation]". Her writing in this regard reflects commitment to the emancipation of women from violent crimes perpetrated by men.

The depiction of strong and independent female protagonists in the novels represents attempts to reverse the stereotypical representation of female characters as weak and dependent on men in the masculine or traditional crime fiction canon. Makholwa is therefore participating in what Munt (1994: 7) sees as "revis[ing] the canon". Since women have been marginalised in fiction, Makholwa's placing of female characters at the heart of the plot can be considered a feminist act.

Evidently, like Orford, her decision helps undermine the dominant discourses of masculinity in most male-written crime fiction. Murray (2016) argues that a large body of crime fiction scholarship explores the extent to which an intrinsically masculine genre could be appropriated by modern female writers to plead the case of South African women. Makholwa's novels seek to destabilise the inherent patriarchalism of crime fiction by creating strong and independent female characters. This allows her characters to go beyond the gendered assumption of what constitutes femininity and masculinity. My argument places Makholwa's novels in a space that allows her as a black, post-apartheid female writer to undermine gender spaces and differences created by dominant male discourses to sustain gender boundaries and stereotypes.

There are obvious thematic convergences between these two novels which compel their comparative examination in this chapter. For example, the protagonist in *Red Ink,* Lucy, is depicted as a naïve character controlled largely and subconsciously by the subject of her autobiographical project, Napoleon Dingiswayo. Napoleon Dingiswayo is incarcerated for raping, maiming and killing dozens of women. His control over Lucy suggests an unclear and problematic feminist project. This problematic representation of power and gender is a result of her unclear[6] position on issues of gender and feminism since this novel marks the genesis of her feminist project and her entrance into the literary scene. On the other hand, *Black Widow Society* represents development in her thinking and her position in feministic discourses and may be read as a sequel to the first novel. The novel depicts an intensified, clear and a more radical feminist agenda. In this novel, the reader is introduced to a sorority of black South African women who go beyond their gendered

[6].Innes (2006:245) states that *Red Ink,* even though fictional in its sense is based on real events which took place in Pretoria involving Moses Sithole who was sentenced to prison for 2410 years on 5th of December 1997 charged with 38 murders, 40 rapes and 6 robberies.

expectation to foster a society, 'The Black Widow Society', whose objectives is to free women from their abusive husbands by killing them through a hired hitman.

Significantly, the courage of these women is similar to that of Lucy in *Red Ink* who achieves what other experienced male journalists and writers could not, that is securing a series of interviews with Napoleon and eventually writing and publishing his biography. Her competencies and achievements in this regard can be read as attempts by the writer to show that gender is a social construct and there is significantly no difference between men and women.

Notably, the violent murders of husbands by wives in *Black Widow Society* reverses the structure and logic of *Red Ink* in which women are violated by the notorious Napoleon. The killing of women in *Red Ink* demonstrates masculine power, therefore the use of violence by women in the latter novel demonstrates the writer's imagination of using violence as a liberating tool. Makholwa's depiction of what Binder (2017: 275) terms "transgressive female figures", affords the author an opportunity to critique larger discourses of prevalent domestic violence and abuse in contemporary South Africa. Moreover, the writer offers an imaginative world in which women could be the ones inflicting pain on men and metaphorically being on an equal footing.

Furthermore, these narratives make the link between domestic violence and romance visible. For example, *Black Widow Society* depicts complicated and failed love relationships which result in the murder of the male characters. The purpose of the widow society is to "eliminate mischievous and violent husbands" (31). Similarly, *Red Ink* portrays the misogynistic behaviour of Napoleon which stems from his abusive upbringing and subsequently becomes a threat to Lucy with whom he has a delusional intimate relationship.

4.1.2 Female agency and depiction of sisterhood in crime fiction

In Makholwa's novels, as in Orford's novels discussed in the preceding chapter, there is evidence of what Naidu (2013:125) calls "post-colonial genre bending" as the writer deviates from the wellrehearsed formula of depicting female characters as weak and benchwarmers in crime fiction and places them at the centre of the plot. She undermines crime fiction traditions as noted by Munt (1994) who argues that traditional crime fiction's plot is driven by a male detective protagonist who overshadows all the female characters in a novel. Makholwa uses her work to appropriate a masculine genre to offer a female perspective which intends not only to subvert, disrupt, and destabilise traditions but also to problematise the normalised male-centred crime fiction discourses.

Makholwa blurs the boundaries of popular crime fiction to create a new kind of crime fiction that privileges a feminist agenda. The writer's ability to bend this genre making it what Spencer (2014:11) calls "hybrid crime genre" allows her to foreground crimes affecting women in the postapartheid period. Her main mission is to participate in larger discourses of crime and feminism focusing on the representation of female characters and their attributes in this predominantly male genre. The novels respond to the marginal and peripheral position occupied by modern black women in the new South Africa. She places her female characters in previously masculine positions showing that gender is not a natural phenomenon, but historically mediated. Her work proves Knight's (2004:163) assertion that female crime writing opposes the "chauvinistic representation of men" by creating powerful, fearless and competent women who resort to violence and crime as a coping mechanism against violence. As noted by Spencer (2014) many crime narratives by female writers from South Africa and other parts of the continent have a feminist social agenda. These writers' depiction of female characters undermines the traditions of this

masculinist genre. Writing becomes a form of subversion and resistance to dominant masculine discourse, and a form of agency. As a result, Makholwa rejects the representation of women as passive and dependent and depicts them as equal to their male counterparts.

Both *Red Ink* and *Black Widow Society* advance the idea of sisterhood as a means of empowering women. Evidently this notion permeates both novels. The convergence of literary strategies in these novels advance an obvious feministic agenda. For example, in *Red Ink* the author brings together women under one roof through Lucy's and Patricia's public relations firm, The Publicist. However, because *Red Ink* represents the writer's entry into the literary scene, the novel depicts a less extreme type of sisterhood. The novel represents a group of women on a mission to undermine the already existing gendered discourses and boundaries which render them weak because of their economic dependence on males. Lucy is a career woman who has made a name for herself as a journalist and proceeded to start a private Public Relations firm with her friend Patricia with the aim of economically uplifting women. The narrator observes that "theirs was a cheerful office of six female staff [and] Patricia and Lucy were as thick as thieves" (19). This speaks of their dependence on one another and the support they enjoyed from each other.

The simile that Patricia and Lucy were "as thick as thieves" also indicates amity and solidarity that can exist between women who are united by a common economic cause whose aim is not just to make money but to empower fellow women. Clearly, this novel is aimed at fostering female unity, bringing women together to deal with issues that result in their exploitation, oppression and abuse. The hiring of only women and the cheerful atmosphere that exists among them is an expression of a feminist agenda that seeks to empower women by showing that they can be economically independent without men. Thus, Makholwa gives women meaning without being associated to

masculinism. She rejects the patriarchal tendency that a "woman seems devoid of meaning without reference to the male" (De Beauvior, 1949: 26). The independence these female characters enjoy shows Makholwa's quest to write crime fiction driven by a feminist agenda. The representation of these women seeks to mobilise an imagination of the coming together of women to find "sisterly" means and ideas to liberate themselves from dependence on men which often generates violent crimes.

Kleins (1998) sees sisterhood as a critical need for women to come together in order to dismantle masculine institutions and tendencies which oppress and marginalise them. Klein (1998: 201) states:

> [Feminism] values female bonding, awareness of women without continual reference to or affiliation with men, and the self-knowledge which prompts women to an independent judgment on both public and personal issues.

Using Klein's insight, the novel can be read as Makholwa's extension of boundaries of the township *stokvels*. Binder (2017) defines a stokvel as a group of women who come together with a purpose of being a support structure for each other. Such women are usually brought together by a common denominator, either social or socio-economic status and help one another deal with their challenges. The maintenance of an all-female staff in The Publicist is an attempt to bridge the economic gap and corporate knowledge and competitiveness between males and females and further speaks to the writer's material conditions of a possible and identifiable sisterhood. Clearly, in fostering this sisterhood, the writer is engaged in the process of re-imagining gender and power.

On the other hand, *Black Widow Society* depicts a stronger and radical sense of sisterhood forged through the eponymous Black Widow Society which brings together women from different walks

of life who have suffered violence at the hands of their husbands and romantic partners. The society is headed by its matriarch, Tallulah, and becomes a justifiable organisation for coping with domestic violence and abuse. The sisterhood in *Black Widow Society* is radical because of the methods used by these women to negotiate for space in post-apartheid South Africa. The society murders abusive husbands to liberate women from domestic violence. The society also seeks to help these women maintain their independence by establishing a female academy for ensuring that the next generation of women does not suffer from male abuse.

Sisterhood in *Black Widow Society* can be read through the lens of Ang-Lygate *et al.* (1997) who see the concept and practice of sisterhood as a unification of women into a group that provides support and engenders a sense of unique identity in each individual. This sisterhood is captured by Tallulah in conversation with other widows in a meeting when she says:

> For many years others like us endured pain, trauma and torture at the hands of unappreciative dogs who badgered and bludgeoned us. Pelted us with vitriolic words, and violent beatings until one day, we finally listened. We listened to what our souls told us. Yes. Yes. We listened to what our souls told us. (19)

These words capture the essence of why these women come together in a society that uses violence to counter violence. Furthermore, these capture the reader's sympathy for these women's cause. Interestingly, Nnaemeka (1998: 4) states that sisterhood is a form of "power" that symbolises a collective bond of networking among people with a shared history of oppression. Considering the seemingly failing justice system's inability to protect women in the post-apartheid moment, Makholwa offers vengeful violence as a possible means of dealing with extreme masculine violence.

Therefore, female violence in *Black Widow Society* is imagined not as criminal but a tool for gender equity and a method of self-defence against prevalent domestic violence and abuse. The writer justifies the crimes committed by these women against men as methods of emancipation and reclamation of power. In the end, killing abusive and violent husbands signals Makholwa's radical feminist agenda. Makholwa reveals that crime is gendered by depicting men who are criminal and females who are negotiating space and subverting gender stereotypes by committing violence. This confirms Butler's (1999: xiii) assertion that crime is an effective method of producing and maintaining gender hierarchies.

For example, Lucy's ability to transcend the gendered notion of weak women who depend on men for survival is reinforced by her ability to juggle both her professional work and being a single parent at the same time. She had taken the decision to raise her son, Diseko, all by herself because his father, Gary, started philandering upon Diseko's birth. This is evidence that Lucy is a strong character as she does not depend on men for her upkeep and that of her child. Her decision to raise her son all by herself shows her courage, fearlessness and her strong will to keep herself going no matter the circumstances. She had even started calling Gary "sperm donor" (55) because she felt he was not part of their lives in any way and she did not need him. By depicting Lucy as finding support from a sisterhood and as being independent both economically and socially as a single mother, Makholwa resists the assimilation modelling of women with men which makes these women dependent on men (Butler, 2004).

On the other hand, the fact that the women in *Black Widow Society* want to build a female-only academy also shows the author's agenda of advocating female empowerment. The envisaged Young Women's Academy aims to give the next generation of women the necessary and proper education that will equip them for the future, helping them to avoid being victims of men by

creating a new breed of stronger and independent women. In a conversation with the society members, Tallulah enthuses:

> We will finally be able to empower young girls with the skills to make it on their own so that they don't have to marry sad, sagging old men just to get ahead in life. (140)

Interestingly, Tallulah's broader vision for the society paints her as a lovable character engaged in a just cause. Her depiction protects her from harsh criticism from the reader who is expected to ignore the society's former crimes. Furthermore, the idea that this academy will only accept young women indicates the female agency Makholwa seems to be foregrounding through this novel. The fact that graduates from this academy will forever be tied to one another through shared experience and gender subversive mechanisms speaks of a generational sisterhood. Binder (2017) observes that the sisterhood fostered by the *Black Widow Society* does not only empower one generation but goes beyond the individual to ensure the emancipation of generations to come. This suggests that Makholwa is making a plea for the unification of women in the post-apartheid South Africa to enable them to deal with issues of gender and power which has for long justified their marginalisation both in real life and in fiction.

The radical sisterhood is also seen in the jewellery that is given to a widow once her husband is eliminated. Although, the society is kept a secret, the necklace gives the widows a sense of belonging. Widows who join the society after the elimination of their husbands are given necklaces as a sign of sisterhood. It is also expected that the girls who will graduate from the planned academy will form strong bonds of sisterhood. For the widows, the necklace represents the coming together of women with similar life experiences of abuse and violence by their intimate partners

to find ways of collectively helping one another overcome their problems. The narrator observes that "the identical bracelets, each with an elegant diamond-studded emblem … of a widow spider, marked the unbreakable ties that bound each of them to the society" (*Black Widow Society*, 18). The elegant diamond and widow spider emblem show the widows' material wealth inherited after the elimination of their rich but abusive husbands just like the female black widow spider which has a habit of devouring its partner after mating. This pride that these widows have after eliminating their husbands suggests that Makholwa uses their depiction to critique gender-based violence and encourage modern black South African women to redefine themselves and confidently proclaim their space in society (Blesser, 1994). The courage and confidence of the formerly victimised women represents a radical shift in Makholwa's feminist vision about the ways in which women can confront gender-based violence. In this sense, *Black Widow Society* is rather a radical sequel to *Red Ink* in terms of the author's feminist agenda. It shows her uncompromising position as she dispenses fictional justice to wayward husbands who in real life usually get away with their domestic crimes.

Makholwa's radical feminist agenda is captured in the title of the second novel, *Black Widow Society*. Fittingly, the widows name their society after the notorious and poisonous Black Widow Spider. The Black Widow Spider is a member of the Latrodectus, a species commonly known for its sexual cannibalistic behaviour where a female feeds on the male to provide protein for the foetus after mating (Garb, Gonzalez and Gillespie, 2003). Similarly, the widows economically sustain themselves and their larger vision through material wealth acquired from the murders of their husbands. Makholwa uses this idea for her fictional world where wives who have suffered abuse and violence from their husbands avenge themselves by getting them killed and then inheriting their property for an apparently justified cause of emancipating women from gender-based

oppression and violence. For the black widow spider, it is natural that the female feed on the male after mating. Similarly, for these widows, their immoral and illegal killing of their spouses is a coping mechanism and a way of delivering what de Kock (2016:114) terms a "final solution" to the societal ills committed by the perpetrators of violent crimes in the post-apartheid periodand ensures that the chain of abuse is cut.

Tallulah claims that their means, although violent, is just. As a result, she indicates that she is at peace with herself because of the work the society does. She says: "I sleep well at night because of the righteousness of our actions" (53). The use of the word righteousness justifies the actions of the society as pure and just. This suggests that Makholwa is appealing to divine morality to defend an illegal act as a way of imagining how the pervasive scourge of domestic abuse and violence can be effectively dealt with in contemporary South Africa. By so doing, Makholwa invites her readers to imagine a different kind of gender relations where women are not perpetual underdogs. The female avengers that she creates in *Black Widow Society* are therefore an exploration of an ethically defensible rather than a legally based method of gender equity.

Although criminal in its construction, her vision is not meant to perpetuate violence but to imaginatively place men at the receiving end of violence and crime in an attempt to influence a rethinking that may not only reduce or stop such violence but could put men and women on an equal footing. This thinking about ethics and justice is also seen in *Blood Safari,* through Lemmer's retributive justice. The narrator says that Tallulah enjoyed seeing an expression of happiness on widows' faces when she meets them in public. She enjoys seeing a happy widow with a "tacit expression that said I thank you … thank you for changing my life … thank you for freeing me, thank you for my newfound confidence" (137). Although achieved through violent means,

Makholwa's feminist vision as embodied by her protagonist, is an optimistic one. It seeks to create a world where women are confident, happy and in control of their lives and free from violent crimes.

4.1.3 Subverting gender and genre stereotypes, the displacing of masculinities

The placing of strong female characters at the heart of the plot of crime fiction by women writers is an undisguised feminist act to subvert a literary genre that has always marginalised women in the world of crime fiction. This radical feminist act also seeks to provoke, undermine and possibly change the prevailing masculine social orders, both in fiction and in the real sense. Like Orford, Makholwa's ability to remodel the crime genre allows her to perform gender by projecting fictional images of female independence and strength. This projection allows her to counteract the "prevailing fictional construct of woman-as adjunct-to-man" in the male canon (Munt, 1994: 193). Klein (1988: 162) argues that "the placement of a male protagonist is a glorification of masculinity" and continues to marginalise femininity and the plea of gender equality by women in the contemporary world. Therefore, the placing of a woman character in a masculine position represents a clear feminist agenda by Makholwa since she depicts the utilisation of an apparatus used to oppress women to undermine this oppression (Buttler, 2004). The writer uses the tools of the master to dismantle the house.

Makholwa's novels, like Orford's, work with and against the grains of the genre. That is, she uses some of the elements of the traditional crime novel to keep her narratives entertaining and catchy while subverting some of these ideas to advance a feminist agenda. In Deon Meyer's *Thirteen Hours*, the hero of the narrative, Benny Griessel, performs the act of liberating abused women and

an American teenage girl who is pursued by male murderers who fear that she will expose their crime. In this novel, only one female is given agency; a policewoman named Inspector Mbali Kaleni, however, she gets shot and killed and is removed from the action almost midway through the narrative. Again, in *Blood Safari*, the male protagonist, Lemmer, helps Emma get to the truth about her brother and protects from her danger. Clearly, the fact that Makholwa's female protagonist are active throughout the novels, speaks of a female agency and a radical feminist agenda she advocates through these novels.

Makholwa's female characters bridge the widening gap of gender politics. Through her characters, Makholwa deconstructs and neutralises the way women are portrayed in the male canon. Makholwa takes advantage of the ability of the crime novel to go beyond its expected borders to feature women in the plot to advance her feminist agenda. Evidently, she takes a neo-Marxist, post-colonial-feminist approach in understanding that the representation of female characters in fiction influences the way women are viewed in society and influences reality. For example, in *Red Ink*, the construction of the protagonist, Lucy, shows Makholwa's clear feminist agenda of empowering women. Lucy has some measure of power; she is fearless and charismatic. In most male-written crime novels, like the ones by Meyer analysed in Chapter 2, these are male attributes used to marginalise women.

Interestingly, Makholwa portrays Lucy as someone who always had her own voice even when she was younger. This fantasy image of strength and independence in Lucy allows the novel to be read through a post-colonial-feminist lens as engaged in the rejection of the phallocentric tendencies of the traditional canon. That is why after the unsuccessful attempts by many male domestic and international writers and journalists to write the story of Napoleon, Lucy comes along and achieves what these men could not. Although young and seemingly inexperienced, Lucy infiltrates the

prison space and subsequently the mind of Napoleon, finishing the biography and having it published to tell the story of this serial rapist and murderer from a female perspective. Lucy's resilience offers a fictional reassertion of women putting themselves on an equal footing with their male counterparts. In this way, Makholwa positions herself and her work at the centre of on-going feminist work by black female writers in the post-apartheid moment which seeks to produce what Butler (1988: 520) calls new "cultural meaning" by reverting, appropriating and dismantling masculine structures of domination.

Similarly, as already noted, *Black Widow Society* has strong female characters who are former victims of domestic violence and have metamorphosed from silent victims to victimisers by appropriating the tools of the master to dismantle the house. These women have turned against their oppressors becoming masters of their own fate by killing their victimisers. The transformation from passive victims to perpetrators of violence foregrounds Makholwa's initiative of crafting a feministic crime novel that serves the interest of women by placing them at the heart of the plot. Mantymaki (2012:442) observes that the proactive placement of a female character as protagonist in a masculine genre is a radical attempt to "distance the genre from its masculine premises and moving it towards a greater social and feminist consciousness". Mantymaki further observes that modern crime fiction with a plot that is driven by females often uses the form of the traditional revenge narrative in which a story of victimisation is connected to a change from a passive victim to an active agent. Thinking about gender and genre through a neo-Marxist lens, Binder (2017) also notes that the creation of a transgressive women offers female writers the opportunity to critique larger discourses of crime and violence perpetrated against women by men through fiction.

Evidently, for Makholwa, the transgressive woman subverts the gender ideology that seeks to maintain the dominant masculinities of the male canon. According to Halberstam (2004), such

novels de-naturalise gender. Interestingly, Halberstam argues that "to be male does not mean one is masculine therefore, masculinity cannot be reduced to the male body" (935), suggesting that gender is performed and not natural. This is captured by Butler (1988:522) who states that "woman" is a "historical idea and not a natural [one]", suggesting that gender is a reality only to the extent to which it is intensified through performance to be perceived as real and natural. Therefore, through her female protagonists, Makholwa demonstrates that masculinity is a social construct, it is a result of the social environment in which one lives. Notably, actions associated with masculinities exhibited by the widows which resulted in violent crimes suggest that women are just as capable of everything associated with masculinity.

Clearly, by reversing roles that are often stereotypically associated with different genders, the writer illustrates that the feminist crime novel is a space of contestation. For example, the relationship between the society's matriarch, Tallulah, and its hitman Mzwakhe, reverses gender relations wherein men usually issue orders and women obey. In this inverted relationship, Tallulah enjoys an undisputed superior position over him, she issues commands and orders him around. For instance, after the China Gumede job he was "ordered" to cremate the body by Tallulah. The narrator says Tallulah "asked aggressively" (22) if Mzwakhe understood the orders. The emphasis of aggression in this conversation illustrates the power relation that exists between the two. Furthermore, Mzwakhe only acts as commanded by the society through its matriarch, suggesting even more that he is not an independent man and Tallulah enjoyed a sense of superiority over him.

Furthermore, through Mzwakhe's subordinate and inferior position in relation to Tallulah, Makholwa suggests that even in the criminal underworld, women are quite capable of holding positions of authority over men. This opposes the structure and logic which have normalised society towards the toxic representations of masculinity which view women as defective and as

the "Other". Through this strategy, Makholwa dissolves the existing gender binaries between female and male characters which is either informed by society's realities or metamorphosis into some constructed reality. Berges (2006:213) argues that "fiction is good because it helps society re-evaluate itself and imagine a different world from that which informs its existence". In the light of Berges's observation, it may be argued that Makholwa's works invite the reader to imagine a world where women wield power over dangerous and violent criminals. This a mentally-empowering process for Makholwa's female readers who suddenly realise that what men and women do is not natural but is largely socially constructed. Thus, Makholwa's construction of powerful female characters who subvert the stereotypical representation of weak female characters in literature helps to imaginatively position men and women on an equal footing in so far as gender discourse is concerned in the real sense.

Notably, one area where men have enjoyed power over women is in sexual relations. In both fictional representations and in real life situations, men often make decisions that fulfil their desires in this matter. However, through the portrayal of Tallulah, Makholwa reverses this logic. In her relationship with her sex boys, Tallulah has the power and is the one who makes decisions about their sexual encounters. The narrator observes that sex is not just a carnal act to gratify her needs but an act of power negotiation. She only enjoyed sex when she was the one who wants to engage and not the man, and she paid her sex partners after for it (106). Through her radical actions, Tallulah rejects the subservient role in sexual relationships traditionally associated with women. Through Tallulah's characterisation in sexual matters, Makholwa looks at the traditional depiction of sexual relations taking a neo-Marxist stance shared by Bressler (2011: 155) who maintains that

"how a female is depicted in literature directly affects how women will be treated in real life". Therefore, Makholwa uses crime fiction to engender new ways of thinking about gender in the post-apartheid.

The depiction of Tallullah further represents a radical shift in Makholwa's vision about feminism compared to her tentative steps in *Red Ink*. In this earlier novel, although Lucy seems to be in control of everything, it is actually Napoleon who initiates it all, beginning with her visit to the prison, the illegal methods used to gather notes for the biography, and the attempts at romance. Napoleon is the one who decided that he would accept the offer of a young woman to interview him. He then proceeded to treat her like his girlfriend and even ordered the murder of certain individuals on behalf of Lucy after she had inadvertently confided in him about her problems. Clearly, Napoleon enjoys a lot of patriarchal power over Lucy.

Therefore, the construction of female characters in *Black Widow Society* represents an intensification and growth in Makholwa's feminist agenda. Contrary to Lucy, Tallulah in *Black Widow Society* is in control throughout the narrative. She even manages to kill Mzwakhe during the fatal and bloody last meeting of the society and subsequently escapes the South African justice system by flying to multiple destinations and finally settling in Malawi. In Malawi, she achieves her dream of building a female only academy which aims to empower girls. After establishing the academy, Tallulah, who has since adopted Miss Phiri as an alias, expresses a sense of fulfilment saying: "This is it Miss Phiri, this is the dream" (287). This shows that instead of creating a female protagonist whose independence is limited as in the case of Lucy, Makholwa's imagination on issues of female freedom and control have become expansive. She empowers her main female characters right up to the end of the narrative thus fulfilling her radical feminist agenda.

Considering the above, *Black Widow Society* illustrates the concept of evolution in art and literature as discussed by Ogunyemi (2018). As already pointed out, this text represents progression in Makholwa's feminist vision in relation to the material conditions of contemporary South Africa. For example, there are instances when male partners infect their female partners with HIV in *Red Ink* and *Black Widow Society*. Their different responses to their misfortune show Makholwa's developing view about how abused women should deal with their situation. In *Red Ink*, when Patricia confronts her boyfriend, Tshepo, about having infected her with HIV, Tshepo becomes violent and abusive. Patricia is weak in dealing with her situation. She tells her parents about it, but they naively suggest she should deal with the problem at hand with Tshepo. They completely ignore the violence and abuse she suffers in the relationship. Contrastingly, when Salome is infected with HIV by her playboy husband, Scot O'Leary, in *Black Widow Society,* she acquires the help of the society to kill him, making him pay for the pain he had caused her.

4.1.4 Fault-lines in Makholwa's feminist gender project

As already argued in Chapter 3, feminist writers who use the genre of crime fiction to advance a feminist agenda work with and against the grain of the masculine canon and are therefore met with several challenges. Evidently, there are several notable pitfalls in Makholwa's radical feminist agenda. One can say it is not radical enough. For example, in *Red Ink*, although Lucy manages to get Napoleon's story of rape and murder, in many ways Napoleon continues to exercise patriarchal power over her. Thinking that she is in control of the interaction, Lucy is unaware that his romantic gestures of touching, hugging and kissing her on the cheek resemble his sexual fantasies about her which makes her his object of desire and possibly a victim. Silently, he knew that he enjoyed the power he wielded over her as he gradually lured her into a web of deception. This indeed proves

that she was not in control, Napoleon was playing her as he did when he first wrote to her inviting her to come see him regarding the writing of his biography.

While imprisoned, Napoleon spreads his tentacles to touch the outside from the inside, a phenomenon Ndlovu (2017: 1) has termed the "inside-out" in the discussion of prisoners' ability to stay connected to the outside while inside. It was through the connection Napoleon had with the outside that he had Patricia Moabelo and Lucy's boyfriend gruesomely murdered by his brother, Sifiso. Notably, Ndlovu (2017: 5) further argues that "the inside of the post-apartheid prison spills over into the outside with tragic consequences". This is seen when Lucy credulously starts trusting him (Napoleon) with delicate information concerning her life and her feuds with her business partner, unaware that she is enlisting him to "take care" of her problems. Interestingly, Napoleon reacts to this assuming his patriarchal position, shielding his "girlfriend". Even after detective Morapedi's observation about Napoleon's criminal activities, Lucy naively still dismisses the possibilities of Napoleon having powers in the outside world. She innocently says to her friend "Fundi he's behind bars, we're not so don't give him too much power" (105). Lucy's naivety compromises the writer's radical feminist project.

Also, Napoleon's power over Lucy is seen from the fact that when she went to see him for the first time in prison, she decided to look boyish to minimise his attraction towards her. The narrator says that Lucy "decided to wear no earrings, makeup, no flashy smile, and wore old jeans, and a raggedy jersey. She looked boyish and unattractive" (24). Moreover, by the end of the narrative, Napoleon escapes from prison which literally places Lucy's life in danger but also symbolically indicates her failure to keep him within the confines of her narrative. At one level, the escape could be thought to be figurative, meaning Napoleon escapes prison through the biography which Lucy managed to

publish. Secondly, it could be literal, meaning that he does find a way to escape the prison. Read either way, the serial killer is on the loose, either in the representation of his monstrous action in the biography or in the real sense and poses a threat to both Lucy and other women.

Lucy's fear when Napoleon escapes prison problematises Makholwa's feminist project and reveals disturbing slippages about this novel's feminist agenda. Instead of Lucy celebrating her achievement at publishing her first book, she hears on the radio the shocking news that threatens her very existence that the "convicted serial killer and rapist, Napoleon Dingiswayo, escaped from the Pretoria C-Max" (260). The ambiguous and open-ended ending of the narrative suggests that there are no clear-cut solutions and the issues of gender and genre are very complex.

This conclusion seems befitting of *Red Ink* and *Black Widow Society* because even though her female characters are given masculine traits; their male counterparts seem to enjoy a considerable amount of power and control over them. This illustrates that although she tries to put men and women on an equal footing through the practice of crime fiction, there remains a great limitation to female writer's appropriation of crime genre to write feminist narratives. This seems to confirm Plain's (2001) observation that crime fiction, whether produced by male or female authors, is very hostile towards women's bid for liberation even when the detective or the protagonist is a female. Plain (2001:11) says: "whether the detective is male or female, straight or gay, she or he always exists in negotiation with a series of long-established masculine codes". This is evidenced by Lucy's gullibility and naivety which gives Napoleon power and control over her, influencing all that is happening in her life. In this regard, her power over Napoleon is simply limited to metaphorically imprisoning him with her narrative. As it turns out, it was naïve of her to believe that "behind bars, he was after all, no more harmful than a trapped mouse" (48). This shows that she naively thought he would not do anything because he was imprisoned.

Moreover, Lucy seems to need some masculine approval to continue with her obviously dangerous project of associating with Napoleon. This is what uncle Qiniso did for her. When her conscience and fear overwhelm her and she is at the brink of abandoning her project, he reassuringly says to her: "[Art's] role is to expose some facet of the human soul. Whether it's good or bad, express it the best way you know how, and don't give a damn about other people. Art doesn't kill anyone" (141). Whether what Lucy is trying to achieve is art or not is of course debatable. What is apparent is that uncle Qiniso is wrong about Lucy's daring project because it results in fatalities as Napoleon goes on a murdering spree on her behalf. Moreover, Napoleon's escape from prison towards the end of the narrative poses a real danger to Lucy's life. The need for male "approval" by Lucy validates de Beauvoir's critical thinking about gender relations. De Beauvior (1949: 26) argues that in gender relations, the woman "is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other". Although argued over half a century ago, this captures Lucy's need for approval from uncle Qiniso. Lucy's portrayal in this regard undermines Makholwa's obvious intention of empowering her female characters.

Similarly, although the widows seem to be in control of their organisation in *Black Widow Society,* they still enlist the services of a male ex-convict to carry out their murders. Although Mzwakhe occupies what seems to be an inferior position in relation to the matriarch, by the virtue of his hold on the instruments of violence, he exercises considerable power over the widow society. As it turns out, this results in a bloody outcome and the destruction of the society when he turns against the women. During the last meeting of the society, he decides to kill some women. The narrator tells us that he waved his gun around saying: "I am going to kill you" (246). Throughout the novel, the women determined who to kill, commanding Mzwakhe to go for it, but now he is the one deciding

who should be killed and at what point to pull the trigger. This punctures holes into Makholwa's attempt to represent strong and independent female characters as already stated above. Mzwakhe's murderous power suggests that women may plan and plot violent crimes, but they still need a man to carry out the actual killings. This representation shows that no matter how much economic power women may enjoy; the instruments of violence are largely still in men's hands.

Makholwa's attempt to use her novel as a platform to negotiate gender equity and to subvert gender and genre tendencies which have accompanied crime fiction is also undermined by the fact that she cannot put female and male characters on an equal footing. For example, for men such as the Dingiswayo brothers, murder is a crime, but for the women it is not. In this way, she justifies an immoral action of crime committed by women while condemning the same crimes when committed by men. De Kock (2016) argues that the moral relativity of *Black Widow Society* is indeed of great interest, since the story seems to neither condone nor condemn the action of these women. Makholwa's soft spot for her female characters is shown by the fact that her protagonists escape the justice system, settling in Malawi and simultaneously get the sympathy of the reader for what is represented as a just course against prevalent violence.

Furthermore, when one of the widow society members, Nokuthula Gumede, is killed by her husband through a hit man on the day the husband was to be eliminated the matriarch remarks: "nx! Imagine a husband killing his own wife-the mother of his children? You really have to wonder what kind of society we live in". The narrator goes even further to inform the reader that Tallulah says all these "without the slightest irony" (22). However, the irony lies in the fact that Nokuthula had enlisted the services of the society to have her husband killed. Evidently, the retribution and

gender balance that these women seek comes at a moral price; complicit to murder, violence and defeating the ends of justice but the novel does not treat this as a big issue in anyway.

Although *Black Widow Society* presents a more radical feminist vision than *Red Ink*, in both novels Makholwa ultimately fails to sustain the power and freedom of her female characters. As noted by Murray (2017: 20), the novels do not capitalise on the opportunity to represent radical female characters to resist these stereotypical and "one-dimensional understandings" of women. For example, after the gruesome murder of her husband, Tallulah is portrayed as a strong, business-minded and witty yet a typical woman who seeks completion and pleasure in the company of men. She began looking for sexual pleasure from sex boys. The narrator says that these boys were her drug (105). Even though her stand in this regard could be a sign of power and independence as a woman who does not want to commit to a romantic relationship, her decision becomes questionable and strips her of gender power and her quest for gender subversion when she starts reading sexual literature on how to submit to a man. It becomes somewhat ironic that after all the crimes committed to free herself from the shackles of gender oppression, she yet again put herself in a vulnerable position giving men power over her through her desire of complete submission to men during sexual encounters. This seems aimed at pleasing men and not herself and in the process, she loses some of her independence and opens herself up to exploitation.

Also, the sexy schoolgirl outfits which she often puts for her sex partners as a romantic gesture replicates the vulnerability of young South African girls who are exposed to the dangers of sexual victimisation. This seems to also be Tallulah's fate. She wore these outfits to appear younger and sexually attractive to the boys she was sleeping with. Thus, she unconsciously renders herself powerless and gullible like the schoolgirls who are often exploited by older men for insignificant

monetary rewards as noted by Martin (2012). Of course, in Tallulah's case, her decision is voluntary as she wants to maximise her sexual satisfaction by giving herself fully to someone at her own terms. However, her actions seem ideologically compromised, and compromises the writer's feminist agenda.

The female solidarity in *Red Ink* also eventually crumbles because of greed and selfishness. After Lucy joins Patricia in the firm an agreement is reached that they will be equal partners. However, when money starts flowing in, Patricia backtracks on her word. Similarly, Nkosazana, the society's financial advisor in *Black Widow Society* has never married nor been in a sexual relationship with a man. She is lesbian and participates in a society that murders errant husband, even though she does not share the same pain with her "sisters". Nkosazana's character renders ambivalent the apparently morally justifiable objectives of the Black Widow Society. Her behaviour mocks Tallulah's admonishing that the society must not turn into an unjustifiable sorority. Tallulah had said to the women: "[B]e not proud of your actions sisters because the aim is not to turn this into a sprawling society" (9).

Ignoring this advice, Nkosazana's greediness fuels the crime and violence in her when she suggests that the society take up a scheming case of Alex Delware, the shady lawyer who conspired with Magda to have her (Magda's) aged boyfriend who subsequently becomes her husband to be murdered so the two can share his wealth. Nkosazana nonchalantly states: "[H]e has a heart condition … if after a few years he is still kicking we might have to step in and speed up the process" (140). This trivialises the seemingly just cause of the society as it is now infiltrated by greed and the desire to accumulate material things.

Furthermore, in *Red Ink*, Makholwa depicts some female characters in a negative light as being incapable of economic independence without men's help. For example, Fundi is introduced in the narrative as a phone service prostitute and a struggling actress. However, her encounter with Mr KK Mabotoa, a BEE tycoon, changes her fortunes. Her situation in this regard is compared to that of "Julia Robert in *Pretty Woman*" (87) by her friend Lucy, wherein a millionaire English gentleman turns a prostitute into a wife, "saving" her. The fact that her luck turns after she met KK shows how dependent on him her life would come to be. De Beauvoir's (1949:26) words that "man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man. And she is nothing other than what man decides", prove true in the case of Fundi's relationship with KK. Fundi could not define herself without the help of KK. Her social and economic freedom is entirely dependent on her boyfriend. This is evidenced by the fact that after knowing that she has been struggling to get acting jobs, he speaks to a producer of popular soap opera, *Generations*, securing an audition and ultimately a job for her. Telling her friend Lucy about it all, Fundi says: "it turns out that he's big buddies with the producer of *Generations* and he's put in a good word for my auditions" (88). This suggests that without the help of her BEE tycoon, Fundi's acting career would have never taken off.

Fundi's situation parallels Scot O'Leary's marriage with Salome in *Black Widow Society* where he justifies his philandering ways and abusive behaviour by reminding her of their prenuptial agreement which stipulates that she would not inherit anything in case of a divorce (100). Scott reminded her that he had saved her from crime and violence in the notorious Cape Flats where she came from. The narrator says: "indeed it was Scot who was the agent of escape from that life" (49). Even though her silence and tolerance can be thought to be like that of Fundi, the fact that Salome eventually turns to the society to have him killed reveals some agency in her character and

her powerful will to take charge of her life. However, although Scot dies, the fact that she is not the one who actually kills him limits her power and control over her decision to take charge of her life. However, it allows her some measure of self-determination. De Kock (2016:114) claims that women in *Black Widow Society* adopted an unexceptional method of dealing with "the bully-boy tactics, outplaying it on its terms by instrumentalizing its pathological method to achieve retribution if not justice". This suggests that these women have turned gender-based violence on its head and are using the tools of the master to dismantle the house.

Makholwa's female characters in both *Red Ink* and *Black Widow Society* show her determination to advocate the rights and equality of women in literature. However, the representation of these events show that the economic and to some extent social liberty that the post-apartheid South Africa has opened for women is accompanied by dangers and does not pave way for gender equality. This is because as women become independent to go into the world and enjoy some measure of economic independence, they discover the chauvinistic hostilities that accompany their freedom as in the case of Lucy whose freedom is threatened by her attempt to exercise her social power and freedom by writing the story of Napoleon. Spencer (2014) highlights that women's demand for equal rights with men have always been accompanied by masculine violence and resistance. In Makholwa's feminist project, for women, crime is a struggle for power and equality while for men, crime is committed for merely selfish ends.

4.1.5 Conclusion

Through *Red Ink* and *Black Widow Society*, Makholwa depicts an unmistakable feminist agenda which becomes more radical in the second novel. However, her attempts in both texts are morally questionable. In *Red Ink*, Lucy pursues her ambition of being the first woman to write Napoleon's

biography despite the obvious dangers that her project poses to those around her. In *Black Widow Society*, Makholwa depicts a group of strong and radical women who come together to form a secret society with a modus operandi of eliminating their violently abusive husbands. The moral relativism of this novel and the fact that legality is circumvented in the pursuit of retribution by the abused women is very disturbing. Makholwa seems to be arguing that the post-apartheid South African legal system is unable to adequately deal with violent domestic crimes and hence the taking of the law into their hands by members of the Black Widow Society. Makholwa's main preoccupation in the two novels is to subvert oppressive patriarchal practices and the inadequacies of the South African criminal justice system to help female victims of domestic abuse. She therefore largely depicts major female characters who are capable, intelligent, and in charge of their own lives and destinies. She places these characters at the heart of the plot to critique the prevalent problem of gender and genre which marginalises women and assumes that crime fiction cannot be used to advance the cause of women.

However, as noted in the discussion, there are occasions when Makholwa's representation limits the gender agency and subversion these texts seem to advocate in relation to a radical feminist project. This is a thought-provoking observation which leaves one to ponder on the performativity of power and abilities afforded these characters to subvert the gender representation in a genre that has always been very masculine.

5. CHAPTER FIVE

5.1 The bildungsroman, the township and violent crimes in Sifiso Mzobe's and Lazola Pambo's novels

5.1.1 Introduction

Sifiso Mzobe and Lazola Pambo's novels can be read as bildungsromans of sorts as the protagonists in both novels overcome their disadvantaged backgrounds and learn to abhor crime and violence. Narrated in the first person, the novels depict violent crimes in South African townships by the so-called born free young males and how these violent crimes determine the protagonists' lives. *The Path Which Shapes Us* (2012) is the only crime novel to date by Lazola Pambo. Set in Evansdale, an imaginary South African black township, the novel follows the life of a fifteen-year-old orphaned boy, Clifford, also known as Cliff. Clifford is adopted by Edward Malothi a leader of a gang, The Street Disciples. Despite being raised by a criminal and a gang leader, Cliff grows to resent crime and its consequences in his community. Cliff is depicted from an idealistic and melodramatic point of view, struggling with the fact that his neighbourhood is plagued by crime and violence. Cliff then adopts principles of peace he has read from a book in the school library to deal with criminality and violence in his community. Pambo uses Cliff and his story to provide sobering insights about the effect of crime and violence in the lives of many young males in contemporary South African townships.

Similarly, although set in a real township notorious for crime, Umlazi in Durban, from which the author was also born and raised, *Young Blood* (2010) is Sifiso Mzobe's novel. The novel traces the circuitous growth of a young boy, Sipho, in his late teens. The novel narrates Sipho's informal

education after quitting school at grade eleven when he was seventeen after failing many times. He gets initiated into a gang, becomes a car thief and a murderer, but subsequently reforms from his criminal conduct after a hair-raising stint in crime. The novel is structured as a moral tale whereby Sipho enjoys the benefits of crime but subsequently realises that the dangers of crime and violence far outweigh its temporary benefits. Mzobe writes as an insider of contemporary South African townships and this gives his novel an irresistible realism. This is captured in his dedication when he says: "this book is dedicated to my township and yours" (2010: 2).

The two novels are examined together because of their similarities and, above all, their contemporaneity. Their thematic convergence is captured in their use of teenage narrators or protagonists who narrate stories of the relationships between violent crimes and the coming of age of young boys in post-apartheid South African townships. Despite their age differences and the time each first appeared on the literary scene, Mzobe and Pambo belong to the same post-apartheid generation of male, black South African writers who are preoccupied with the depiction of violent crimes in the contemporary townships. Both novels are products of the post-apartheid material conditions and imaginary responses to the violent township environment. They represent their authors' visions about how violent crimes can be dealt with in the South African township.

Although the novels hardly refer to the apartheid period, the fact that they narrate the postapartheid period, speaks of a fundamental spilling over of the apartheid into the post-apartheid which requires critical attention. The chapter will demonstrate that it is the material conditions of the apartheid as seen in the hardships of his parents and the spatial entanglement between his township and the apartheid white suburbs which mainly drives Sipho into crime to bridge the economic gap. Contrary to Sipho's forays into crime, is Cliff, who even though he sees the class division in Evansdale, remains adamant that education is the key to success and bridging the economic gap.

Through a post-colonial and neo-Marxist lens and spatial theories, the chapter grapples with the issues of crime, violence, teenage point view and material accumulation in contemporary South Africa as depicted in the two novels.

5.1.2 Bildungsroman and violent crimes

Sipho says the defining moment of his life was when he said, "goodbye to [his] childhood and embrac[ed] manhood from a different angle" (107). This comes after his unsuccessful attempts to steal a car in the previously whites only suburb across the highway from his township. This event coincided with his turning eighteen years, the age of maturity in South Africa. Therefore, not only does Sipho become an adult in terms of the constitution, he also becomes a man by being initiated into crime. Sipho's movement in and around the city makes Mzobe's novel a *bildungsroman* as defined by Buckley (1974) who argues that the protagonist in a bildungsroman often leaves home to gain his independence and education in the city. Similarly, Sipho conforms to this pattern of leaving home often and never returning until after a few days. He spends time in the affluent suburbs and the city where his growth, awareness and independence are heightened. Buckley (1974: 17/18) says:

> He [the protagonist] therefore, sometimes at quite an early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home, to make his way independently to the city. There his real *education* begins, not only his preparation for a career but also … and often more importantly … his direct experience of urban life. (Emphasis added)

Sipho's education comes in the form of informal lessons from his friend, Musa, and other crooks such as Sibani who initiate him into the criminal underworld. Although he does not permanently relocate from Umlazi, he often sleeps out in the affluent suburbs with his criminal friends where

he is initiated into other crime rings. This leads to his forging of a destructive masculinity away from home. Mzobe's novel is therefore about how black South African township boys in the postapartheid environment construct violent masculinities as they come of age.

Unlike Pambo, Mzobe employs realism as a narrative style in the depiction of Sipho's growth, forays into crime and contrition after a short and almost lethal career. According to Jacobson (1987:20), realism can be understood from the perspective of an author trying to emulate reality and from the reader's judgement of a text and seeing its emulation of reality. Mzobe is an insider to the township realities that he depicts, and the reader is drawn in by the verisimilitude of the events portrayed to how the post-apartheid township is perceived in the popular imagination.

The realism is seen in Sipho's circuitous life which reflects realities of growth for most township boys in the post-apartheid moment. The positive ending where Sipho reforms from his criminal activities is suggestive of the moral lesson the writer wants to convey to young men and is aimed at gaining the readers' sympathies. Naidu (2013: 734) argues that the ending of a crime novel which gives the protagonist a chance at redemption induces the pleasure of reading crime fiction. She calls this "the pleasure of a good crime novel". At the novel's denouement, Sipho reforms from crime and goes back to school to train as a car mechanic. His decisions follow the psychological trauma that the life of crime had shown him when he is almost imprisoned and his friends are killed. The novel thus serves as moral lesson and a cautionary tale to all township boys that although crime seems to have quick material rewards it can also lead to a premature death if one does not quickly redeem himself.

Unlike Cliff in *The Path Which Shapes Us* who is depicted as a flat character, Sipho is a rounded character who represents the path that is often taken by most township boys. For example, in his

late teens, he starts resenting academic education reasoning that it is a slow, meandering, and tedious process of accumulating material wealth. However, by the end of the novel, the streets have been a good teacher by exposing him to the harsh realities of violent crimes which are often masked by the glamorous lifestyles of the seemingly successful criminals.

Notably, both Mzobe and Pambo present formal education and acquiring practical skills as the only genuine and morally acceptable way out of poverty for township boys. While this vision seems morally acceptable, it also reveals the power of the state ideological apparatuses. The emphasis on formal education by these writers ignores the systemic structuring inequalities embedded in the pursuit of such an objective. The home environment, the school resources and the general environment of the township are not conducive and supportive of academic excellence.

This is evident in Sipho's life where his father is an ex-convict and most of his friends have prematurely left school and got involved in crime. The apartheid social and economic inequalities are perpetuated in the post-apartheid period under the guise that all young people have an equal chance at getting education and getting ahead in life through formal education. However, their novels reveal that the post-apartheid structural inequalities are promoted by a series of active relationships or hegemonic ideologies which individualise the failure or success of young people without taking holistic view of capitalist tendencies of the post-apartheid environment (Gramsci, 1971: 669). The writers' positionalities prevent them from positing a radically emancipatory discourse about township teenage boys' growth and becoming in relation to the im/moral, and il/legal practices that characterise township realities.

Despite the seemingly contrived morally acceptable ending of *Young Blood*, through Sipho, Mzobe depicts the fractured and difficult growth of township boys in South Africa today. Sipho's portrayal

shows that the simplistic vision of growth depicted in Pambo's novel is largely misleading. Mzobe shows that the township boys' growth does not take an unproblematic linear path of acquiring education and then getting a well-paying job. Rather it takes a circuitous, painful, disadvantageous and problematic shape. When the novel opens, Sipho says: "I gave up on my high school education. There was absolutely nothing for me at school" (7). This is in fact a radical realisation that the socialisation and education of young people in post-apartheid South Africa lacks diversity that would cater for the different talents of teenagers.

However, the context of these words in the above quotation shows that Mzobe is not calling for a positive diversification for the training of young people. The only avenue to those who are not academically oriented seems to be crime. This is seen from the fact Sipho utters these words after being mesmerised by the flashy lifestyle of his criminal friend, Musa, who has just returned from Johannesburg after serving a nine-month jail sentence for theft. Of course, the impressionable Sipho is unaware of all the details of Musa's life in Johannesburg. All he desires are the material goods that Musa has apparently accumulated without having to break any academic sweat. Musa's apparent quick economic success makes Sipho view formal education as a tedious process to economic success. The narrator says, Musa retuned dressed in Versace, driving a BMW and drenched in what is described as a glorious "I have made it glow" (15). Sipho is clearly enticed by this.

Sipho's being enticed by the quick short-term benefits of crime closely mirrors the experience of many young boys in South African townships today. Thus, Mzobe's novel provides a nuanced view of conditions which are pull factors into violent crime for many young boys in many postapartheid townships. Mzobe's depiction of Sipho and Umlazi township is enriched by the fact

that he himself grew up in the township. This gives him an insider's perspective into the evolution of the masculinities of township boys which he subsequently renders vividly in his novel. Therefore, it is his narration of Umlazi from the inside that gives his work credibility. Matzke's (2012) claims that African novelists can only grapple with African contemporary issues through crime fiction if they are writing about Africa they belong to. Mzobe's insider status offers the reader what Augart (2018: 10) describes as "a detailed and recognizable portrait of the new South Africa". Mzobe treats Sipho's growing up in the township with a sense of meticulousness and realness and this makes his novel credible in representing life, crime, education and the post-apartheid township space.

Mzobe uses Sipho to demonstrate that the life of violent crime is not as easy as some young men imagine. Sipho quickly learns it the hard way, that to be "streetwise" does not come cheaply. He soon recognises that what De Certeau (1991: xii) calls "everyday practices" of the street are an extremely demanding educational process just like the academic route which he has just denounced and rejected. He learns through his practice of everyday life as a criminal that the streets are harsh and can lead to premature death. He soon realises that the world of gangsterism is not a haphazard free-for-all enterprise. Rather, like the academic system that he has left behind, it is controlled by rules and respect for hierarchy. Eventually, it is this realisation of the similarities in terms of rules and discipline and the inevitable dangers of a criminal life that makes Sipho opt to go back to the academic route which he had earlier viewed as empty. Comaroff and Comaroff (2011: 807) write that the purpose of crime fiction in a society already plagued by violent crime such as South Africa is to provide "readily available tropes for addressing ironies, for ventilating desires for justice". *Young Blood* is therefore a cautionary tale to all would-be-gang-members young people that a life of violent crime is not without pain and discipline. Furthermore, the novel shows that while

academic education is hard as Sipho declares, alternative methods to material accumulation are not only harder but are also dangerous.

For example, while engaged in the "practice of his everyday life", going on as a criminal, Sipho learns that the criminal underworld is characterised by violent punishments that may include death. His experience of the murderous interaction between the Cold Heart brothers; a pair of ruthless criminals and members of the notorious 27-prison gang and his friend Musa, helps Sipho to come to a point of deep self-realisation about violence and gangsterism. After this encounter, Sipho says:

> I am a township child, I knew what Musa and the Cold Heart were on about. I knew that what I had just witnessed was the law of the number of convicts, as laid out briefly in number lore. (32)

Through this encounter, Sipho experiences the harsh realities of a criminal life and the consequences of belonging to a street gang. His witnessing of these encounters speaks to his informal education as he goes on about his criminal life. LeSeur (1995: 22) argues that in any coming of age novel, "the education may be either formal or informal", and Sipho gets a harsh informal education in the streets. His witnessing of Musa and the Cold Heart Brothers in action is a significant lesson for him. It teaches him about the high cost criminal life and the dangers involved in getting the benefits and material rewards that he had imagined come easy.

Ironically, like the process of acquiring formal education, Sipho is put through criminal classes by his friends, Musa and Vusi, as well as his criminal icons, Sibani and Mdala, who all become his mentors and teachers. Musa teaches him how to go about stealing a car and the benefits attached to it, thereby enhancing his courage and enticing him. Musa tells Sipho that stealing a car is not complicated but finding the courage to steal is. He says: "you have to want to do it, that is the only

way you will learn" (53). Sipho is also taught that to avoid the risk of being caught in a stolen car is by driving it to the buyer at night after having repainted it, changed its tags and the engine number (52). He is also taught that murder is justified, and bullets are meant to right wrongs (82). The fact that he is told that murder is justified suggests the risks, and dangers he was unaware of, which are associated with the life of crime. Sipho's visit to Sibani's flamboyant house and hanging out with the rest of his criminal companions both in and outside the city and his township constitute his education in the criminal underworld.

Interestingly, as Sipho is being inducted into a world of crime, his father does not strongly condemn his behaviour although he seems aware of what his son is involved in. This is seen in the conversation between the two when his father tells him that in the world of money, only money matters because it makes things happen and could change his life. The father says to him: "In the real world, money matters. Notes are the tiny hands that spin this world around. The more of these tiny hands you have, the better your life will be" (56). The father seems to tacitly approve of his son's criminal life. Sipho's father has a negative influence on him because he tells the boy that money is everything in life. His life is also informed by his social and economic existence which have influenced his capitalist thinking and approach to life of viewing money as everything. The father ignores the fact that there is more to life other than accumulating things such as fast cars and flamboyant houses. Subsequently, he sees criminality as some form of a get-rich-quick scheme. He declares: "I choose money over freedom" (108). The point that Mzobe is making through Sipho's father is that township boys often lack positive role models hence their development of destructive masculinities.

Significantly, Sipho's father has a chequered past, having been involved in crime himself as a youngster. He was arrested and joined the infamous 26-Prisons numbers gang as a young man. He

likely did not have positive male role models and the way he deals with Sipho's criminality is an example of how township boys do not have good male role models. Admittedly, when it comes to crime, his father warns him: "[*Crime*] is just a fairy-tale, son. My boy never believe in fairy tales" (33; *emphasis added*). Therefore, Sipho's tragedy is the fact that he has a father who has a contradictory set of moral values.

Ironically, earlier on, Sipho gives the reader the impression that he is at least proud to have a father figure unlike the other boys on his street. He says; "my father was the only man on my streets" (15). As the conversation quoted above between father and son indicates, Sipho may have a father but his father is not a positive role model. In the end, his situation is like that of his fatherless friend, Musa. Mzobe foregrounds absent fathers and the lack of positive male role models as the scourge that contributes to boys' development of destructive masculinities in contemporary black South African townships.

It is this realist portrayal that differentiates the tone of Mzobe's novel from that of Pambo. While Cliff in Pambo's novel is largely a flat character, Sipho grows and develops throughout the novel. Crime initially appears empowering to him but he subsequently realises that the power one gets from violent crime is dangerous, illusory and ephemeral. That is why in the end he resorts to academic education which offers a slower but more solid and less dangerous means to upward social mobility. On the other hand, although being raised by a criminal, Cliff decides right from the onset that education and peaceful resolution of conflict is the best way of life. Therefore, although both novels are bildungsroman in that Cliff and Sipho experience some growth in awareness, it is Sipho who develops and grows the most. This difference is accounted for by the fact that Cliff is in his early teens throughout the duration of the story and Sipho is in his late teens

by the end of the narrative. It is therefore reasonable to expect Mzobe's character to be more developed than Pambo's whose story seems to be more child-oriented.

Cliff is depicted through a melodramatic technique which limits the writer's ability to 'truthfully' represent post-apartheid township boys' growth. However, the fact that Cliff does not grow and become a mature young man may itself be a literary strategy through which Pambo comments on what he sees as the stunted growth of most black township boys in South Africa. The township boy must remain an idealistic childlike Cliff because realistic transition to adulthood always violently thrusts him into a dangerous world of crime as seen in Sipho's case.

Ironically, it is the violence in the criminal underworld which forces Sipho to contemplate on the advantages of formal schooling over violent crime. It is the near-fatal experiences of crime that make Sipho not feel like a master "mumbler" (7) in class when he decides to go back to school. Mzobe sanctions formal education as the only viable route to a stable life for township boys. This is seen in Sipho's words below:

> From my first class at the technical college, I realized that my mind no longer drifted into a maze of tangents. I concentrated for the forty minutes the class lasted. They teach about engines and issues of interest to me I told myself […] I know that I concentrated in class because of everything I saw in the year that I turned seventeen. (227-8)

Sipho's concentration and love for formal education is seemingly forced as he realises the capitalist conditions of the post-apartheid society forces him to go through the route of formal education to access desired material wealth. His tone is an attempt to convince the reader that he began loving school, however, the reader is already aware that Sipho's reformed decisions are influenced by his

hair-raising experiences in the life of crime. Naidu (2013) posits that crime fiction forces the reader to look at life from a different perspective. True to Naidu's observation, Mzobe allows the reader to go through the process of criminality and violence by reading the story of Sipho. The reader vicariously goes through the same tumultuous experience of Sipho's involvement and subsequent escape from violent crime which forces him to reassess his life's choices. In the end, Sipho chooses formal education and skills acquisition over the temporary flamboyance offered by involvement in violent crimes.

Ideally, both Pambo and Mzobe conjure what Comaroff and Comaroff (2011: 807) see as a "moral commonwealth" of postcolonial detective narratives in their novels through the depiction of education as one of the morally acceptable routes to acquiring material goods even in crime infested and capitalist environments of South African black townships. In this sense, the novels maintain that instead of becoming criminal and violent, post-apartheid South African male youths should take full advantage of formal education as an instrument of upward economic and social mobility. However, the writers' emphasis on formal education illustrates that they are caught up in an ideology that prevents them from critically reflecting on the capitalist structural and systematic inequalities that are embedded in the pursuit of such an education. In other words, as these novelists adequately show, the township as an apartheid spatial construct makes it more difficult for young people to take advantage of the educational opportunities that the post-apartheid environment seemingly presents.

5.1.3 Teenage romance and the construction of non-violent masculinities

In addition to formal education being posited as an antidote to crime and violence, both novelists foreground young romance in the coming of age of township boys as influential in these boys' forging of non-violent masculinities. Both novels follow the romance pattern by depicting young romance as a positive factor in shaping boys' masculinities and in curbing possible violent behaviours. With regards to a bildungsroman, Buckley's (1974: 18) asserts that the "protagonist in this genre is usually tried in romance as well" apart from being challenged in other aspects of his life, and his ability to keep up romance forms an integral part of his growth. Thamarana (2015) also notes that the growth of the protagonist in most English bildungsromans follows a pattern which includes romance. By emphasizing Sipho and Cliff's budding romantic relationships, Mzobe and Pambo suggest that healthy teenage romance can have a positive attitude on young boys and curb their inclination towards crime and violence.

In *Young Blood*, Sipho is restrained from complete ruin by violent crime by his girlfriend's mature remarks about the futility of a life in crime. Upon hearing that Sipho was involved in a spectacle of spinning and burning a stolen car at the funeral of his friend, Vusi, his girlfriend, Nana, threatens to end their relationship. Nana says to Sipho: "Of all things you can do, stealing is the most stupid. Thieves always get caught. If you are stealing that will be the end of us" (182). Although Sipho does not immediately quit criminality after Nana's rebuke, it becomes clear that their romantic relationship plays a crucial role in him eventually reforming and realising the dangers and emptiness of a career in crime.

Nana is morally upright and values education, hence her ability to be a positive influence on Sipho. Unlike the other girls from Durban University of Technology who he usually picks up at the mall for one-night sexual activities and consumption of drugs and alcohol, Nana does not drink nor

consume drugs. Rather, she is from a reputable family with a father who is a lawyer. She respects the law and is fond of education. After participating in crime and drinking sessions, the last person Sipho wants to talk to is his girlfriend, Nana. This shows the importance he attaches on her (70).

Significantly, Nana's decisions about life are largely influenced by the conducive environment she is raised in and the comfortable material conditions that characterise her existence. Mzobe highlights once again the importance of a conducive family environment in the lives of children and especially teenagers. Since Nana is not desperate for gifts such as the girls Sipho and his friends pick up at different night spots, she is able to focus on her education. The novel neatly ties together positive teenage romance and the post-apartheid South Africa's material conditions as largely influential in young township boys' coming of age.

The same is true of Cliff who falls desperately in love with Nandi Parker who comes from a respectable and well-to-do family. His desires to please this girl contributes to his firm resistance to his foster father's gangster tendencies. This is seen when Cliff is confronted with a choice of engaging in a fist fight at school. He feels that his involvement in violence, where he beat up a fellow learner until he bled, may have ruined his chances with the girl of his dreams. Cliff describes how Nandi curbed the violence in him, when he says: "I was sure she knew already from the school gossip that I had been involved in a fight with Isaac. That was not good for my reputation" (88). This suggests that his decision to remain a morally upright teenage boy is influenced by his girlfriend's perception of him. Elund *et al.* (2010) maintain that adolescent romantic relationships influence youth behaviour directly or indirectly by reinforcing certain norms and self-conducts.

Pambo posits the relationship between Cliff and Nandi as a positive factor that prevents Cliff's involvement in violence and crime.

5.1.4 Degraded township space and aspirations of upward social mobility

Mzobe and Pambo use the crime thriller's generic formula of a paced plot, "voyeurism, graphic violence and exaggeration" as noted by Naidu (2013:728), to deal with the concept of space and the inequalities which are still embedded in South African spatial arrangement. *Young Blood* foregrounds not only the fractured upbringing and family financial circumstances of Sipho but the space of the township itself as a contributory factor for Sipho's involvement in violent crimes. For example, Musa, Sipho's notorious friend, comes from a squatter settlement ironically named Power, which Sipho refers to as a "ghetto within a ghetto" (14). Both Mzobe and Pambo present the township through Comaroff and Comaroff's (2011) post-colonial eyes as a breeding space for violence and criminality. Moreover, both novelists represent the township, in Jones's words (2013: 222), as a "patriarchal domestic space" in that it is largely males who are involved in violent and criminal activities of material acquisition.

Mzobe exposes the South African black township as a physically confined and confining space with a potential of causing psychological damage to young boys who have aspiration of improved material existence. Mzobe's depiction of the township can be understood through Lefebvre's (1991) seminal work about spatial issues and through Wacquant's idea that the township space "encages" its members and "severely curtails" their chances of making it out (2007: 51). The poorer neighborhoods of the township are shown as responsible for the identity crisis that afflicts Sipho and his friends and pushes them into a life of violent crimes to access material wealth and move up the social ladder.

Contrastingly, the suburb is posited as a space that has a completely different psychological effect on its inhabitants. Comparing the congestion and chaos of the township and the serene and peaceful

conditions that characterize the suburbs, Sipho claims that "the air you breath changes in the suburbs. There are more trees than houses, more space than you can imagine" (46). He indicates that the apparently healthier air, abundance of trees and space as what drives him deeper into violent crime. Expressing his determination and aspirations to leave the township and reside in the more affluent suburbs, Sipho says: "Even I bush mechanic that I was, vowed not to die in a township, let alone in my father's house" (54). Crime for him is first and foremost a means for getting out of the degraded township space. He feels the township space has a limiting effect to his aspiration of accumulating material possessions. For him, the township is a space of degradation for young black South Africans and he desperately wants to break that cycle of spatial confinement by moving into the affluent suburbs. He thinks of the suburb as a place one should be to enjoy "the fastest forward" life (46).

Sipho's temporary escapes from the township as he goes partying and robbing in the suburbs gives him a taste of a life he desires. The fact that he only sees positivity in the suburbs speaks of the economically-degrading and limiting conditions of the apartheid township which functioned primarily to limit black people's access to upward economic mobility opportunities. Similarly, Wacquant (2007: 51) posits the township as "an ethno-racial prison" which limits the prospects of its residents. Mzobe's association of the suburb with success and the township with degradation speaks of the failures of the post-apartheid government to eliminate the limiting apartheid urban spatial arrangements. Therefore, the township of Umlazi is depicted as an active socio-political space which influences criminality and violence for teenage boys. This depiction allows Mzobe to deal with spatial issues as they are and on the process of becoming in the post-apartheid period.

Notably, Sipho posits his participation in crime as a result of exclusion from the post-apartheid South African dream of equality and economic prosperity for all races. For him, residing in the township means economic exclusion. He says: "[Crime was] my chance to break the circle of nothingness … to step into better things" (101). The space in which he is born into, in the postapartheid period is in Lefebvre's words, "produced" for control and domination by the apartheid government and is now seen as perpetuating economic inequalities by Sipho.

Sipho's limited life choices resemble those of a lot of South African youngsters whose occupation of the township in the post-apartheid period is both limiting and acts as a push factor into crime. Boehmer argues (2018: 90) that "many of the divisions and tribulations of the apartheid era not only remain entrenched, but in some cases grew more extreme". The Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (2008: 4) claims that inequality and exclusion lead to psychological feelings of "insecurity and inadequacy" which translate into crime and violence. Therefore, Sipho gets involved in crime because he wants to break away from the depressing space of the township.

The spatial issues the novel depicts are entangled with issues of class. Having noticed that space determines class, and affords material possessions and power, Sipho gives himself to a life of crime. He wants to move out of the congested township to the spacious suburban neighbourhood because he believes it engenders freedom, peace and dignity. In his description of the suburb as a space of elitism (46), Sipho's thoughts are similar to Steve Biko's. Biko (1987:101) indicates that there is a difference between the township and the suburb that touches on the very question of being human. Biko writes:

> The homes are different, the streets are different, the lighting is different, so you begin to feel that there is something incomplete in your humanity, and that completeness goes with whiteness.

Sipho also thinks of the suburb in similar terms and associates it with the development and selfrespect. For him, residing in the suburbs is an escape from the ruthlessness of poverty. Through Sipho's feelings and thoughts about the differences between the township and suburb, Mzobe comments on how the ever-widening spatial exclusion which is embedded in class results in both psychological and economic frustration which often translate into violence and crime for most young people in post-apartheid townships.

Sipho's sense of inferiority and feeling of exclusion which drive him into the criminal underworld is embedded in the history of his place of birth, the township. Mzobe suggests that the township cannot offer its youth a dignified way of life because it has always been a neglected economic space since the heydays of apartheid. For example, Sipho describes the township as a dissolute space in which shacks and crooks mushroomed everywhere (14). As noted by the CSVR (2008: 7) the apartheid government shaped the country's spatial economy, excluding blacks who were relegated to the congested township and excluded from the mainstream economy. Lemanski (2004: 101) calls this persistence of squalid urban spaces symbolised by townships, the "new apartheid". Equating the old with the new suggests that one cannot talk about the postcolonial and post-apartheid, without talking about the colonial and the apartheid, it speaks of the entanglement of temporalities as already noted.

Similarly, Pambo's novel introduces the reader to the difference in the township and suburb spaces. In the opening of *The Path Which Shapes Us*, the narrator introduces the reader to the spatial

differences which translate into criminalising township residents while absolving those who dwell in the suburbs. Pambo sees the predilection of township residents to crime and violence as deeply embedded in the spatial differentiation between the township and the suburb. The novel posits the material condition of the post-apartheid township as a factor contributing to crime and violence. Cliff shows these spatial differences through his juxtaposition of the suburb and the township. He says:

> We are located in Zone 2. The houses that you find here are not the same as the double storeys in the suburbs. Almost every house here is built in the shape of a matchbox, situated in rows on a vast flat, plain of dusty road and rocky gravel roads. (1)

This description of the segregated spatialities that were inaugurated and legalised by apartheid continues in the post-apartheid period. Pambo shows that the segregation of the past which were violently and ideologically maintained during the apartheid era has spilled over into the postapartheid period. Pambo's novel suggests that the apartheid spatial segregation was built on criminality which continues to manifest itself through violent crimes in the post-apartheid townships. The novel further reveals that class differences are a form of exclusion that translate into violence as the poor feel compelled to use any means necessary to acquire material possessions. As in Mzobe's novel, Cliff's description of the township suggests that it offers little or no economic prospects for its residents.

Notably, Cliff's attitude towards crime and education represents Pambo's vision about the kinds of township spaces that South Africa must have. Pambo uses Cliff to think through the power and ability of education in building a better society. The novel suggests that formal education plays a critical role in the growth of teenagers by helping them make informed and sound decisions. Pambo

also shows that education helps in shaping young people and their future. He highlights the power of education and its potential to solve socio-political problems and challenges and sees education as a positive tool for young men in constructing positive masculinities. It is through formal education and the books that he reads in the library that Cliff realises that there are other ways of solving problems without resorting to violence.

For example, when Cliff realises that his foster father, who is a leader of the Street Disciples gang, intends to wage a war with another gang, The Nasty Boys, Cliff employs principles from Sun Tzu's classic book *The Art of War* to prevent a blood bath. According to Sun Tzu (20121: 23), "to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting". Cliff notes that in the previous gang war, sixty people were killed and some of these were school children that Cliff knew (7). Memories of this bloody gang encounter bolsters Cliff's desire to make his community a safe place without using violent means. Interestingly, the peacefulness of the suburb which is suggested by the above long quotation speaks of the fundamental difference between safety in the township and the suburb.

In this way, Cliff's attitude towards crime and education sets the tone of Pambo's novel and the approach of the writer in the treatment of crime in South African townships today. Cliff's depiction illustrates the divergence in Pambo's and Mzobe's views about the post-apartheid township conditions. Pambo reinforces the idea that education is a key to everything, and most importantly to shaping nonviolent paths for young township dwellers, especially males. This view is captured in the title of the novel, *The Path Which Shapes Us*, which suggests that human behaviour is determined by the decisions one makes. Pambo uses Cliff and his love for education to suggest that if given quality education, township boys could form their masculinities outside the parameters

of crime and violence. Cliff's enthusiasm and belief in education as a life-changing space for everyone represents the author's view that education can help one acquire desired material things for upward economic mobility without resorting to violence and crime.

Cliff's attitude towards education is vividly captured in Chapter Ten after he and other pupils from his school visit the Bantwana Orphanage. Although he is initially unaware that he is himself an orphan and that he spent some years in that orphanage, he learns that one's social disadvantages can be overcome through good education which has the power to change how people view the world and can subsequently curb violent ideas. He leaves the orphanage convinced that although children growing up in orphanages suffer from several deprivations, they have the choice to shape a good future for themselves. About these orphans, Cliff says: "they also can go to university and become artists, doctors, lawyers and accountants" (97). Clearly, Pambo believes that education plays a critical role in shaping how people grow and how they become responsible and respectable members of society. In this way, the author suggests that it is not circumstances around one's birth that determine a person's future, but rather each person's decisions and attitudes towards opportunities that one is given.

Significantly, even though Cliff knew that Evansdale was a crime-infested township, where even children his age belong to street gangs, he still decides to remain morally upright. He does not join any gang and does not entertain crime. This is captured when he refuses to use the gun his foster father gives him for personal protection. Cliff protests, saying: "I did not want to be a kid who had a gun as a birthday gift … I don't want to live my life as if I am a gangster" (211). Although his foster father is a gang leader, Cliff constructs his masculinity as an individual who has been positively influenced by formal education.

Furthermore, when his foster father takes him to the warehouse, where his artillery and dirty money are stored, Cliff is not tempted to emulate him. He refuses contemplating taking over the criminal enterprise in the event of his foster father's death since death is certain in the criminal underworld. When he is taken to this warehouse, he rationally reasons: "People never owned guns to admire their beauty as if they were art portraits. Guns were made to kill people" (85). In this way, he remains morally upright, he refuses to be corrupted and acknowledges that guns are for killing and criminality and he wants nothing to do with such. Cliff's attitude and decision in this regard show the author's determination to show that individuals and even young people who have negative role models have a free will to choose positively despite the spaces they find themselves in.

However, even though right in his treatment of education and its relationship to crime, Pambo's novel is limited by his romanticised depiction of growing up of black males in South African townships today. He uses Cliff to naively suggest that young people who grow up in violent-infested townships have access to means of pursuing a peaceful existence. Pambo seems to ignore the complexities associated with growing up in a township by suggesting that the decision to pursue peace is always easy, neat, peaceful and has happy endings. He does this through the simplistic portrayal of Cliff who even in the face of violence that almost leads to his death, still occupies a moral high ground and chooses education and peace instead of violence to protect himself.

Therefore, Pambo's novel and the construction of Cliff in a linear manner, oversimplifies complex contemporary issues of crime and education. Cliff starts off from a morally upright position as the novel opens having noticed that the township of Evansdale is permeated with violent crime and remains upright in his conduct. As the novel comes to an end, he is still the same character who despite all that has happened within the length of the novel seems to have not changed. By the end of the novel, Cliff still sees life from the same point of view as he did at the beginning of the novel.

Pambo's moralising tone about crime, space and other intractable social and economic issues limits the novel's critical engagement with post-apartheid township issues.

However, even though it is narrated with a melodramatic style this novel may have an effect to an audience of the protagonist's age. Nandy (1998: 8) opines that "the extravagant aesthetic of popular melodramatic [narration] often has a more significant social impact on ordinary [audience]". Young teenage township boys like Cliff, may be positively influenced by the novel. In this way, the melodramatic language and narrative style could be thought of as deliberate narrative strategy by the writer aimed at an audience of Cliff's age. Pambo's use of a young narrator and the employment of simple language suggests that indeed his novel targets an audience of early teens and younger. Nandy (1998) argues that every artistic expression targets a given audience and usually penetrates them. The novel may therefore be successful in influencing the intended readers and curbing the development of violent tendencies in them.

Since Cliff is only fourteen years old, he seems not to fully understand the realities of violent crimes in contemporary South Africa. This limits the novel from filling the lacunae of critically examining violent crimes and its association with township masculinities. Instead, the novel exudes melodramatic qualities in the solutions it proffers for South Africa's problem of violent crimes. Ndlovu (2014) indicates that there is anxiety associated with the representation of violence by child narrators in postcolonial Africa. Pambo's depiction of Cliff which leads to his overlooking of the realities of violent crimes in contemporary South Africa, shows the limits of the use of a child narrator in the critical engagement of some of the most intractable social problems.

5.1.5 Automobile and mobilities of freedom, accumulation and resistance

Sipho's fast car, which enables his mobility in and outside the township, suburb and city and allows smooth business and trade for him, can be read as a metaphor for the economically privileged life he desires. The car enables smooth mobility for him but subsequently drives him into a precipice. He tells the reader that his life took a rapid upward trajectory since the return of Musa from the city. He admits: "My life had moved at a higher tempo since Musa's return from Joburg" (101). The tempo he speaks of is largely negative. He quits school, joins a carjacking syndicate and subsequently reforms from the life of crime and goes back to school.

Historically, the freedom and the ability to move from one place to another has always been denied to black people during the apartheid era. Today this movement is no longer limited by the unfair and violently constituted regulations but rather through poverty and access to material things which are still entangled with race and class. For Sipho, the ability to move with swiftness and speed in his stolen car, represents resistance to space being a means of domination and control like it has always been for black people during the apartheid era. However, his freedom is precarious as his mobility depends on stolen fast cars which, while giving him mobility, also limits his freedom as he cannot drive any time. He usually drives at night with the hope that he would not be caught by the police.

Sipho's subversion of spatial laws and the bridging of actual spatial gaps which also translate into the bridging of economic gaps for him recalls De Certeau's (1984: 124) differentiation between place and space by demonstrating their relationship. To him "space is a practiced place". Space is a way in which people walk the streets, how they subvert spatial strategies and arrangements employed by hegemonic institutions to dominate, control and exert power over them. In Sipho's case, it is not walking the streets that gives him power, but the ability to speedily transverse the township, suburb and city with his BMW in ways that he had never done before his involvement

in crime. He observes: “For a car that breathes as freely as a BMW 325is, Durban’s West Street is best at night. It is empty, so the robots are there to be raced”. For Sipho, moving within and between the locations of affluence without obstruction constitutes the appropriation of a place into a space of resistance and acceptance. His violent and criminal tendencies and attitudes as he drives through and within the city and the white suburbs represent his desire for freedom and access to materialism.

Moreover, in the suburbs Sipho drinks expensive alcohol, “whiskey in its late teens” and has access to some of the finest women in the city (117), luxuries denied by the poverty of the township. In his resistance, he reproduces the space and makes it what suits his mobility and ways of life.

Lefebvre (1991: 610) suggests that “resistance, has to start with the human body, with its corporeal ability to produce space”. To Lefebvre, the human body must not simply conceive space but must also produce it and take back power through the act of everyday life. It is his everyday life that turns the suburb and the streets into a space of accumulation for Sipho which enables him to resist spatial confinements.

Significantly, Sipho does not fight the system that imposed spatial laws upon him and the township community, rather he appropriates its rules to make them fit his everyday life, so that he can redefine his existence in ways that are embedded in lawlessness and criminality. Jones (2013) suggests that the agenda of apartheid spatial regulation was to regulate movement of the black body. Sipho defies road rules by racing through red traffic lights and driving over the speed limit and by not having a valid driver’s licence. It is driving into the city in the BMW 325is, a car that he claims is loved by crooks and doctors alike that he transgresses class boundaries and violates road rules. Jones (2012: 212) argues that “the aesthetics of walking invoke slowness” while driving

evokes a sense of speeded mobility and easy criminal recklessness. Seemingly, for Sipho, going to school meant walking, which he saw as a slow process, however his involvement in crime gives him access to a car which becomes a symbol of speed and progress.

Similarly, *The Path Which Shapes Us* also grapples with the social status attached to mobility through a car. Cliff wants his foster father to fix his BMW in the garage so it can give him the same social status it used to when he was driven in it to school. Furthermore, the day he is driven to school in an Audi Q7, one of the most luxurious Sport Utility Vehicles, Cliff feels as if his social status has just been upgraded and wants his schoolmates to see him as he gets off (77). Ironically, he is driven to school because he is in the line of fire as the Nasty Boys want to kill him. Since he is raised by a gang leader, Cliff is protected by gang members and enjoys the luxurious lifestyle led by gang leaders as evidenced by his being chauffeured to school. Therefore, while giving him the social status that he so much yearns for, the car also compromises his moral principles.

Sipho's paced and precarious mobility is brought to a halt by his arrest and the death of his best friend. Jones (2013) asserts that a car facilitates mobility of black people in contemporary townships of South Africa, but it also constitutes vulnerability. Clearly, "[while] the car facilitates mobility and a reworking of marginalized bodies; it also indicates their continuing vulnerability" (Jones, 2013: 220). Eventually, Sipho had previously asked his friend Musa to burn a BMW M5, a car he equates to the feeling of having raw sex for its smoothness on the road (75) upon Musa's death in the criminal underworld. Through this act, he does not only declare himself a car thief but also acknowledges that in the life of crime death is certain and inevitable. He becomes conscious of the fact that, the freedom the car affords him is temporary and tangled with the imminence of death. Wessels (2013) also observes that the temporary freedom that crime affords is entangled

with violent death and or imprisonment. This is captured in Sipho's conversation with Vusi's mother after Vusi is shot dead where she tells Sipho about the certainty of death in the criminal underworld. She says: "Parents should bury their children - it is the other way around. Money rules everything but it is not the beginning and end" (145-146). This conversation is authorial commentary which cautions township teenagers about the dangers of violent crime as a method of material accumulation and upward social and economic mobility.

5.1.6 Conclusion

Young Blood and *The Path Which Shapes Us* are bildungromans, that is, they deal with the formative years and the coming to some measure of awareness of their respective protagonists. Cliff comes to know that he was an orphanage child who is subsequently raised by a gangster foster father. He also comes to realise that the violent ways of resolving conflict that his foster father has been using only breed death and more violence. This informs his determination to help his foster father to resolve conflict through peaceful means. The fact that Cliff succeeds shows that Pambo's vision for the post-apartheid township is that of peace and not violence. By contrast, Sipho's father was a gangster in his younger years but now has reformed to become a law-abiding backyard mechanic.

Moreover, unlike Cliff, Sipho deliberately abandons his formal education and opts for a life of violent crime. The desire for the quick acquisition of material comforts holds a strong attraction for him that he is willing to steal cars, sell drugs and even commit murder. However, when Sipho sees his friends getting killed and he himself is almost imprisoned, he decides to reform and goes back to college to train as a mechanic. In the end, both novels present formal education and healthy teenage romance as remedies to criminal tendencies that township teenage boys may develop.

Additionally, both novels show that the post-apartheid South African urban space is still racially and economically segregated. The township still belongs to a largely impoverished black population. An apartheid creation, the township is depicted as a space of moral and psychological degradation in that it is not just afflicted by material lack and spatial confinement, but these also breed crime and violence that have become so ubiquitous in contemporary South Africa. Pambo emphasises academic education and young romance as ways in which the township can be rehabilitated into a tolerable if not a peaceful space. Similarly, Mzobe proposes education and teenage romantic love in stabilising the psychologies of teenage boys who may have tendencies to drift into violent crimes. While Pambo proposes a communal and social solution to the resolution of violence and crime in the township, Mzobe views it as a somewhat solitary and introspective process that each teenage individual must go through. Ultimately, both writers conform to what Naidu (2013: 738) calls a "neat conclusion" of a crime novel by offering morally acceptable conclusions to the conflict created in their narratives.

6. CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Conclusion

This dissertation examined eight post-2000 South African crime novels. Firstly, the study explored the convergences and divergences of crime fiction written by authors of different age groups, genders, races and classes to see how they look at crime and violence in the post-apartheid moment. Pitfalls and successes of these writers in representing contemporary South African violent crimes were highlighted and discussed. Secondly, the study examined the works authored by the so-called first and second generation of post-apartheid crime fiction writers. Meyer's and Orford's novels were examined as the first generation of post-apartheid crime novels by white writers while

Makholwa belongs to the post-apartheid first generation of black female writers. Makholwa, Orford and Mayer's depiction of violence and crime and the possible punishment they envision for violent offenders in the post-apartheid period is similar. These writers' thinking about possible methods to be used in punishing violent criminals depicts troubling notions of justice in South Africa and a greater lack of confidence in the justice system by white people and black females in the post-apartheid period. Mzobe and Pambo were categorised as a second-generation of postapartheid black male township crime fiction writers. This led to the conclusion that contemporary crime fiction representations in South Africa are reflective of gender, class and race. This dissertation noted that Orford advocates retributive justice for victims of violent crimes. This may be disturbing to some readers since it amounts to the use of extra-judicial violence against violent criminals. At the end of both *Daddy's Girl* and *Water Music*, criminals are killed in acts of

self-defence by Hart and are never brought before the country's legal system to answer for their crimes.

Hart's "ethical killings" earns her the readers' sympathies because she takes criminals off the street and obtains the status of a hero (Orford, 2010: np). Although Hart's actions allow the writer to radically talk about issues of gender and violence and highlight her achievement in subverting genre traditions, they expose the reader to some troubling notions about justice, law and order. It was also noted that Hart's quasi-legal status as a detective indicates Orford's exasperation with the weaknesses of the post-apartheid criminal justice system. Although there may be individual excellent detectives, the South African Police Service is largely depicted as dysfunctional due to corruption and skills flight.

By placing a female at the centre of a plot that is considered masculine, Orford's novels are oppositional discourse challenging, subverting and subordinating dominant cultural ideologies of the masculine canon that is largely reflected in Meyers's novels. Orford is successful in bending and appropriating the form of the traditional crime novel by replacing a male protagonist with a female heroine while maintaining the content of this genre, that is, violence and paced plot to advance her feminist agenda. However, the study also noted, acknowledged and discussed Orford's blindspots in writing a radical feminist detective novel.

Interestingly, Orford's novels illustrate in Gramsci's words that ideology is a constantly contested area. The novels show that ideologies which serve to sustain gender binaries as seen in the traditional crime canon can be contested and subverted. However, the various pitfalls Orford confronts also indicate that subversion and contestation of masculine ideologies in crime fiction require more than the substitution of a male by a female character. Thus, the post-2000 South

African crime novel by female writers is a clear space of contestation and negotiation between dominant and oppositional discourses. Although met with various challenges, Orford's efforts demonstrate that the genre of crime fiction is fluid and can be appropriated to advance a radical and liberating feminist project.

Furthermore, the study argued that it is through Hart's apparent freedom to walk the streets of Cape Town that the reader sees the horrors that await women as they transverse different spaces in the post-apartheid period. Through her movement in and outside the city with Faizal investigating crime, the reader sees the social injustices that the previously marginalised coloured communities are still subjected to in South Africa. The novels foreground these social, political and economic injustices as the root cause of contemporary violent crimes against women and little girls in Cape Town. Therefore, through her critical feminist work, Orford is also successful in dealing with issues of space, race and violent crimes as constituting the psyche of many in postapartheid Cape Town. *Daddy's Girl* and *Water Music* break away from the romanticisation of Cape Town as a haven with beautiful mountains, beaches and tourist attraction by depicting the horrors that lie beneath its romanticisation through a realist mode.

Although Orford's novels pursue a clear radical feminist agenda, she shares a similar vision with Meyer when it comes to the depiction of the extra-judicial execution of apprehended violent criminals. Meyer's protagonist, Lemmer, shares several similarities with Orford's Hart. Like Hart, Lemmer is not a police detective but achieves results faster and more efficiently than members of the SAPS. Moreover, in both *Trackers* and *Black Widow Society*, Lemmer executes ethical killings of violent criminals. The novelist portrays Lemmer as a crusader for justice which the state fails to provide, he is viewed as a hero by the reader. Lemmer's action also reflects the pervasive mistrust of the post-apartheid criminal and legal systems by most white South Africans.

The positive ending of both Meyer and Orford's novels highlight what Naicker (2017: 7) claims to be "a generic contract between writer and readership", that is, allowing the reader to see his or her deep-seated desire for justice and law fulfilled through fiction. For example, in Meyers' *Trackers*, Milla leaves her abusive marriage and starts a new life. This illustrates Meyer's shift in gender representation because in *Blood Safari*, Meyer subordinates Emma, a female character, while seemingly advancing male chauvinism through Lemmer. Clearly, Meyer's fiction engages with the ongoing debates about gender and violent crimes in the post-apartheid society.

Through Lemmer's tough guy characterisation, Meyer fulfils the requirements of the hardboiled detective novel which enables him to make various social commentaries through Lemmer's eased movement. It is through Lemmer's eyes and other characters such as Branca that the reader sees the continuing racial differences of the apartheid period which have seemingly spilled into the post-apartheid moment. Although the novel cannot be purely read as an ecocritical crime novel, the fact that Meyer uses Lemmer's journeys motif into the Lowveld and Beit Bri*dg*e respectively to comment on contemporary eco-crimes allows the novels to assume their seemingly intended social commentary position exposing the greed and capitalist tendencies of the post-colonial South African and Zimbabwean governments.

Furthermore, the study argued that, like Orford, Makholwa uses her novels to respond to the prevalence of gender-based violence in South Africa today. The difference is that where Orford's novels are set in Cape Town and her protagonist is white, Makholwa's novels are set in Johannesburg and her protagonists are black females. This allows the two writers to deal with issues of violence and crime from different social and racial backgrounds. In *Red Ink*, Makholwa pursues a moderate feminist project by mainly exploring the psychology of a serial rapist and

murderer. In the process, she discovers that while the unstable mental state of male perpetrators of violent crimes against women accounts for their actions, the socio-political status of the victims and even that of the perpetrator also comes into play. In her *Black Widow Society*, which was read as a sequel to *Red Ink*, Makholwa pursues a radical fictional feminist vision. The creation of transgressive women offers Makholwa the opportunity to critique larger discourses of crime and violence perpetrated against women by men. The widow society kills violent husbands and empowers their abused wives by taking the husbands' material wealth. Although issues were raised concerning ethics of using illegal violence by abused women to end their violation; Makholwa is out to foster a different feminist where women become their own liberators than wait for a male rescuer.

Makholwa's strategy is aligned to Mantymaki's (2013) observation that modern crime fiction with a plot that is driven by females often uses the form of the traditional revenge narrative in which a story of victimisation is connected to a change from a passive victim to an active agent. Makholwa suggests that men who abuse their sexual partners must be severely punished through an equal or even greater punishment. The fact that she puts a female protagonist, Tallulah, in such a violent plot and she manages to survive and realise her dream of building a school to liberate fellow women and girls, indicates the writer's success in transforming, appropriating and subverting genre norms.

In analysing *The Path Which Shapes Us*, it was concluded that Pambo is successful in deploying the child narrator to articulate how young males are affected by criminality and spatial temporalities in the post-apartheid moment. The dissertation also demonstrated how these young males can participate in engendering non-violent solutions in dealing with the ubiquitous South

African township spaces and its violence. The melodramatic narrative style adopted by Pambo in his depiction of Cliff's method of reconciling warring murderous street gangs has a special appeal to teenagers and is also the writer's way of presenting his vision about the post-apartheid township spaces. Through Cliff, Pambo reinforces the view that violence can be successfully countered through non-violent means and education can be looked at as more than just a tool for upward economic mobility but also a necessary tool in fostering positive masculine behaviours. This vision is a marked departure from that of Meyer, Orford and Makholwa who seem to propose the use of illegal violence to deal with criminal violence. In addition, Pambo offers formal education as a strategy that will empower teenagers and prevent them from engaging in violent crimes. This is seen in Cliff's diligence to bring peace and in his taking his academic studies seriously. The difference in these authors' view about different spaces in relation to crime and each one's material conditions allows the reader to see crime through multiple views.

Mzobe's *Young Blood* shares the same vision about the importance of formal education in curbing violence and crime among South African township boys. Mzobe's novel serves as a cautionary tale that although crime seems to have quick material benefits, it is a precarious means of material accumulation for desired upward economic mobility. It often leads to death or imprisonment. The novel juxtaposes two methods of accumulating desired material goods in what seems to be an extremely capitalist post-apartheid South African society. On the one hand, the novel portrays education as a slow and meandering process to economic success, and on the other, violent crime as a faster but precarious and dangerous method of accessing material goods. In line with the moral correct lesson that he wants to teach to teenagers, Mzobe indicates that formal education is the route that young people should choose if they want secure and peaceful economic success. It was noted that by so doing, Mzobe avoids a serious reflection on the foundational capitalist inequalities

that disadvantage the township teenager who pursues education as a means towards upward economic and social mobility.

The novels examined proves that crime fiction can indeed be deployed to comment on various issues in post-apartheid South Africa. The novels prove the crime novel can be deployed to offer alternative lenses through which pathologies and felonies of the post-apartheid period can be looked at. The study demonstrated that crime fiction allows the writers and ultimately readers to make up insights which allows them to go deeper in imagining and narrating the post-apartheid period in ways non-fiction often does not. Clearly, Meyer, Orford, Makholwa, Pambo and Mzobe's novels are appropriate in imaginatively mediating the politics of the post-apartheid moment. These novels engagingly and fictitiously offer a response to violence and crime in present day South Africa. The novels achieve this by using chilling violence to captivate the reader while at the same time offering a critical lens through which the post-apartheid period can be viewed.

Through true to life characters, as they live what is depicted as the practice of everyday life in post-apartheid, the crime novels examined in this study allow the reader and writer to relate to the actual word in a way that is not dogmatic. These post-2000 crime novels are deployed to comment on various forms of pathologies because crime fiction has the advantage and ability of creating a parallel universe through which the reader can see violence, crime and alternative ways of dealing with it. Therefore, the creation of transgressive female characters in Orford, Meyer and Makholwa's novels allows a more empathetic identification of realities of everyday life without the actual hurts and pains for the reader. The same is true of the protagonist in Mzobe and Pambo's novels whose lives have been greatly shaped by the condition of both the apartheid and the post-apartheid spatial politics of South Africa.

All eight novels selected for this dissertation grapple with the increase of violent crimes in post2000 South Africa. This was posited as paradox in the sense that the prevalence of violent crimes and the attendant factual accounts of such crimes should diminish people's appetite for fictional representations. The increase in both production and consumption of crime novels such as the ones examined in this study suggests that fiction does what factual account cannot do. Fiction gives the writer space to imagine unorthodox means of depicting and dealing with violent crimes. For the reader, fiction provides the fulfilment of seeing justice served, even if it is through illegal violence that most of the analysed novels propose.

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